

The Good News

SUMMER 2023

A PUBLICATION OF THE DOMINICAN SISTERS OF HOUSTON



THERE WAS MUCH TO CELEBRATE WITH OUR VIETNAMESE SISTERS IN RESIDENCE THIS MAY – GRADUATIONS, TEMPORARY AND FINAL PROFESSIONS, AND VOW RENEWALS. THIS SPRING, WE SUPPORTED NORTHEAST ACTION COLLECTIVE'S CITY CAMPAIGN THAT SUCCESSFULLY SOUGHT MORE FUNDING IN THE CITY OF HOUSTON BUDGET FOR EQUITABLE FLOOD AND DRAINAGE SOLUTIONS FOR UNDERSERVED NEIGHBORHOODS.



Greetings

FROM THE prioress

Dear Friends,

For the past seven years, our Congregation has been undergoing long-term planning to ensure that our Sisters and our schools are ready to move into the future. Having just celebrated our 140th Anniversary in Texas, we have listened to the Spirit and embraced the courage to take the next steps to fulfill our mission of teaching truth and preaching justice within our current demographic. In the 1960's, our census was close to four hundred Sisters – and now we are less than fifty with a median age of eighty-three. We are small, yet a vibrant Congregation.

However, because of our current demographic, we began looking in 2016 at new sponsorship models to ensure the Catholic and Dominican identity of our sponsored schools, St. Agnes Academy and St. Pius X High School. We joined with other Dominican Congregations to explore the possibility of collaboration in the sponsorship of our schools in the future. This exploration led to the development of a new canonical entity in the Catholic Church, Dominican Veritas Ministries (DVM), formed by five Dominican Congregations to sponsor our schools and sustain our Dominican charism into the future. The Congregations forming DVM include the Dominican Sisters of Houston, Adrian, Sinsinawa, Springfield, and Peace.

DVM is affirmed by Cardinal DiNardo and received approval from the Vatican in December 2022. Five Dominican Sisters, including myself, will serve on the

DVM Member Board. The sponsorship of nine schools, including St. Agnes and St. Pius X, will be transferred to DVM on September 1, 2023. Other Dominican schools plan to join DVM in subsequent years.

The schools in DVM will continue to operate in a manner consistent with what has occurred over the past years. The day-to-day operations will continue to be overseen by the schools' administration. The school boards for each school will still be responsible for oversight, guidance, and policymaking. DVM will now hold the reserved powers for sponsorship and governance, which were formerly held by the leadership of each Congregation.

I assure you that the Dominican Sisters of Houston will always remain an integral part of St. Agnes and St. Pius X. We believe that our schools' futures are bright and embrace them with enthusiasm and joy. We are confident that under DVM's sponsorship our Dominican and Catholic values will continue and deepen at St. Agnes and St. Pius X. **This is the first collaborative step we have taken in planning our future; we will keep you informed as we continue our planning in other areas of our Dominican life.** Thank you, as always, for your continued support of our mission and ministries.

With love and in prayer,

Donna M. Pollard, O.P.

Donna M. Pollard, O.P.
Prioress

Thank YOU

We gratefully acknowledge all those who contributed to this issue:

Mary Brenda, OP	Wanda Jinks, OP
Heloise Cruzat, OP	Felix Kapoor, NAC
Adrian Dover, OP	Lauren Lindee, OP
Linda Gibler, OP	Joyce Lubofsky, Liturgist
Julie Greig, OP	Donna Pollard, OP
Laura Grove Prouty, Archivist	Paul Porter, Villa
Laura Henderson, Editor	Administrator
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Family	Liz Witrago, Administration

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Study & Prayer

WORD OF GOD LITURGY

On Saturday, January 22nd, the Community participated in the “Sunday of the Word of God” proclaimed by Pope Francis in 2019. Each Sister brought her Bible to Mass, and after the homily, we asked God’s blessing upon ourselves, imploring the Holy Spirit to help us as we study and pray the Scriptures. Our prayer was “Come, Holy Spirit, enkindle in us the fire of your love.”



EARTH DAY

On Saturday evening, April 22nd, we gathered for evening prayer and a labyrinth walk to commemorate Earth Day. The theme for Earth Day 2023, Invest in Our Planet, focused on the effects of climate change on the planet we all share and what efforts are being made in the real world to mitigate it. The campaign focused on “engaging governments, institutions, businesses, and the more than one billion citizens who participate annually in Earth Day to do their part – everyone accounted for, everyone accountable.” (Earthday.org) Recognizing a green economy as the only path to a healthy, prosperous, and equitable future for all, this year’s campaign called on everyone to support eco-conscious brands and products to help send a clear message to corporate America that consumers want change and a greener economy.



LENTEN PRAYER SERVICES

At the end of February, we hosted the Archdiocesan Lenten Day of Prayer for Consecrated Women, organized by Francesca Kearns, CCVI, Vicar for Religious. Linda Gibler, OP facilitated the day, the theme of which was "Praying with God in Creation." Later in Lent, sisters participated in an online video retreat series led by Catholic liturgical composer Dan Schutte. The twenty-one videos each included a reflection and music video. Sisters gathered in the community room at our retirement home, St. Dominic Villa, twice weekly to view and discuss the presentations. And as is our tradition, sisters gathered for the stations of the cross every Friday during Lent in the meditation garden at the Villa. The beautiful stations of the cross in the garden were created by our Mary Peter Tremonte, OP.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING

After a two-year in person hiatus due to Covid, in February we held our Prayer and Labyrinth Walk as we commemorated the feast of St. Josephine Bakhita, the patron Saint of victims and survivors of human trafficking. Once again, we collaborated with Kimberly Williams with the Path Collaborative at St. Luke CHI. Through prayer and the labyrinth walk, those present reflected on recognizing the systems that leave millions of people vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking, promoting anti-trafficking actions, and building a culture of encounter that leads to a conversion of hearts willing to protect the rights of every person. Lastly, attendees reflected on how to acknowledge human dignity in the fight against human trafficking. Before the morning ended, members of the group shared their experiences of walking the labyrinth.



HARBOR OF HOPE RETREAT

This year, the community was treated to a retreat titled "Harbor of Hope." The retreat directors, Joyce Detzel, CDP, and Jane Ann Slater, CDP, teamed up to offer the retreat drawing on the Providence Spiritual Outreach (PROSO) model. The directors, along with Joyce Lubofsky and Mike Comeaux, who served as liturgist and musician, provided the sisters with prayerful opportunities to contemplate and speak with each other about the harbors they have experienced and the ones they hope for in the future. Information about PROSO is available on the Congregation of Divine Providence webpage. <https://www.cdptexas.org/proso/>



Mission & Ministries

GALA HONOREE

In April, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston celebrated its 175th anniversary with a lovely gala during which six individuals were honored “for their extraordinary acts of leadership, generosity and service in furthering the mission of the Church in Texas.” Among those honored was Heloise Cruzat, OP, a lifelong resident in the Archdiocese. She attended All Saints Catholic School and St. Agnes Academy and entered the convent in September 1951. Sr. Heloise ministered in education as both teacher and principal in the Archdiocese for over 35 years, served in the congregation’s leadership as councilor and prioress, and served the Archdiocese as Vicar for Religious. Currently, she is involved in our congregation’s Laudato Si’ Action Plan, is chair of the Labyrinth Committee and is the liaison for volunteers who tend the Dominican Sisters’ Community Garden. Of religious life, Sr. Heloise has said, “Although I have always lived in community, my belief is that my



witness has been to the importance of Catholic education, and in these later years, to service of the local church.”

In accepting the service award from His Eminence, Cardinal DiNardo, Sr. Heloise expressed her gratitude and directly addressed the women religious in attendance, saying “My presence on this stage is an expression of gratitude by our local church to each of you, to your communities, and to the countless sisters who have ministered here since the foundation of the Diocese of Galveston in 1847... Dearest sisters, you have been and you remain a vital part of the mission of this local church, its ministry in health care and education, its ministry to the poor and to the marginalized, its creative vision that

addresses changing times, moving forward undaunted by obstacles.”

ARCHIVES BAZAAR

In April, the Archivists of the Houston Area (AHA) and the Orange Show Center for Visionary Arts teamed up to host an archives bazaar. Repositories from all over the city gathered to showcase their most interesting and unique materials. Our archives participated and shared some favorite artifacts including a doll dressed in the traditional Dominican habit created by Mary Ann Bocklett, OP and a 1950s recruitment video for Dominican College. Our archivist Laura Grove Prouty talked to so many people who were fascinated by not just our display, but also by the history and mission of the congregation. The day was a great success!



SERVICE AWARD

In June, the Knights of Columbus Council 3491 honored Julie Greig, OP as a Cardinal Medeiros Fellow for her years of ministry in the Port Arthur area and the Diocese of Beaumont. The Cardinal Medeiros Fellow Program was started in 1998 and supports the educational grants program of the Knights.

In surprising Sr. Julie with the fellowship award, the Knights stated that "our recipient is known as caregiver, teacher, mentor, friend, family, spiritual leader, and confidant. She is known to accompany us in everything that we do around the hall, in the community, at church, and sometimes floats in and out like a ninja." The Knights noted how very special Sr. Julie is to them all. Congratulations, Sr. Julie!



RACIST HISTORY OF THE DEATH PENALTY

Our congregation has a long history of working to abolish the death penalty in Texas. In April, Brandon Mack, activist, sociologist and owner of B. Mack Strategies, LLC, spoke to us about the inescapable link between racism and the death penalty. Texas has the highest number of death penalty cases and executions in the country with a disproportionate number of cases involving black or brown defendants.

Since 1619, slavery has shaped the way we as a nation have treated black people. At its core, slavery legally sanctioned the devaluing of black lives. Examining our history is crucial to understanding this devaluation and the systems

that perpetuate the legacy of slavery, a legacy that has justified criminalizing, incarcerating, and killing people of color at much higher rates than the white majority.

During slavery, over sixty offenses, if committed by a black person, were deemed capital offenses; for the white majority, only one criminal offense was punishable by the death penalty. After the Civil War, lynching became an acceptable practice against black adults and children and perpetuated the legacy of devaluing their lives. Lynchings were public spectacles, seen as entertainment and a successful way to terrorize the black community. Many political leaders in the South publicly supported the death penalty and lynching as effective ways to address “the Negro problem.”

This legacy from slavery to lynching continues today with the imposition of the death penalty at much higher rates for people of color. The number one indicator of who will receive the death penalty is the race of the victim. If the accused is black and the victim is white, the accused is four times more likely to receive the death penalty or be sentenced to a higher penalty than if the situation is reversed. If the accused is white and the victim black, the death penalty is rarely implemented. While black people make up only 13% of the population, they make up 42% of prisoners on death row and 34% of prisoners executed.

This disproportionate application of the death penalty perpetuates our racist history and continues the devaluation of black lives. In death penalty states, 98% of prosecutors are white. Prosecutorial discretion is largely unchecked, allowing for explicit and implicit racial biases to taint decisions. Likewise, juries are not truly diversified because prosecutors dismiss black jurors twice as often as their white counterparts. The system for appointing counsel for defendants facing capital punishment does not remedy the imbalance of the State’s power. Appointed attorneys are overworked, underpaid, and lack the resources to combat the resources of the State.

Relying on years of data, the US Supreme Court abolished the death penalty in 1972 as unconstitutional under the eighth amendment because its application disproportionately harmed racial minorities. However, four years later, the Court reversed itself, holding revisions to state laws since 1972 added sufficient clarity and objectivity in defining which defendants could be eligible for capital punishment. For example, jurors were now asked whether a defendant will likely constitute a continuing threat to society. However, rather than adding “objectivity” to the decision-making, revisions like this one give potential jurors and states the ability to draw on our racist history and biases by answering affirmatively when the defendant is black. The 1976 decision led to a new era of executions in Texas, and in Harris County alone, black defendants have been given the death penalty twice as often as whites.

Further changes to existing laws will not fix the racial discrimination inherent in the capital punishment system because any law, short of abolishing the death penalty, will be applied in a racially biased way as statistics and history have shown. Consequently, the death penalty is yet another system that allows society to continue to devalue black and brown lives. Voting, advocacy, and education are effective tools for getting a broader base of support to abolish the death penalty.



INEQUITABLE FLOODING

We continue to educate ourselves on the causes of disproportionate and inequitable flooding in poor neighborhoods in Houston as part of our commitment last fall to the Laudato Si' Action Platform (LSAP), an initiative of the Vatican urging Catholics and all people to journey towards sustainability to care for our common home. This spring, we began supporting the efforts of Northeast Action Collective (NAC), a community organization advocating for solutions to inequitable flood mitigation, storm recovery, and water contamination in marginalized areas in Northeast Houston neighborhoods.

In March, NAC launched its City Campaign, advocating for increases in the City of Houston budget next year to achieve equitable drainage in Northeast neighborhoods. NAC organized to convince the city of the necessity and urgency of the street and house flooding problems that occur in Northeast neighborhoods during even moderate rainfall. Each week, numerous advocates spoke at council meetings, wrote letters, emailed and called council members, garnered media attention, and rallied at city hall in support of their demands to increase the public works department's budget by \$40 million for drainage maintenance and improvement projects. Our congregation helped financially support the campaign and advocated for campaign demands.

NAC's campaign proved successful when Houston City Council voted in June to increase the public works department budget next year. While a \$20 million increase to address drainage and flooding will be divided evenly among districts, \$20 million will be spent equitably on drainage problems in the areas of highest need across the city. Importantly, NAC's campaign also succeeded in changing the city's decades-old policy of putting the burden on the people in these neighborhoods for regular maintenance of their open ditches. Now, responsibility will be rightfully placed with the city for the maintenance of all open ditches, the vast majority of which lie in communities of color and in impoverished areas.

NAC's press release stated, "This is a major victory that fulfills our campaign's central demands and addresses the issue of ditch maintenance that we have pushed for years. Together, these three programs will reduce flood risk and be a big step towards equity in infrastructure provision...A single year's budget won't fix decades of underinvestment, but this is the beginning of truly prioritizing the most vulnerable first in how we spend our public dollars." Our congregation will continue to support NAC and other organizations in their fight for more equitable drainage and flooding solutions beyond this coming fiscal year.

Community



MILESTONE BIRTHDAYS

Our community celebrated in January two of our sisters who reached their 100th birthdays! On January 4th, Mary Alice Carbajal, OP celebrated her birthday and her 75th jubilee as a Houston Dominican. Later in the month on January 23rd, Benignus Galiano, OP celebrated her 100th as well. Sisters, family, and friends attended both very special occasions and enjoyed visiting and celebrating the lives of two remarkable women.

VILLA DINING

Ruby Wilson, our longtime dining services manager, and Anita Caraway, one of her talented staff, outdid themselves preparing a wonderful Mardi Gras lunch of boiled crawfish, jambalaya, fried okra, and King Cake for dessert. Our dining service frequently prepares meals for special occasions, such as birthdays, feast days, and jubilees. This spring we were also treated to fabulous barbeque to celebrate Rodeo Houston, and of course corn beef and cabbage for St. Patrick's Day.



VIETNAMESE SISTERS' CELEBRATIONS

In May, we had much to celebrate with the Vietnamese sisters who reside with us at the Villa. On May 15, Srs. Thiep Vu and Yen Bui, members of the Lovers of the Holy Cross (LHC) of Hung Hoa, Viet Nam, celebrated their graduations by hosting an authentic Vietnamese lunch at the Villa for their local LHC sisters, benefactors, friends, and us. Sr. Thiep graduated from the University of St. Thomas in Houston with a bachelor's in psychology, and Sr. Yen completed an associate degree in psychology from Houston Community College. The graduates thanked everyone present for their years of support and encouragement.

On May 26, we in turn hosted a party to say farewell and congratulations to our Vietnamese sisters. Yen and Thiep not only completed their studies but will return to Viet Nam to make their final vows in September. Additionally, Srs. May Nguyen and Vi Vu made final vows in Maryland in July, and Srs. Elizabeth Oanh and Thuong Tran renewed their vows in May.

We thank each of these sisters, along with Srs. Hoa Bach and Hoa Nguyen, who continue to reside with us while attending ESL classes at Houston Community College, for enriching our community. Their skill with flowers, care of the chapel, and attentive presence to the sisters at the Villa are a gift to us every day.



DOMINICAN FAMILY

On Sunday April 30th, the Dominican Family gathered with sisters, family, and friends to welcome eleven new members at a commitment Mass and celebration. The new members made this first commitment to the Dominican Family after completing one year of inquiry and formation during which they studied the Dominican charism and explored the four pillars of Dominican life – prayer, study, community, and preaching.

Rev. John Rooney, who is a member of the Dominican Family, celebrated the liturgy, during which new members shared how they intend to live the charism:

by strengthening their faith through prayer; by growing spiritually through reading, studying, and preaching; and by being of service to the community. After Mass, those gathered enjoyed a lovely reception.

The Houston Dominican Family currently has 150+ members with new formation classes held every year since its inception fifteen years ago. On August 21, there will be an informational evening for those interested in learning about the Dominican Family. To RSVP, please contact Carol Mayes, OP at cmayes@domhou.org or 713-440-3718.

OUTINGS

Sisters went on several outings planned by our care team while Houston's weather remained pleasant. Highlights included a trip to the Brookwood Community, a residential and vocational nonprofit for adults with disabilities, where sisters enjoyed lunch and admired handmade gifts and lovely gardens. The sisters enjoyed an outing to the Charity Guild of Catholic Women Resale Shop and other shopping excursions as well.

In March, our resident Vietnamese sisters took a day trip to Galveston. Guided by Josephine Marie Godinich, OP and Barbara Collins, OP, the sisters enjoyed sightseeing, beachcombing, feeding the seagulls, riding the ferry, and dining on fresh seafood. In May, sisters took a trip to the Bayou Wildlife Zoo where the animals provided an abundance of entertainment and laughter. Sisters also enjoyed an afternoon Astros game in June. The Astros delivered that day, beating the Mets by two runs. Sisters were delighted to join Jim McIngvale in his suite to watch an Astros game and celebrate July 4th, and Sr. Emily Bordages, OP enjoyed a photo op with José Cruz.





DOMINICAN FAMILY LEADERSHIP

In May, Dominican Family Leadership Team said hello and goodbye to some fantastic servant leaders. A huge thank you goes out to Former Chair Greg Schockling, Councilors Deidra Lane and Leslie Pruski, and Communications Chair Mary Perrotti.

Maria Burdick replaced Mary Gangelhoff as the Current Chair, while Mary assumes the role of Past Chair. The Family welcomes Future Chair Elizabeth Detweiler, Councilors Pam Laffin and Robin Licato, and new Communications Chair Laura Grove Prouty.

All these members give of their time and talent to make Dominican Family better for its members and the community. Pictured are Sr. Carol Mayes, and Chairs Maria Burdick, Greg Schockling (top row) and Elizabeth Detweiler and Mary Gangelhoff (bottom row).



SISTER SPOTLIGHT

Earlier this year, Sister Sharon Steglich, OP was featured in DomLife, a biweekly newsletter focused on Dominican religious women congregations. Since her retirement in 2019, Sr. Sharon has dedicated her time to serving her community in countless ways. Sr. Sharon grew up and attended Catholic schools in Port Arthur, Texas, where she was taught by Dominican Sisters of Houston. Inspired by the sisters, she entered the convent in 1959 and earned her BA in education from Dominican College in Houston. Sr. Sharon lovingly and patiently taught first grade for an inspiring fifty-one years, twenty-seven of those years were in the small town of Orange, Texas. She loved teaching in Orange where she knew everyone in the community and felt as if she were teaching family.

On her love of teaching first grade, Sr. Sharon has said, “I had a difficult time learning as a child, especially with reading. As a teacher I taught phonics and was really successful at it. You learn so much in the first grade, and I wanted to help the children learn to read. I had patience with the children because I had the same struggles growing up.”

This same sense of compassion and community that drove her teaching ministry has made Sr. Sharon beloved and invaluable in our retirement community. Sr. Sharon is involved in so many aspects of day-to-day life on the Motherhouse campus and at the sisters’ retirement home, such as assisting with funeral arrangements, gardening, helping with special events, running errands for sisters, anticipating and fulfilling needs, creating and arranging lovely decorations, and personally thanking donors and organizing mailings to them. Sharon is constantly attentive to chapel needs and to our visiting sisters from Vietnam who perform sacristan duties and arrange the weekly environment. She also provides what they need for maintaining the beauty of our Meditation Garden outside of the chapel. Many sisters request her to accompany them on doctor visits because they trust her so much. And Sr. Sharon does it all so graciously and always with a smile. Sr. Sharon enjoys religious life and is grateful for the opportunity to have learned, studied, succeeded, and served. Her community remains grateful for her many gifts and caring spirit.



IN *Memoriam*



SR. THERESA MACEY, OP

February 19, 1935 – May 13, 2023

Born in Houston, Sr. Theresa (Antonieta) graduated from St. Agnes Academy in 1952. She entered the Dominican Sisters of Houston in 1956, after having earned a B.A. in education and English at the University of St. Thomas in Houston. She also completed studies in Spirituality at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington and the Pastoral Institute in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Sr. Theresa served in education ministry in Texas at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic School, Houston; St. Catherine Catholic School, Port Neches; St. Mary Catholic School, Orange; Sacred Heart Catholic School, Houston; and Dominican High School, Galveston.

Answering an appeal from Pope John XXIII for religious communities to minister in Latin America, Sr. Theresa dedicated over forty years of her life to minister in Guatemala. She worked as a pastoral minister in Zacapa, Guatemala, and co-founded Colegio Parroquial San Vicente de Paul Bethania, a Catholic school in Guatemala City. Sr. Theresa was instrumental in fundraising for the school, allowing it to serve children from one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city. She brought education and religion programs to many impoverished young people in Guatemala, empowering them to become future leaders. She also served as a spiritual counselor, translator, and aide.

Sr. Theresa will be remembered for her kindness, her humor, and her justice and peace ministry, addressing social issues and non-violence. Among her many accolades, Sr. Theresa was the first recipient of the University of St. Thomas Rev. Vincent J. Guinan Distinguished Alumni Award. In addition, the Presidential Commission for Human Rights recognized her as a “Constructor of Peace and for forty years of devotion, solidarity and commitment to the effort of building a culture of peace among Guatemalans.”

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TODAY'S KINDNESS GROWS TOMORROW'S BLESSINGS

The Dominican Sisters of Houston's legacy in Catholic education and service is deep rooted, and we continue today to serve and to preach the Gospel. When you name the Dominican Sisters of Houston as a beneficiary of your will, life insurance policy, trust, or retirement plan, you help ensure the future of our mission. If support of our mission and sisters is part of your legacy giving in your will or estate plans, please let us know. We would love to thank you for your generous commitment. If you are considering remembering the sisters as part of your estate planning, please contact us today at 713.440.3707.



AUG 21ST

Dominican Family Informational Gathering

RSVP TO CAROL MAYES, OP

CMAYES@DOMHOU.ORG OR CALL 713-440-3718

NOV 11TH

Antiracism Workshop

DOMINICAN CENTER FOR SPIRITUALITY

6501 ALMEDA ROAD

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 713-440-3714

Mission Statement

WE, THE HOUSTON DOMINICAN SISTERS, PUBLICLY COMMIT OURSELVES TO STUDY AND ADDRESS THE CRUCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES OF OUR TIMES. WE ASSUME THE RISKS INHERENT IN PREACHING AND TEACHING THE GOSPEL. WE WILL WORK TO TRANSFORM SOCIAL STRUCTURES WHICH OPPRESS THE POWERLESS, MINISTERING WITH THEM IN OUR COMMON STRUGGLE TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO THE WORD OF GOD.

