DOMINICAN SISTERS
San Rafael

OPignite

SPRING 2019

Dear Friends, Spring 2019

By the time you receive this newsletter, we will be close to completing our 2019 Chapter, our governance process. Every five years, we meet to elect a new Prioress and Councillors, our leadership team, and to set our direction and priorities for the future. We began the process in January and at the end of June, we will spend a week completing our presentations, conversations, reflection and decision-making. We will make sure to share the results with you this summer. In the meantime, we ask that you continue to hold us all in your prayers.

It has been my privilege to serve my congregation as Prioress General for the last ten years. None of us could have imagined all that has happened in that time – in our personal lives, our local communities, our Church, our country and our world. There have been moments of great joy and of great sorrow, as well as plenty of ordinary days that also called us to step forward in faith.

My heart is filled with gratitude to God, my sisters, my family and my friends, including all of you who have blessed our congregation by sharing your friendship and your treasure. David Steindel-Rast, a Benedictine brother, scholar and author, says, "Everything is a gift. The degree to which we are awake to this truth is a measure of our gratefulness, and gratefulness is a measure of our aliveness." I invite you to join me in living in gratitude and to remember that, "The glory of God is a person fully alive." *St. Irenaeus*

We hope you will enjoy this issue of **OP*ignite*** in which we celebrate our 2019 Jubilarians, and share our news of how we continue to find ways, as individuals and as a community, to follow Jesus "according to the Dominican apostolic life."

This is my last letter to you as Prioress. Be assured, though, that this is not the last time that I will be thinking about you and praying for you and your loved ones. I am looking forward to new ways of expressing the mission of the congregation to "bring the Gospel to bear with depth and compassion on the critical issues of our times." I ask for your prayers.

Gratefully,

Sister Maureen McInerney, O.P.

Sister Maureen McInerney, O.P.
Prioress General

PREACHERS OF TRUTH · LOVE · JUSTICE

Sister Maureen McInerney (left) shares about the symbolism of our gift as Sister Barbara Hagedorn, SC, chair of the Catholic Healthcare Federation, looks on. Kevin Lofton, Chief Executive of CommonSpirit Health, holds the artwork for all to see.

The Healing Ministry Continues

Our congregation has ministered in healthcare for 120 years, beginning in Stockton in 1899. You can imagine the changes that have happened over that time! At first, we owned and operated our two hospitals. We joined other congregations of women religious in 1996 as sponsors of **Catholic Healthcare West** (CHW). Our Prioress, Sister Patricia Simpson, served on the Board. When CHW became **Dignity Health** in 2012 and the fifth largest hospital system in the country, Sister Maureen McInerney, as Prioress, served on the new Sponsorship Council.

After years of study, discussion and consultation, Dignity Health and **Catholic Health Initiatives**, a large healthcare system operating primarily in the midwest and eastern regions, aligned to become **CommonSpirit Health** as of February 1 of this year. With 142 hospitals and more than 700 care sites in 21 states, the services of the new health system will be accessible to almost one in four U.S. residents. **Lloyd Dean**, former president and chief executive of Dignity Health, and now one of two chief executives of CommonSpirit Health said, "We want to set a standard that other faith-based health systems want to emulate. Serving the common good is at the core of who we are. This means helping people get and stay healthy in every part of their lives." CommonSpirit Health intends to pay special attention to the needs of the vulnerable, supporting programs that address homelessness, human trafficking and violence prevention.

Catholic Health Care Federation is now the sponsoring body, and is accountable to the Vatican for preserving and advancing the Catholic identity and values of the new health system. Dignity Health had six founding congregations and Catholic Health initiatives had thirteen. While they will no longer sponsor CommonSpirit Health directly, their charisms and history will not be forgotten. The Federation plans to "create a culture that blends the strengths of [each] into a new entity."

In March, Sister Maureen attended a spiritual ritual in the new corporate headquarters in Chicago. The founding congregations were invited to bring a representative gift. These gifts are being displayed as constant reminders of the contributions of women religious to healthcare in our nation.

Healing Ministry... *continued on page 9.*

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

70 years

Sister Marion Irvine, OP

"To live for God" – My ring motto, chosen in 1949, continues to inspire me to live for the good of the world in prayer and in the service of education and social justice. I extend my gratitude to the congregation for allowing me such rich opportunities to be of service.

60 years

Sister Anne Bertain, OP

When I was in high school, I started having this nagging feeling that religious life was something I needed to explore. It was not what I had thought would be my future. I decided to enter the Dominican Sisters right after high school and was sure that in a few months I would know that God was not calling me to follow this path.

Here it is 60 years later. My life as a Dominican Sister of San Rafael has given me opportunities for service far beyond what I thought possible. When I made my profession, I selected as my ring motto, "In His Will is our peace." I prayed to faithfully follow the path God had planned for me.

My vocation has been a gift. The people with whom I have ministered and the people who have come into my life have been such a special part of helping me live the Gospel. I am grateful for my family, my congregation and my local community. I know my relationship with God continues to grow because of their example and their love and support of me throughout my life.

Sister Anne Dolan, OP

After sixty years in vows, first of all, I thank God, who has led me with grace and kindness. As well, since before Dominican life, I owe gratitude to family and friends and all those who contributed to my education, especially through example. The fact that my parents came from two foreign countries gave me the appreciation for different cultures. Particularly in relation to cultures, I received a gift which has enhanced my life: an ability in the Spanish language, which has further enabled me to appreciate other cultures. Experience with Hispanic people has contributed to my empathy for those who migrate to the United States. Like my parents, these immigrants share their diversity of spiritual endowments, despite the losses they experienced in their early lives that led them to leave their homes.

Life as a Dominican has been full of changes: following the signs of the times, we religious women are growing to recognize God's presence in all creation, following Jesus by improving relationships with our neighbors with non-violence and compassion, and being led by the Spirit in applying the Church teachings of Vatican II and beyond.

You Are Invited to Join Us

Mass and Reception
in Honor
of our Jubilarians

Saturday, July 20, 2019

To receive an invitation by mail, please call (415) 453-8303 or email CommunityRelations@sanrafaelop.org

Sister Patricia Simpson, OP

Lord, you know all things.
You know that I love you.
Ring motto

Jubilee 2019

Sister Ruth Droege, OP

When I was growing up and whining about something that I did not like, my father would say to me, "Be a big girl, Ruth." These words of my dad stayed with me over the years, and I have often pondered their meaning. I think he was reminding me to act more like a grown up than a baby. I was the youngest sibling, having a sister and brother eleven and twelve years older than myself who were often part of my problem. Somehow I figured out that I had to find my own way in life rather than grumbling about what had upset me and getting angry. As a result, I became strongly independent and resourceful.

After graduating from the University of Cincinnati with a B.S. in Physical Education, I went on to obtain a Ph.D. in Theology from St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana. This resulted in my finding my way to the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael and my Dominican vocation.

When it was time for my final profession, my ring was made from the gold obtained from a now closed family gold mine near Quincy, California. I chose the motto, *Viriliter Age* (Act with courage). To me, the words meant that following the life of St. Dominic I would lead a life of study, prayer and teaching as fully as possible. As a newly professed Sister, I was assigned to teach other courses at Dominican College in addition to Theology to fill out my schedule. These courses included health and English composition. A life-long interest of mine in writing and literature resulted in developing a course in Theology and the Novel which received credit in either Religious Studies or English. Under the mentorship of Bob Shukraft, I became interested in Developmental Psychology. This led to further studies in Psychology. The motto *Viriliter Age* still stood me in good stead. I was recruited by Southdown, an inpatient treatment program in Canada, to develop an assessment program that was internationally recognized.

Now that I am back in San Rafael, and retired, I find myself strongly drawn to the more contemplative side of Dominican life. The Epistles of Paul and John's Gospel are favorite readings. What St. Paul writes in Romans: 12:33-36 seems a better fit for my sixty years of profession: "Oh, the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgements and unsearchable his ways! For who has known the mind of God/ or who has been his counselor? Or who has given him anything/ that he may be repaid? For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."

The words *Viriliter Age* still ring true for me. As an often-quoted saying about old age goes, "It is not time for sissies." How to live it is described in a prayer composed by Teilhard de Chardin, a French Jesuit priest, scientist, theologian, and mystic whose life and thought have come to mean so much to me.

"When signs of age begin to mark my body and still more touch my mind; when the ill that is to diminish me or carry me off strikes from without or is born within me; when the painful moment comes when I suddenly awake to the fact that I am ill or growing old; and above all when I am feeling I am losing control of myself and am absolutely passive within the hands of the great unknown forces that have formed me; in all these dark moments, O God, grant that I may understand that it is you (provided my faith is strong enough) who are painfully parting the fibers of my being in order to penetrate to the very marrow of my substance and bear me away within yourself." Divine Milieu, pp. 89-90.

If you are what you should be, you will set the world on fire.

St. Catherine of Siena

Jubilee 2019

50 years

Sister Patricia Boss, OP

I feel so blessed to have been called to be a Dominican Sister of San Rafael. I have so much gratitude but can there ever be enough space to express it?

How can I identify all the religious I have known in other congregations who provide me with inspiration, consolation and encouragement?

How can I say how vitally important my parents, siblings, niece, nephews, grands, and cousins are to me and to my ability to be faithful to this call to Dominican life?

How can I say thank you to the faculties, parents and students of the four schools where I ministered, for being patient as I matured as an educator and administrator?

How can I let everyone know how happy I am to use the gifts God gave me in music, which have been so amazingly inspirational to me all the days of my religious life?

How can I express my gratitude for all the stretching experiences and opportunities that this life has brought to my journey? All the friendships? All the travel? Wow.

I give thanks to God and for each person who has been part of this exciting adventure along this "road less travelled."

40 years

Sister Susan Marie Roche, OP

Where your treasure is,
there is your heart also.
Ring motto

The Jubilarians' years of faithful commitment to Dominican life and mission are truly inspiring.

"Whatever you do,
in speech or in action, do it
in the name of Jesus."
Colossians 3:17

You can give a gift
by inviting a single
Catholic woman between
25 and 45 to learn more
about life as a
Dominican Sister of San Rafael,
a preacher of
truth, love and justice.

Share this newsletter with her and let God take care of the rest!

A Celebration of Vision and Service

"It began as a dream, then a prayer, a hope, and finally a reality. On St. Joseph's Day, March 19, 1899, Father William B. O'Connor and the people of Stockton gathered to celebrate the official setting of the cornerstone for St. Joseph's Home and Hospital." – San Joaquin Historian, Fall 1899

The 120th anniversary of that occasion was time to celebrate. Sister Abby Newton, Vice-President of Mission Integration for St. Joseph's Medical Center, made it memorable by writing and producing an historical play, ***Our Stories, Our Legacy***, a musical no less, to which the staff and the public were invited. Three performances throughout the day accommodated everyone's schedules. Bishop Myron Cotta joined a gathering around the statue of Father William O'Connor, the visionary who built St. Joseph's Home and Hospital and invited the sisters to run it.

Employees, physicians, volunteers, Foundation members, retirees, and Community Council members stepped up to portray the fascinating cast of characters: **Mary of Nazareth** speaking about St. Joseph, **Mother Mary Goemaere**, foundress of the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, **Father William O'Connor** and some of the founding physicians, **Sister Gabriel Lally**, administrator for forty years who guided the conversion of a small hospital to a regional healthcare system and **Sister Pia Shaw**, "Sister Visitor" for more than forty years, and **Vivian Walters Gonterman** who, as a child spent 18 months in the rheumatic fever ward. Mrs. Gonterman herself came from her home in South Lake Tahoe to celebrate the occassion.

Carol Wilson, retired employee and current volunteer as Mother Mary Goemaere crossing the Isthmus of Panama.

Scott Neeley, MD as Father William O'Connor with some familiar faces as founding physicians.

Eleven sisters attended the joyous anniversary event. From left, Sisters Patricia Boss, Sue Allbritton Anne Dolan, Lorraine Amodeo Pat Corr, Katherine Hamilton Abby Newton, Veronica Landi, Francine McCarthy, Maureen McInerney and Brigid Noonan.

From Start to STEAM

Our relationship with the people of Vallejo began when we started teaching at St. Vincent Ferrer Grade and High School in 1870. The co-ed high school became all-girls in 1968 when the boys went to the new St. Patrick's with the Christian Brothers.

Demographics and economics led to a decision to merge the two schools. In the fall of 1987, the first classes of St. Patrick-St. Vincent High School united to continue the long tradition of excellent Catholic secondary education in Solano County. The Christian Brothers and the Dominican Sisters continued to serve as teachers and administrators.

We no longer minister at St. Patrick-St. Vincent High School today, but special relationships don't end when people move away. When asked to support a special project, we were happy to contribute to the creation of an innovative STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) Maker Space and Robotics Room. The learning center, with group project rooms housing computers, 3D printers, and robotics lab equipment, will motivate and inspire generations of students to take an interest in STEAM subjects now and to continue in college.

Justice

Dominican Women at the UN

In March, **Sister Patricia Farrell**, Executive Director of the Dominican Sisters Conference, and our Justice Co-Promoters, **Sister Judy Lu McDonnell** and **Lyn Kirkconnell**, shepherded nine Dominican Sisters from congregations in eight countries attending the **63rd United Nations Commission on the Status of Women** (CSW).

Established in 1946, the Commission is dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women globally through policy-making. Every year, representatives of the United Nations member states, agencies, affiliates and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) gather for ten days at United Nations Headquarters. It is a time to review progress towards goals and a place for policymakers, advocates, researchers, and activists to network. Sister Margaret Mayce, representing the Dominican Order as a nongovernmental organization, facilitates the participation of Dominican Sisters from different parts of the world.

The group stayed at Mariandale Retreat Center in Ossining, New York administrative headquarters of the Dominican Sisters of Hope and commuted by train to attend sessions related to this year's focus: "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls."

While there were many special events and sessions each day, bringing new connections and learnings, Sister Judy Lu and Lyn cite these major highlights:

- Attending the session with the Secretary General, António Guterres, was profound. His support for women's parity, equality and leadership were evident in his sincere address; he listened respectfully to the pleas of women from around the world and promised action to address their concerns.
- Experiencing how the United Nations works. Though not a perfect body, especially because it is unable to enforce global compacts, it remains a place where nations can come together to debate, propose and formulate policy that could lead to peace, justice and equity.
- Being with 7,000 women from around the world who are focused on gender equality, including Dominican Sisters from around the world.

Sister Judy Lu (far left) and Lyn Kirkconnell (fourth from left) at the United Nations headquarters with some of their Dominican Sister guests.

Photos by Debra Greenblat, courtesy of San Francisco Archdiocese.

Our weekly ministry with the women in Marin County Jail was recognized in April at the **Restorative Justice Ministry Awards** dinner, hosted by the Archdiocese of San Francisco Office of Human Life and Dignity in April. Currently thirteen women, both sisters and lay, are participating in this ministry organized by Sister Marion Irvine. *Shown, from left,* are **Sisters Brigid Noonan**, **Marion Irvine**, **Anne Dolan**, and **Lisa Martinez**, a Dominican Sister of Mission San Jose, receiving their awards from Julio Escobar, staff member of the Office of Human Life and Dignity. In addition, **Sister Patricia Riley** received a Restorative Practice Award in appreciation of her work with Comunidad San Dimas at the San Francisco Juvenile Justice Center. Thank you to all for your gift of presence to people who are incarcerated.

Can Privilege be a Grace?

by Sister Patricia Riley

Catedral Basílica Santa Maria la Antigua de Panamá.

This portrait of our founder hangs in our Heritage Room. It was painted by Margaret Burton, circa 1936 based on a daguerreotype from 1850-1855.

In February, I had the privilege of traveling to Panama, on a cruise organized as a pilgrimage by **Sister Adele Gerlach**. Each day the twenty-two pilgrims in our group focused on an historical figure who had devoted his or her life to trying to rouse the "privileged" in Central America to remorse for their unjust dealings and treatment of the "unprivileged."

Being on the luxury ship sensitized me to the privilege I daily take for granted in my life as an American citizen of English/Irish descent, albeit a woman. Simply because of the family and circumstances into which I was born, I have had myriad choices in my life, especially choices of education. My religious vocation as a choice was an extension of the privilege I have known since birth.

Our foundress, **Mother Mary Goemaere**, was also a woman of European-rooted privilege. In 1850 she responded to her sense of call to go with Bishop Alemany and Father Villarasa to California. To get there, she traversed the same route as the Panama Canal but on mule back. We pilgrims appreciated afresh the suffering she must have endured as we realized she had none of what we enjoyed on our ship: safety, comfort, good food, entertainment, friendly companionship, and the certainty of returning home. Our gratitude grew for how one particular woman used her privilege of a choice to begin what is today the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael.

The reality in our world of a "privileged few" has long been a barrier to equitable treatment of all human beings. God invites those of us who enjoy privilege to use it to work for that very equality, the basis of God's kingdom. Mother Mary put it thus: "Love equally all people. Your love for all participates in the love of God." I feel my trip was both a privilege and a grace.

In honor of Mother Mary Goemaere, Sister Patricia brought a bit of soil from the convent grounds in San Rafael and placed it in a small park facing the cathedral in Panama City where Pope Francis had celebrated Mass just two weeks prior for the 2019 World Youth Day gathering.

Throughout our history of 169 years, we have been sustained by our faith in God, and by the loving generosity of people like you. Your prayers and thoughtful gifts have supported us in our mission of service to God's people. With deep gratitude for the generous support we continue to receive from our friends, families, colleagues and partners in ministry, we faithfully hold you all in our thoughts and prayers.

What follows is a list of those whose gifts were received between September 1, 2018 and February 28, 2019.

Healing Ministry... *continued from page 2.*

As Sister Maureen presented our gift, she shared these remarks, prepared by Sister Abby Newton, "In the *Summa Theologica*, our Dominican brother, Thomas Aquinas writes *contemplata aliis tradere* (to hand on to others the fruits of one's contemplation). This motto of the Dominican Order is reflected in the framed artwork, aptly named *Contemplation*, by Sister Adele Rowland, OP. Sister Adele used the medium of photomontage, blending two photographs from which emerges a new and surprisingly evocative image. It includes a California sunset and the scallop shell, representative of the pilgrimage known as the Camino de Santiago de Compostela in Spain, but also calling forth all journeys taken in response to the call of our Creator."

Sources: *Catholic Health World*, a publication of Catholic Health Association of the United States, March 1 and March 15 2019 issues.

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thank you!...

OP *ignite*

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OP *ignite* is 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.

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