



# MONASTERY BELLS

LIFE WITH THE CLOISTERED DOMINICAN NUNS

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Spring 2015

MONASTERY OF THE INFANT JESUS

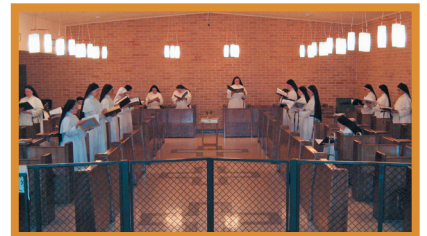
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**“Seven times a day I praise you...” (Psalm 119:164)**

We've shared about our work around the monastery in past issues of "Monastery Bells". In this issue, we would like to talk about the primary "work" we do: prayer. The desert father, Evagrius Ponticus, writes in his Chapters on Prayer, "If you are a theologian you truly pray. If you truly pray you are a theologian." This could be the motto of a Dominican nun, who works and studies hard throughout the day, but never forgets that her primary reason for being in the monastery is to pray and intercede for the salvation of souls. There is so much to pray for in our troubled world!

There are essentially two kinds of prayer at the monastery: communal and private. Our communal prayer is the Liturgy of the Hours, which is the official prayer of the Church. It consists of seven parts or "hours", which are prayed throughout the day and into the night. The Psalmist sings, "I rise before dawn and cry out...my eyes greet the night watches as I meditate on your promise." (Psalm 119:147a-148) and this is exactly what we do. Seven times a day we gather together in chapel to sing the Lord's praises and beg for his mercy for the world. We pray the rosary in common each afternoon and also recite the penitential psalms each week as a suffrage for the dead. Occasionally, we add short prayers at the end of our official prayers that reflect our concern for what is happening in the world today. Currently, we are reciting a prayer for the many Christians suffering in the Middle East.



Our private prayer is also divided into parts. Each nun has two periods of meditation each day, one before Mass in the morning and one after Compline in the evening. During this time, she is free to stay in chapel, or go outside, or to her cell, or almost anywhere in the monastery in order to pray. Some of the sisters like to take a meditative walk through our beautiful grounds. Some choose to prayerfully read the Bible. Each sister has the freedom to pray in the way God calls her to pray. St. Albert the Great tells us that "the best way to pray is the way you pray best".



Every day, from 8AM to 8PM, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in our chapel. Each sister is assigned a time, adoring God in His presence. The nuns take turns spending a longer period of time with the Lord in the evening during our recreation period. We, as Dominican nuns, who received the privilege of adoration from our founding monastery in France, cherish these times of silent praise and worship of God.

As you can see, the prayer schedule (plus times of adoration) has a way of interrupting the day. It often seems that just as you are getting somewhere in your work, it's time to stop everything and go to pray again. And this is exactly the point. Our primary work in the monastery is prayer. Everything else is important, true, but falls short of the important work of giving praise and thanks to God.

Jesus told His disciples, "I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father." (Matthew 18:19) And to quote Evagrius Ponticus again, "Prayer is the fruit of joy and of thanksgiving." It is our joy and our privilege to pray for you and for the world.

*For your enjoyment and to promote vocations, we invite you to view our documentary on YouTube! You may click on YouTube and type in "Monastery of the Infant Jesus", or check the link on our website and blog. Please continue to pray with us for vocations. God is blessing us with postulants.*

Jesus went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Mark 1:35



Fr. Mark Padrez, O.P.

There are times during the year when we enter into greater solitude. Fr. Mark Padrez, O.P. joined us to direct our retreat from September 29 to October 7, 2014 on growing in holiness through the practice of the virtues. Father's conferences and homilies were really inspiring, and we appreciated his talks very much. Father is currently provincial of the Western Province of Dominican friars, so we were glad he was able to take time out of his busy schedule in order to be with us!



Sr. M. John's brother,  
Charles, and family

A golden jubilee is a time to remember the past with gratitude and look forward in hope to the future. Both of these aspects presented themselves at Sr. Mary John's jubilee celebration on November 23, 2014. Bishop Joseph Strickland, of the Diocese of Tyler, TX, officiated at Mass, and was joined by Fr. Martin Iott, O.P. and Fr. Marcos Ramos, O.P. (our chaplain). There were all kinds of guests—family and friends who came to celebrate Sr. Mary John's fifty years of consecration, as well as fifty years of devoted service. Sr. Mary John has served our monastery as prioress for twelve years, as well as in many other capacities. She was also President of the Association Council for eight years. Throughout her multiple years working in maintenance Sister has touched many lives in the Lufkin community, too. Some of these people were able to come and personally express their gratitude to Sister and many more sent greetings and good wishes. It was a moving experience for all of us to hear stories of how Sister has helped various people through her prayers, her letters and parlor visits, and most of all by being so open to God and His will for her. We all pray that Sister will have many more years of service and prayer here in our monastery!

### Fifty Years of Prayer and Praise



Bishop Strickland with  
Sr. Mary John

### Welcome!

The Council of the Association of Monasteries of Dominican Nuns in the United States met here at our monastery from February 10-14, 2015. Our Sr. Mary Rose, who is one of the councilors and also secretary, was joined by Sr. Maria Christine from the Corpus Christi Monastery (Menlo Park, CA), Sr. Mary Thomas from the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament (Farmington Hills, MI), Sr. Anna Marie from the Monastery of Mary the Queen (Springfield, IL), and Sister Denise Marie and Sr. Mary Catharine, both from the Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary (Summit, NJ). Fr. Walter Wagner, O.P., the priest-consultant for the Association, also came. The Council had intense meetings every day, so we didn't get to see a lot of them, but we did have a picnic for dinner one day in the community room and some delightful evening recreations with them. We are grateful we had the opportunity to host this meeting and see our sisters again.



Sr. Carmen Gloria, O.P. came to our monastery for an extended visit from the Monastery of St. Catherine of Siena in Cordoba, Argentina. Sister is a native of Chile, and made her profession at the Monastery of St. Rose of Lima in Santiago, Chile, where she lived until that monastery was closed in 2014. Sister doesn't speak much English, but she is trying to learn! In the meantime we are blessed to have several nuns who speak Spanish so she always has someone to talk to during recreation. We appreciate her exuberant spirit and the joy she brings to all.

*His Resurrection*

*Let us rejoice and be glad!  
Happy Easter*

*Our salvation*

