



MONASTERY BELLS

Life with the Cloistered Dominican Nuns

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Spring 2018

MONASTERY OF THE INFANT JESUS

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"All those called by God to the practice of the evangelical counsels and who, faithfully responding to the call, undertake to observe the same, bind themselves to the Lord in a special way, following Christ." (Documents of the 2nd Vatican Council)

Sister Mary Therese of the Divine Mercy made her first profession of vows on January 27, 2018. Our chaplain, Fr. John Lydon, O.P., was the celebrant. The following is her reflection on her first profession.

"Before making profession of temporary vows, I enjoyed the traditional ten-day retreat which was taken in the monastery with the usual activity going on around me. But because I wasn't doing regular work or chores or going to recreations I felt like I had entered a cloister within the cloister. I was able to spend long stretches of time reading helpful spiritual books, reflecting on the Scriptures, and meditating on my vocation.



The profession ceremony was celebrated during the Mass. The readings and hymns were a personal expression of what the vows mean to me and why I want to make this life commitment to God. I picked the Divine Mercy image for the cover of the Mass program, and a Scripture quotation that reflects how I feel about my vows: "Remain in me as I remain in you" (Jn 15:4).



For the actual profession of vows, Sr. Maria Guadalupe and I went into the sanctuary where I promised obedience according to our Constitutions. Then Fr. John presented me with my new black veil, which Sr. Maria Guadalupe and Sr. Mary Rose substituted for my white novice veil. After that Fr. John blessed my scapular with holy water.

A part of the profession Mass that was special for me was that my family was able to participate. My father and niece did the readings, my sisters carried up the gifts, and my nephew was the altar boy. My family's support is very important to me, and I was very glad that they were able to have an active role in my profession Mass."

We all rejoice in this great moment for our community and for the Order, and we hope that through the blessings of this day more young women will be encouraged to embrace life as a contemplative Dominican nun here in Lufkin.



Following Christ for 25 Years

On January 10, 2018 Sr. Irma of the Angels was remembering her first profession of vows 25 years ago. Sister is originally from Puebla, Mexico and transferred to our monastery a few years ago. We are blessed to have her with us and to share this anniversary with her. It was also a day of blessings for the Church in recalling the years of consecrated love and service Sister Irma has offered to God. Sister shares about what her jubilee means to her:

"To have celebrated 25 years of consecrated life has been for me a solemn thanksgiving to God for this heavenly gift. It is also an opportunity to admire the work of God in my life because He has chosen me, has sustained my fragile answer and has transformed my weakness into strength. During these years, faith and love have been the two wings to draw close to Jesus along the way. My soul sings with joy the praises to my Beloved. With fervent gratitude I tell Him: My God and my Lord, You called me and when I heard your voice I followed you. My Life is all yours; I want nothing more. I am already happy and my heart intones hymns to your kindness."



A Blessed Easter Season To All!

All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Cor. 3:18

Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.



The following of Christ is a process and an invitation to wholeness. During our retreat last September, we were guided along this way of perfection by Fr. Emmerich Vogt, O.P. According to Father, transformation is a work of God's grace, but it requires our cooperation. Using pertinent quotes and a dose of humor, he stressed the importance of self-knowledge in our pursuit of sanctity and then took us through the Twelve Steps as a way of acquiring virtue. Father's mix of psychology and spirituality was challenging and compelling, but, as he added at the end, God's grace is sufficient to help us attain the goal.

Father is from the Western Province headquartered in California. He has served in various ministries: parish work, Provincial, chaplain for our nuns in Los Angeles, and is now giving retreats and workshops throughout the country, and world. We are very grateful for his time with us.

From October 9-11, 2017, Fr. Leo Almazan, O.P., gave us a workshop on the virtues. Father's approach to the virtues according to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas was different from Fr. Emmerich's, but just as interesting. Father looked individually at each of the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, and then the theological virtues: faith, hope and charity. He illustrated his lectures with visual aides, concrete examples and wisdom. Though a member of the Southern Dominican Province for the last 17 years, this was his first visit to our monastery, and we hope not his last.



In January 2018, Fr. Leo took up residence in Geneva, Switzerland after his appointment as the representative at the United Nations for the Office of Dominicans for Justice and Peace. We are sure he will enrich the delegation with his expertise as a moral theologian and his gift for languages. We wonder if he will have a chance in his new position to utilize his beautiful calligraphy, which he can execute even in chalk!



Go preach to all nations.



Another way to follow Christ is by spreading the Good News. On December 13-14, 2017, Fr. David Caron, O.P, Vicar of Evangelization for the Archdiocese of New Orleans, lectured on the New Evangelization. Father began by providing us with some sobering statistics on the decline of the practice of the faith in the U.S. He explained that the New Evangelization is primarily aimed at those already in the Church. It is not about new doctrine, but new strategies to meet the needs of our time. He shared some novel ideas about how they are reaching out to people in New Orleans. We were impressed and inspired by his originality and zeal.



Originally from Massachusetts, Father Caron visited our monastery before both as a novice and when he was Vicar Provincial of the Southern Dominican Province. However, this was our first workshop with him and we look forward to having him back.



We were delighted to have a lecture by Rev. Gavin Vaverek on January 9 this year on the "Ten Characteristics of Our Christian Identity" which he based on talks given by our Tyler Bishop, Joseph Strickland. The talk was very interesting, imaginative and thought provoking, highlighting the characteristics that we, as Catholics, should demonstrate in our following of Christ.

Father returned in March to give us a talk on the World Wide Web. Father explained how the internet, although very useful, can, without discipline, become a source of distraction and therefore impede our following of Christ.

Currently assigned as Pastor of St. Luke Parish in Wills Point, Father has also received a special appointment to work with regularization of marriage efforts in the diocese. He is a canon lawyer, as well, and defender of the Bond for the Tribunal for the Diocese of Tyler.

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