

DOMINICAN
SISTERS
San Rafael



OP *ignite*



FALL 2017

Dear Friends,

Fall 2017

Praise be to God, the all-merciful one, whose consolation never fails us! God consoles us in all our troubles, so that we in turn may be able to console others in any trouble of theirs and to share with them the consolation we ourselves receive from God. As Christ's suffering exceeds all measure and extends to us, so too it is through Christ that our consolation has no limit. **2 Corinthians 1: 3-5**

As I write this, I am praying for all those who are facing difficult times, that they may experience the consolation of our God. I know from talking to people and watching the news, that many are being consoled and lifted up by their neighbors. We have seen this with the hurricanes in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico, in the aftermath of the shooting tragedy in Las Vegas, and most recently with the wildfires in the counties of Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino and Lake, just north of us. I know that not all troubles are related to natural disasters; people that you and I know and care about are facing challenges to their health, their financial security, or their ability to remain in our country. People we do not know, but who are our brothers and sisters, face many other challenges, just as dire. In the midst of it all, I remember two things: God is with us, and God has given us one another.

The sheer numbers and the extent of people's suffering can be overwhelming, unless we rely on God's strength to guide us. Each of us is able to do what is ours to do. Some are called to respond on a large scale; some of us support their efforts with our time or our treasure. Some of us prayerfully continue with our daily lives and stay alert to opportunities to extend loving hands and hearts.

As 2017 draws to a close, we pray for the grace to truly believe that "All things work together for good for those who love God." Romans 8:28. We hope you will enjoy this debut issue of **OPignite**, our re-named newsletter that reminds us of our passion as preachers of truth, love and justice. We have included news and photos of what we are doing, locally and globally, that express our mission to proclaim God's Word in our world.

While I always say how much it means to us to have you as part of our Dominican family, and to hear from you, please know that in these times, I feel it even more deeply. Please stay in touch, and be assured of our thoughts and prayers.

Gratefully,

Sister Maureen McInerney, O.P.
Sister Maureen McInerney, O.P.
Prioress General



Photo courtesy of Maura Thurman, Homeward Bound of Marin.

The Yellow Hallway Adventure

Having received all of the necessary approvals, the renovation of a hall of rooms at Our Lady of Lourdes Convent, currently unoccupied by any sisters, began in earnest in June.

In August ten of our sisters came by for a one day painting party! Seen above, from left, Sisters Sue Allbritton, Margaret Diener, Raya Hanlon, Joan Hanna, Anne Dolan, Brigid Noonan, Rodolfo Cubillo who is the convent's maintenance tech, Lorraine Amodeo, Abby Newton, Kit Hamilton, Patricia Dougherty, joined Lourdes Convent moderator, Sister Patricia Simpson. Six bedrooms, one for each mother and one for each child, were carefully cleaned and freshly painted. What has taken a little more time has been converting a window on the front porch into a separate entrance, turning two rooms into a small kitchen and dining area, creating a small living room and a play/study room for the children, and creating a door to lead out to a small deck and fenced lawn area. We have also taken great care to be sure that we meet all of the ADA building requirements as well as fire safety codes.

Two women, formerly without permanent housing, and their children under eight years old, will live with us for two years, with support services from not-for-profit Homeward Bound, to transition to fully independent living. We are thrilled. As our faithful readers know, this dream began in 2015, the Year of Mercy.



Mission Statement

We, the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, commit ourselves to the mission of Dominic: to proclaim God's Word in our world.

Called to discipleship through our vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, we follow Jesus according to the Dominican apostolic life; we pray, study, celebrate and live out God's Word in community.

With our lives thus centered in the Lord, we seek to extend His mission of truth and love in our ministry, bringing the Gospel to bear with depth and compassion on the critical issues of our times.



We reverence and affirm the inherent dignity of each person. We will work for transformation of attitudes and systems that deprive any person of dignity.

Vision Statement



Blessed Be the Longing

In August we gathered to welcome our latest candidate, **Theresa Cusimano**, into the Dominican family and our congregation. She was born in Buffalo, New York and raised in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Theresa studied business as an undergraduate, obtained a master's in higher education and a law degree. She pursued a career in higher education, and has "a passion for justice," as seen in her human rights advocacy.

Theresa began to explore her calling to religious life with the Sisters of St. Joseph in Philadelphia who taught her from first grade through high school. At a Come & See event, she was encouraged to take the online vocation match survey on vocationnetwork.org, a website provided by the National Religious Vocation Conference. That led her to us. After conversations with our Vocation Director, Sister Carla Kovack, Theresa applied to continue her vocation journey with us.

In September, Theresa flew to Florida for a pre-arranged speaking engagement, so was coincidentally on hand to help her parents, Martha and James, prepare for Hurricane Irma. Thankfully, their neighborhood was relatively untouched. Currently she serves as Executive Assistant to the leadership team, and attends classes at the Graduate School of Theology in Berkeley. Please join your prayers with ours of gratitude and support.

A Walk for Hope

by *Sister Patricia Simpson*

HOPE! What a wonderful gift: the ability to hope. We are hoping for so much in our world today that it is difficult to name everything.

Here at Our Lady of Lourdes Convent, one of our hopes is for an end to Alzheimer's. As we watch some of our Sisters, our family members and friends endure this devastating disease, we wonder what we can do to help. Each year the Alzheimer's Association's campaign, **Walk to End Alzheimer's**, has the goal to "raise awareness and funds for the care, research and support" of those affected by the disease. Since we at Lourdes Convent aren't able to travel to one of the walks in the various cities where they take place, what better way than to have our very own walk around our outdoor pathway. We call it the **Path of Hope**. For five years now we have sponsored a walk right here at Lourdes Convent, and each year we have been able to send a generous donation to the Alzheimer's Association to further their research and contribute to care. This year we showed up on Saturday, October 7.

The Sisters living at Lourdes Convent walk by themselves if they are able or they use their walkers. Our caregivers help those in their wheelchairs navigate the path too; our Sisters from the neighboring convents join in as do friends from around the Dominican neighborhood. The wonderful students from Dominican University of California come and help organize, walk to support all those who come to further the cause of Alzheimer's research. Who knows! Maybe one day all of our efforts will bring what we hope and pray for: an end to Alzheimer's.

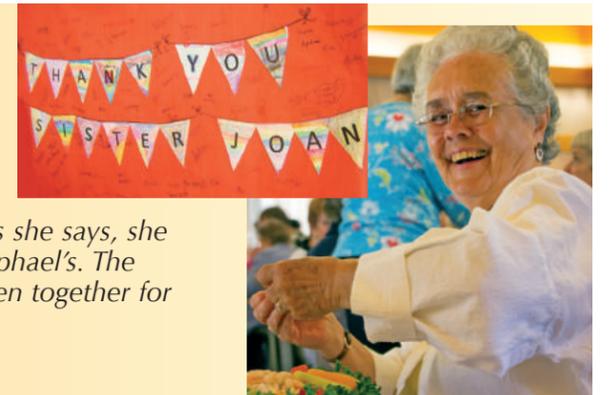


**STEP FORWARD
GIVE HOPE**
Alzheimer's Walk



All ages, all abilities joined in October on the Path of Hope around Our Lady of Lourdes Convent to make a difference in the effort to end Alzheimer's dementia that now affects 5.5 million Americans.

*In May the wonderful people of St. Raphael Parish hosted a special tribute to the Dominican Sisters with a beautiful Mass and celebratory supper. They acknowledged 120 Sisters who had ministered in the parish and its school since 1889. **Sister Joan Hanna's** retirement as Director of the Preschool for thirteen years coincided with the event; as she says, she is "the caboose" in the long line of Sisters to serve at St. Raphael's. The histories of the parish and the congregation have been woven together for 128 years; our deep relationships live on.*



Our Vision Partners

We are pleased to share with our readers about two of the **Vision Grants** that we awarded this year. The Vision Fund gives us the ability to support critically valuable ministries in places where we do not have Sisters living, or in ways that we are not qualified to provide.



Sister Susannah Malarkey sponsored the application from **Catholic Charities** in the San Francisco Archdiocese to support a **therapeutic equestrian program at St. Vincent's School for Boys** in San Rafael. For more than 160 years, this school has provided help and hope for severely abused, neglected and abandoned boys. A trained equestrian clinical practitioner, working full time, helps the boys overcome anti-social and aggressive behavior, and promotes their self-esteem. More than 60 boys are able to participate in this program, and the eighteen horses are receiving another opportunity to be of service.



Sister Maria Foraboschi sponsored the application of a pastoral program in the Diocese of Pakse in southern Laos. The **hygiene, health and literacy program for the YienDak women** is improving the health of a thousand households in a rural village. Water is piped from an open stream about seven miles from the village. The basics of hygiene were unknown to the villagers; research shows that when the women learn, everyone benefits. In addition, literacy in the Lao language among women has been very low, as in ten per thousand. A one-on-one mentoring program has been set up. This has proven to be an effective model in other developing countries.

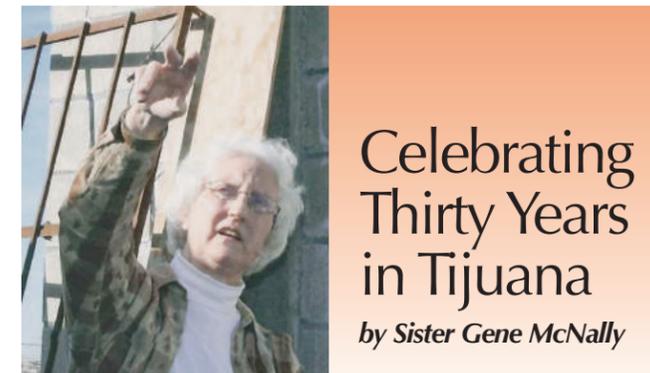
Works of Love in Africa

For nine years our readers have been following the story of **Sister Carla Kovack's** ministry in **Uganda**, the result of her deep listening to a long-time yearning to serve God's people in Africa. In 2008 Sister Carla traveled to the small rural village of Kiganda, lived with the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart, and volunteered in the primary school.

Since then, she has returned several times, each time with fresh ideas and support for improving the quality of life for the people such as water filtration systems, mosquito bedding nets, school supplies, and play equipment for the children.

In June, for the third time, Sisters Carla and Professor LeeAnn Bartolini escorted a group of **Dominican University of California** students to the village to experience life in a developing country first hand. "Each day we met with our small group of primary school students. At first, the youngsters were shy and uncertain about these American women. By the third day, the children were fully engaged in their conversation lessons using the wonderful books provided by recent Dominican graduate, Jennifer Doering. By the end of our stay, students were showering Stephanie Hernandez (*pictured below*) with food: avocados, maize and sugar cane, tokens of their gratitude. "The language of thanks is the same all over the world," Sister Carla shared.

Other exciting news this year is the completion of a maternity wing at the St Matia Mulumba Parish Health Center. Thanks to grants from **Dignity Health** and a Vision Grant from the congregation, a new furnished and equipped space, dedicated to pregnant women and newborns, will provide services from pre-natal classes and monitoring through delivery with the caring supervision and assistance of the Center's midwife.



Celebrating Thirty Years in Tijuana

by **Sister Gene McNally**

I ministered in education for twenty-seven years, teaching in Catholic high schools that our congregation had founded and/or staffed. During that time, I took students on service trips to Tijuana and did some volunteering myself. In September 1986 I began working in Tijuana full time, with the support of the congregation and friends. The vast majority of the people living in this arid canyon area lacked the funds to meet their families' basic needs.

Colonia Esperanza is a labor of love, not only from those who have supported it, but also from the people who live here. We have built **Our Lady of Hope Chapel** where we gather as a community to pray. We have established the **Clinic San Rafael**, open three days a week, where a doctor sees patients for just 35 pesos per visit, and is able to provide some medicine for free. We have the **Domingo Guzman Youth Center** with classes in English, a computer lab with a teacher, a playground and a basketball court.

But that's not all. All of the homes and businesses we have helped build by paying local workers, as jobs are scarce. We have also been able to provide most of the funding for twelve university graduates, as well as elementary school and high school students.

I couldn't have done it without my "lovely ladies," a group of lay women living in the area who assist me with running the programs, activities and services here. They refuse to accept salaries, saying they are "doing it for God," so I do what I can to express my appreciation.

I couldn't have done it without faith in God, the generosity of the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, and the kindness of so many others. It is a great comfort to me on those difficult days...Thank you all so much.

Donations to support Sister Gene's ministry can be sent to the Development Office with a note that they be directed to Colonia Esperanza.



Back to School The new school year began in August at **Dominican University of California!** The faculty, staff and students are our neighbors, and we look for every way to mutually support and interact with one another.

Each year we look forward to welcoming the new students and introducing ourselves! The first event is **The Amazing Race**, a creative scavenger hunt for information that helps the students find their way around campus.

The second event is **Smoothies with the Sisters**, an invitation to pause in the midst of a busy day to sip a refreshing treat and get to know one another.

Treasured Memories in Our Archives

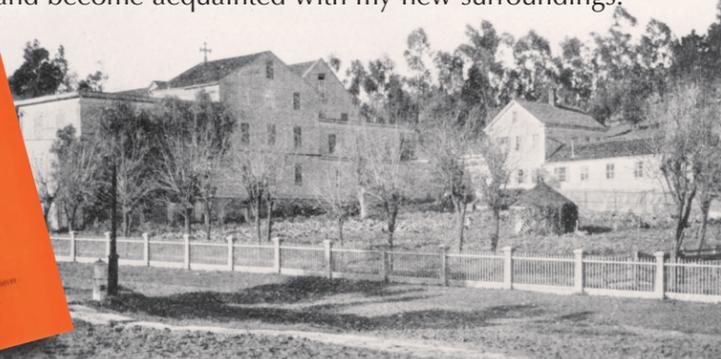
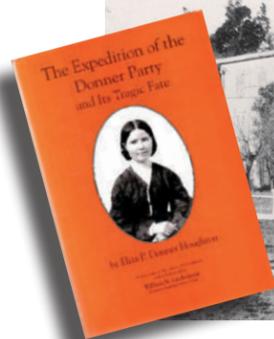
Our congregational archivist, **Sister Patricia Corr**, often comes across fascinating examples of times when our history intersected with that of our state or region. Recently she shared with us the story of Frances, Georgia, and Eliza, daughters of George and Tamsen Donner. The three children survived the Donner Party Expedition and were rescued in 1843 when they were just 6, 4 and 3 years old. In 1857, when Frances was 17, Georgia 15, and Eliza 14, they were enrolled in **St. Catherine's Academy in Benicia**. It was the decision of the husband of their half-sister, Elitha Benjamin Wilder was taking advantage of the Sisters' offer "that when more than two of a family become pupils the same term, the third one shall be received free of charge (except incidentals)."

Eliza published her book in 1911. In chapter 34, we read her charming memory of arriving at St. Catherine's, a month after her sisters, and meeting **Mother Mary Goemaere**.

Mother Mary, with open watch in hand, stood before me, saying, "Your sister Georgia cried twice as long as expected when she came; still, I will allow you the regular five minutes." "I don't wish to cry," was my timid response.

"But," she insisted, "you must shed a few entrance tears to—" Before she finished her sentence, and without thinking it would be overreaching a stranger's privilege, I impulsively threw my arms around her neck, laid my cheek against hers, and whispered, "Please don't make me cry."

She drew me closer to her, and her lips touched my forehead, and she said, "No, child, you need not." Then she bade me go with my sisters and become acquainted with my new surroundings.



2017 Fanjeaux Seminar group.

A Dominican Experience of Studying Abroad

by **Sister Patricia Dougherty, Professor Emerita at Dominican University of California**

For twenty-one years I have happily been involved with the **Fanjeaux Seminar**. It was the inspiration of Sister Vivian Jennings, a Caldwell Dominican. The goal is to ensure that a true understanding and appreciation of St. Dominic, and the charism of the order he founded, continue among the laity in Dominican institutions of higher education. The seventeen-day seminar uniquely introduces American students, faculty members and staff to medieval times and the heritage of St. Dominic.

Sister Samuel Conlan first told me about the concept, and I immediately volunteered to help in any way since I would be in France on sabbatical that spring. My contribution was accepted, and I have worked with the program ever since. At this stage, I help coordinate and get everyone to where they should be. I also trouble-shoot and fill in with a variety of activities. It has been life-giving to me because it grounds me. I have met so many wonderful people who work at different Dominican colleges and universities. We share our own schools' successes and challenges and learn from each other.

In 2017, we hosted thirty-six participants from eleven institutions. In the mornings, the students learn about the history, philosophy, art and literature of the period. Faculty and staff explore the Dominican vision of higher education emerging from the intellectual traditions of the Order of Preachers, particularly as they relate to theology, social justice and the arts. In the afternoons, we all go on excursions to visit heritage sites, including the cities of Toulouse and Albi, the monastery of Lagrasse, and the mountain of Monsegur and, of course, the village of Fanjeaux and the monastery of the nuns at Prouille where the order began.

For many years the group stayed at the Belvedere, the guest house of the Dominican Sisters of the Verbe Incarné. This year, we stayed at Notre Dame de l'Abbaye in Carcassonne. I missed walking the medieval streets and the sunrises at Seignadou and sunsets in the Belvedere garden, but Carcassonne was a great site at the foot of the ramparts of the fortified city. A welcome surprise was learning that Dominic celebrated Mass at the abbaye in the lovely, twelfth century chapel. The seminar always ends with four nights in Paris.



We're going again at the end of May 2018. If you or anyone you know is interested in learning more, go to <http://www.dom.edu/academics/studyabroad/fanjeaux-france>.

We are grateful to our friends, families, colleagues, and partners in ministry for their faithful support of our members and their ministries. We hold you in our thoughts and prayers. **Listed here are those whose gifts were received between March 1 and August 31, 2017.**

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Your Cause PG&E

Creatures Great and Small

by Sister Maria Foraboschi, OP

Thanks to local beekeepers, Bonnie and Gary, a new blessing has come to Dominican Convent's natural area: honey bees. These gossamer-winged creatures are endlessly fascinating. Not only do thousands live



together in their honeycombed-partitioned hives but also they are all, other than the drones, very busy. The drones are the males whose only purpose is to mate with the queen, after which they die. With the arrival of winter, those still living are unceremoniously shoved out of the hive because they use too many of now scarcer resources.

The queen is the largest bee and indispensable to the hive. She lays approximately 2,000 eggs a day in the comb! All of her needs, food and grooming, are met by worker bees. The worker bees live their short lives in two

stages. In the first stage, they work inside the hive, tending to the brood, making and storing honey, and maintaining the proper temperature in the hive by fanning their wings. In the second stage, the workers go outside the hive for the first time and fly all around the hive area, getting their bearings before returning to the hive. The next day they fly off to gather pollen and nectar within a three mile limit. These little bees have their own built-in GPS and are able to communicate the exact location of rich nectar sites in their bee dances back at the hive.

The guard bees take their stance at the hive entrance and will allow only bees with the correct pheromone (scent) to enter. It is their password, and each hive has a unique pheromone which is acquired by the bees from tending the queen.

These beautiful "selfless" marvels of creation function as a community that works for the good of all, with no "in-charge" individual directing their activities. They enrich our lives by pollinating plants which provide not only food but also dessert: honey! When we help bees, we help the environment and, of course, ourselves, a parable for our times.



Farewell, Dear One

Carol Bush served the Sisters and the mission for thirty-two years as Executive Assistant in the administration office. She did her job effectively with great

grace and kindness. There was quite the turnout of Sisters, colleagues, and her family at two events to express our gratitude for her service and best wishes for her retirement! **Carol is flanked by two special friends, Sister Patricia Bruno (left) and Sister Bernadette Wombacher.**



Fall 2017 Volume 33, Number 1

OP ignite is the new name of the bi-annual newsletter published by the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael since 1985. Its purpose is to share information about our history, news of our current ministries, and our vision of the future in the context of our mission. We welcome the opportunity to communicate with our friends and colleagues as well as with others who wish to learn more about our congregation of women religious and the Order of Preachers. We invite and appreciate your prayers and support.

Prioress General

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Sister Susan Allbritton, OP
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Diane Smith, Margaret Diener, and
Gene McNally.*



Be Refreshed in a Sacred Space

We invite you to treat yourself in 2018 to the many joys of our ministry at **Santa Sabina Center**, a place of study, prayer and community in support of contemplative spiritual exploration. You will find a wonderful selection of offerings: engaging leaders of residential retreats, musical programs, days of prayer, study/reflection evenings, private retreat opportunities, and other special programs.

Visit www.santasabinacenter.org to see
what's upcoming in the new year.