



# MONASTERY BELLS

LIFE WITH THE CLOISTERED DOMINICAN NUNS

website: [www.lufkinnuns.org](http://www.lufkinnuns.org)

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Spring 2012

MONASTERY OF THE INFANT JESUS

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At their time of visitation, they will shine out. (Wisdom 3:13)

In the month of February, God came to visit our community in a profound way by calling two of our sisters -only nine days apart- to their heavenly home. Though we expected their passing due to the nature of their illnesses, we are still grieved that they have gone from us even while we rejoice in the hope that now they see Christ face to face.

## Sister Mary Catherine de Ricci of the Immaculate Heart, OP



(born Mary Elizabeth Laiche) was 84 when she died and in her 63rd year of profession. Sister entered the monastery in 1946 with her good friend, Maxine Montegut, who would become Sister Mary William (+ 2004), and made her First Profession on August 15, 1948. Sister Mary Catherine served our community faithfully in a number of capacities, including sub-prioress, directress of novices, head of the Infant Jesus Guild, printer, secretary, and librarian. Five of our current sisters were her novices. Among these we can count two prioresses, four sub-prioresses, three novice directresses and two printers. In fact each have served

at various times on our Monastery Council. Clearly, Sister was a great directress of novices. She was always ready to try new things and learn new skills, traits that came in handy especially in her job as printer. She taught herself how to run the printing press and duplicating machines (used before computers were so accessible), and also did photography and original drawings (including the little nuns featured in this issue).



A self-portrait of Sr. Mary Catherine?!

These talents were seen in her work on the "Monastery Bells" (which she began in 1954 and continued for some 15 years) and her many cards and original designs for monastery stationery. She also served as first President of the Conference of Dominican Nuns in the USA, and made trips to Rome and Bologna representing the Dominican nuns of the United States. We will all remember her beautiful smile and her fidelity to prayer, as well as her trust in divine Providence and her practical nature. Her funeral was well attended by family, friends, and the Dominican Laity, including Msgr. Joseph Strickland (main celebrant and homilist), Fr. Ron Foshage, MS, Fr. Ian Bordenave, OP and Fr. Dominic Izzo, OP.



## Sister Mary Therese of the Annunciation, OP

(born Mary Gloria St. Amant) was 82 when she died and in her 62nd year of profession. She entered the monastery in 1947, and professed her first vows on April 20, 1949. Sister Mary Therese held many different positions in the monastery: in charge of the Cloistered Workshop (sewing vestments, altar linens, etc.), in charge of receiving guests, infirmarian, and cook for the chaplain. She also served for a time on the Monastery Council. Sister loved roses and thrived on gardening, creating a beautiful area we've dubbed "Sr. Mary Therese's garden". Sister Mary Therese also taught and encouraged many of our sisters to garden, so hopefully this legacy will continue! Sister was a gentle and refined person, with a strong determination to do the Lord's will. Perhaps the most profound example of this determination was her entrance into what was in 1947 an all-white religious community. Although the community accepted her wholeheartedly, she and her family endured prejudice outside for many years.



Sister Mary Therese had a great devotion to the Sacred Heart, and she spread this devotion by making Sacred Heart badges. She actually received a grant in 1977, which helped her begin producing these badges in English and Spanish, and they have enjoyed a wide circulation among both Catholics and Protestants. From 1988-1990, Sister Mary Therese volunteered to spend two years with Sister Mary of the Trinity (+ 2005) at the Monastery of St. Dominic in Senekal, South Africa, helping the Spanish-speaking nuns learn English. Sister's funeral was also well attended by family, friends, and the Dominican Laity, as well as Bishop Alvaro Corrada del Rio, SJ (main celebrant and homilist), Msgr. Joseph Strickland, Msgr. William Manger, our chaplain Fr. Paul Philibert, OP, Fr. Ron Foshage, MS, Fr. Francis O'Dowd, Fr. Raymundo Garcia, Fr. Joe Kannampuzha and Fr. Timothy Kelly.



Sr. M. Therese had a great devotion to St. Martin de Porres

A group of people who love the Dominican Nuns at the Monastery of the Infant Jesus is forming an organization called The Friends of the Monastery to help with some of the monastery's financial needs. The Nuns give their lives of prayer for all of us, and we want to become a part of their mission of prayer for the needs of the world by helping raise funds for them. They work very hard to be self-sufficient, but in these times, the Nuns would prayerfully appreciate whatever help we, their friends, can provide. If you would like to be involved in The Friends of the Monastery, please contact Elaine Jackson at 1606 Juniper Lane, Lufkin, Texas, 936-634-4233 or [ejackson1941@yahoo.com](mailto:ejackson1941@yahoo.com).

## What will you do at the visitation of the Lord? SIRACH 2:14

When a sister is dying in the monastery, what happens? The first thing is that we hear the sound of the clapper. Ordinarily it is used when a sister is near death. When we hear its distinctive sound, we quickly obey its summons, making our way to the infirmary to gather around the deathbed. This is our last visit with our sister in this life, and we sing the “Salve Regina” (a Dominican custom) to mark this solemn moment. The chaplain anoints the dying sister, and the community waits, praying the rosary or just praying silently, for God to visit us with his presence and to take our sister to himself. The slow tolling of the outside bell announces the sister’s death. The sister’s body is then taken to the funeral home while the family is contacted and funeral arrangements are made. On the morning preceding the day of the funeral, our sister’s body is returned to the monastery in its coffin. We then keep vigil with her body day and night in the chapel, praying the Psalter over and over and remembering the sister we have lived with and prayed with for so many years. This time of prayer is precious, a chance to visit one last time with our sister and to pray for the happy repose of her soul. Visitation for our friends continues throughout the day and a public rosary is held in the evening. After the funeral Mass, we form a procession to escort the sister’s body to the cemetery. Our cemetery is located on our property, near the enclosure fence, and there is a gate that allows friends and members of the family to enter the cemetery after the funeral Mass and to be with us for the burial.



At our two recent funerals, we were privileged to have our long-time workman and member of the Dominican Laity, David Bomer, carry the cross in the procession. Two of our sisters acted as acolytes, carrying candles; another led the procession, sprinkling holy water. The clergy and the Knights of Columbus joined us as well. We then processed to the cemetery singing hymns, and were followed by cars carrying sisters who cannot walk, and the hearse surrounded by the pall bearers. After the burial, we resumed our singing as we processed back to the monastery.



For a week after the funeral, we go to visit our sister’s grave every day. At the grave site, we pray a decade of the Rosary and sing a hymn or song, usually one of our deceased sister’s favorites or one appropriate for the season. And in years to come, you will often see sisters coming down the road from the main building of the monastery to visit their sisters -the rest of the community- in our cemetery. They remain close to us, and we cherish the hope of being reunited with them one day.

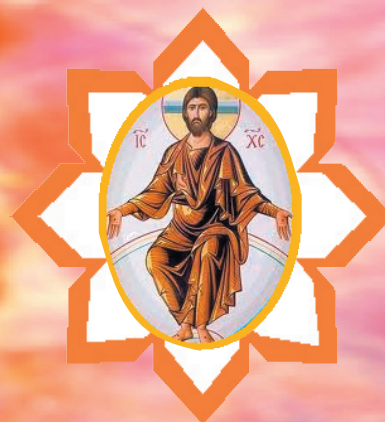
## You shall be visited by the Lord of hosts. ISAIAH 29:6

The Dominican Order will soon be celebrating 800 years of existence. To prepare for this jubilee year, the Order is observing a “novena” of nine years, from 2007 to 2016, with a special theme for each year. This year’s theme happens to be “Women and Preaching”. People often ask, “How do the Dominican nuns -who are cloistered- share in the Order’s mission of preaching?” We preach through our lives, our prayers, our conversations with people in the parlor and on those rare occasions when we go out, and through the written word -including our blog and our “Monastery Bells”. In this issue, we are introducing a new feature called “Lotus Blossoms” which offers a short meditation by one of our nuns.

“Remember me, Lord, visit me.” Jeremiah 15:15 God encounters his people in many and various ways. He spoke to Adam and Eve in the garden; he wrestled with Jacob at the river Jabbok; he appeared to Moses in a burning bush. But God’s greatest encounter came when he sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to live among us, a man like us in all things but sin. Jesus is still working in our world today, healing souls and bodies, transforming lives, waiting to be invited into our hearts to change them forever. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” Rev. 3:20 Are you ready for company?!

**LOTUS BLOSSOMS**

May the glory  
of the Risen Christ  
fill your hearts  
this Easter season!



We are grateful for the overwhelming response to our raffle.  
Thanks to all who participated!