

# OP*ignite*



DOMINICAN  
SISTERS  
*San Rafael*

AUTUMN 2019

## PREACHERS OF TRUTH · LOVE · JUSTICE

Dear Friends,

As a child growing up in Eagle Rock, a suburb of Los Angeles, I was introduced to Dominicans: the sisters taught me in elementary school while the priests oversaw the parish. Like most children I absorbed my reality like a sponge. Only later as I reflected on my experience, could I articulate my observations and make decisions in the direction of my life calling.

Upon graduation from high school, I joined the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael. Why? I was attracted by the witness of their way of life, their humor and joy, and their dedication as educators. The sisters I knew were strong women, with diverse personalities who may not have always agreed with each other, but they loved one another and were deeply loyal to each other.

Father Gerard Timoner, OP, the recently elected Master of the Dominican Order, said, "Mission is not what we do, but it's who we are." In the 1960s I recognized this reality; the identity of those Dominican women and men was more than what they did. Being Dominican involves an integration of life and mission, of being and action. Years later I reread our Mission Statement that clearly states our mission integrates our vowed way of life in community with the following of Jesus. From this flows our desire to live out God's Word in our preaching. And, oh, it is often a preaching not heard in words but observed in the relationships and actions of service and compassion.

Our Chapter meetings of 2019, were ones in which new leadership was elected, but more importantly, a direction was set by the sisters in the congregation. *With radical trust of God...we reaffirm our mission to preach the gospel with our lives.* This and future editions of our *OP Ignite* serve to share the stories of our sisters who preach truth, love, and justice.



*Sister Carla Kovack, OP*

Sister Carla Kovack, OP  
Prioress General

### *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.

### *Vision Statement*

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.

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*We are appreciative of the generous support of*  
*so many who allow us to carry out our mission.*

**About the Cover** Architectural view of the side of the Jane d’Aza Convent, our gold level LEED certified community living space. Read more about community living and Jane d’Aza Convent on page 6. Photo by Eileen Mize

## New Director of Communications and Advancement and Editor of *OP Ignite*

Meet our new Director of Communications and Advancement, Eileen Mize, who began her work with the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael in September. Eileen has a longtime connection with the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael and brings with her more than 20 years of experience – beginning as Communications Manager at San Domenico School in the late 90s. She went on to as Director for Communications at Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory in San Francisco and most recently as Director of Communications at Justin-Siena High School in Napa, which was co-founded by the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael.

Eileen is thrilled to join the Sisters’ administration in their leadership efforts. “I am humbled by the invitation as I have been a witness to and the recipient of the good works of the Sisters. With the good fortune of having been educated by and having worked as colleagues with several Sisters over the years, it brings me great joy to join their team. Born and raised in San Rafael, I have a deep interest in the history and future of our city – both of which are hard to imagine without the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael. And so, it is an honor to partner with them, share their stories, and help advance their mission so that all may know the blessing they have been and continue to be in our community and to ensure their mission continues to thrive well into the future.”



Sr. Emmanuel Cardinale, OP and Ms. Eileen Mize pictured at a recent Justin-Siena commencement ceremony where Sister served two terms on the Board and Eileen served as Director of Communications. They are co-workers now, but their history runs deep – to St. Isabella’s when Eileen was a student and Sister was principal.

## Meet the Team



### Seeding the Future Together Through Radical Trust in God

*A new leadership team for the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael was installed in a special ceremony in September and has been hard at work mapping a course for the future.*

On Sunday, September 22, 2019, the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael ushered in a new era of leadership for their congregation with a special Ritual of Installation for the new Prioress General and the leadership team. Sisters, family, friends, and partners in ministry were included to pray with and for these leaders as they begin their work to “seed the future.” The new team, serving for a five-year term, are Sr. Carla Kovack, OP (Prioress General); Sr. Cathy Murray, OP; Sr. Barbara Green, OP; Sr. Abby Newton, OP; and Sr. Margaret Diener, OP.

The installation program was personal and meaningful including symbols of service and leadership. The leadership team read excerpts from the Congregation’s Constitution, reaffirming their commitment to the work begun by Dominic, Founder of the Order of Preachers, as well as acknowledging the profound relevance of his teachings in today’s world.

As the new Prioress General Sister Carla Kovack, OP mentioned in her reflection, “Our call is to seed future generations with a desire to preach a gospel of truth, love, and justice.” She invited those gathered to come together through collaboration and partnership. “Let us together be sowers of hope seeding a future for next generations to take up our unfolding story of truth, love, and justice.”



*Leadership Team (from l-r): Sr. Margaret Diener, OP; Barbara Green, OP; Sr. Carla Kovack, OP (Prioress General); Sr. Cathy Murray, OP; and Sr. Abby Newton, OP.*



**Sr. Carla Kovack, OP**  
**Prioress General**

Sr. Carla Kovack becomes the 16th Prioress General of the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, the first being Mother Mary Goemaere from 1850-1862. Steeped in Dominican tradition throughout her upbringing, Sr. Carla made her profession of vows in 1966 and has worked tirelessly in the areas of education and vocations; most recently having also served as a member of the congregation’s leadership team under the direction of her predecessor, Sr. Maureen McInerney, OP. Under the mantle of service Sr. Carla sits on several Boards in the community including Homeward Bound of Marin, St. Rose Corporation, and San Domenico School. Rooted in contemplative prayer and study, Sister Carla hopes to use her community connections and hard-earned wisdom to invigorate and collaborate with the congregation and the greater community to address the pressing issues of our time. As Sister Carla looks forward to this new chapter, she reflects, “Global sisterhood is continuing to unfold because the voices of women are so significant in our society. Although our numbers decline, we know we do not need numbers to be of influence. We represent the kernels that will enliven our local Christian communities to be change agents for good.” She continues, “What gives me hope as we continue to seek and live out our mission bringing the joy of the Gospel to all we touch, we are energized by a huge movement in contemplative ways of living – a heightened sense of being and an awakening to a high calling. This sort of intentionality is full of hope.”



**Sr. Cathy Murray, OP  
First Councillor**

Energized by a sense of new, her recent return to Marin, and most importantly by “those many who are dedicated to building a future of hope and justice,” Sr. Cathy Murray has jumped right in to her work with the Council and the various roles that come with leadership, including Director of Vocations. “This is an exciting time to be in Church and religious life. I look forward to finding innovative ways to work with inter-generational groups. I am excited about working with young adults regarding discernment and vocation to religious life and/or to lay ministry.” Sr. Cathy has had a lifelong commitment to social justice and served as the Promoter of Justice for the congregation in her early years of religious life. Sr. Cathy was also a Pastoral Associate proclaiming the gospel and preaching as well as leading adult religious education programs in St. Helena, San Francisco, and Corralitos. More recently Cathy obtained her license as a Clinical Social Worker and was a supervisor for Sonoma County Adult Protective Services. She has led workshops on meditation, spirituality, and mental health. Sr. Cathy is eager to work with the team and the congregation to build community and build an increased interest in the Dominican way of life through her vocation and discernment ministry with young adults.



**Sr. Barbara Green, OP  
Second Councillor**

Ever the consummate educator and a life-long learner herself, Sr. Barbara Green is highly regarded for her ability to convey complex ideas in creative and tangible ways. A recent past professor of biblical studies at the Graduate Theological Union, she taught both seminarians and graduate students in religion and in 2016 was awarded the Sarlo Excellence in Teaching Award, honoring her inter-religious commitment, interdisciplinary approach, sensitivity to diversity, and creative, and effective pedagogy. She is widely published in the area of biblical literature and has published several academic books and many articles on the Old Testament / Hebrew Bible and enjoys writing fiction. As she writes her own next chapter in her position as Second Councillor on the leadership team she notes, “There are many new things to learn and opportunities to be creative for the future while being faithful to our past.” Her hope for the future is directly tied to the team’s collective commitment to radically trust in God, and she is called to listen. “The universe and God know what they are doing and are trying to share that wisdom with us.” Sister Barbara will be putting her classroom skills to good use in imagining the 2020 calendar for *Gather@Grand* and other events designed to engage the community and educate others as to the critical issues of our time.



**Sr. Abby Newton, OP  
Councillor**

A longtime educator and administrator and current Vice-President for Mission Integration with Dignity Health at St. Joseph’s Medical Center in Stockton (under the care of the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael since its beginning in 1899), Sr. Abby Newton, OP is animated by a love of learning and the thoughtful reflection of doing good in the world, as was instilled in her by the Dominican Sisters when she was a student at Dominican College (now, University). She also serves as Vice President for Mission Integration for the Central California Division of Common Spirit Health and is active in the Diocese of Stockton on a variety of committees, having served on the board of SEEDs, as well as the Retired Priests Task Force and Whole Person Care. Sister Abby brings many talents to the team and the congregation and has much hope for the work at hand. “Our communal commitment to the evolution of religious life and to creating communities of welcome give me much hope. In this divisive world, I think there is no more needed witness of the Gospel than that Christ welcomed all.” Looking ahead, Sister Abby sees a way of moving in this direction by re-committing to “sharing our underutilized spaces – that of our hearts, our homes, and our resources through collaboration and partnership.”



**Sr. Margaret Diener, OP  
Councillor**

Drawing from a breadth of experiences and skills, Sr. Margaret Diener joins the leadership team inspired by “the dynamic living of who we say we are – women of faith willing to meet ever changing needs.” An entrepreneur at heart, Sr. Margaret’s vocational journey reveals an affinity for organizing and facilitating. So it is no wonder that an advanced degree in library and information science led to a long leadership stint with Dominican University’s Library, the launch of an organizational development consulting business benefiting several non-profits, and for the past decade, the directorship of Santa Sabina Center. In considering the next few years she is heartened by the openness of her fellow sisters. “We have the possibility of unleashing new creativity in the way(s) we might re-imagine our future expressions of mission. We are being called to listen deeply to one another, to the needs of the larger world and those questing to know the Divine. God’s holy people still hunger. We need to have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand, for the loaves and the fish are among us and those with whom we engage. We have called ourselves to radical trust in God’s grace. That is the starting point and ultimately the end point.”

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# Building Stronger and More Loving Communities Beyond the Convent and the Church

*Sr. Christina Atienza, OP is a scholar, engineer, budding theologian, devoted daughter and sister, immigrant, and the newest fully vowed member of the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael. In late October 2012, Sr. Christina began her Dominican journey, and on August 10, 2019, she professed her perpetual vows before family, friends, colleagues, her fellow Dominican Sisters, and God.*

Sr. Christina was born and raised in Manila, Philippines, where she received her early education at a K-to-college school run by Benedictine Sisters, St. Scholastica's. At 18, she immigrated to the Bay Area with her parents. She has bachelor's and master's degrees from UC Berkeley in civil engineering, and enjoyed a 20 year-long career in transportation engineering and planning that took her to San Diego, Phoenix, and finally back in the Bay Area. She likes to refer to this time in her life as "BC" – before convent.

In her late teens and after a few philosophy classes, Christina grew skeptical of the Roman Catholic Church and organized religion in general and stopped regularly attending Mass. In her mid-twenties, she discovered Sogyal Rinpoche's *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, which quite simply "blew her mind." From then on, as an avocation, she took to self-studying the sacred texts and spiritualities of non-Christian traditions and happily found great truth and inspiration in them as well. Her interests also took her to many places throughout the world to visit religious sites and experience different expressions of spirituality. As the providential path of life's twists and turns would have it, Christina was eventually drawn back to her home tradition. She was inspired to take on what became a two-year-long commitment to read the Bible cover to cover, which shed new light on the Church that she had walked away from in her earlier years.

Christina discovered the joys of contemplation and ministry at her local Cathedral Parish of Christ the Light in Oakland, which over a few short years, served to shift the focus of her energy and attention away from her successful career and toward service to God and God's people. Following a process of discernment and spiritual direction, she answered God's call and entered the Dominican Congregation. In her initial years of religious formation, Christina served as a campus minister at Dominican University of California and completed an MA in inter-religious studies from the Graduate Theological Union and the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley.

The communal aspect of the Dominican way of life is something that Sr. Christina cherishes. Perhaps a nod to her civil engineering background, she believes that the community – which lives and prays together, shares property in common, and learns not just how to get along but ultimately how to love one another as sisters – provides a firm foundation for her vocation as a Christian and as a woman religious. "The strength of community helps you become a better follower of Jesus," she says. And, Jesus is at the very heart of the vows she just professed. "Jesus' view of community is rooted in love of one another as equals, and even more than that, as friends, who love and serve and sacrifice for one another. That is what I experience and continue to work toward in my convent community. It is also what animates my desire to help spread this reality beyond the walls of our convent and even beyond the walls of our Church. Imagine the whole of humanity loving and serving one another!" And when asked about how she chose to make her perpetual vows during this time of significant challenges for both the Church and religious life, she notes with confidence: "I would do this even if there were only a handful of us. It wouldn't be as much fun, but I would still do it because it is the best thing I could do with my life."

Sr. Christina feels that the particular way in which God has called her to this loving service is through building bridges with followers of other religious



traditions, a historically difficult and at various times even tragic subject. Her present pursuit of a doctorate in comparative religion at the Graduate Theological Union is giving her much insight into the complexity of inter-religious encounters and relations. Encouraged by Pope Francis's prioritizing and broadening of the meaning of evangelization, she shares, "Our global consciousness and concerns force us to take this direction seriously – it's time to have the difficult conversations. We have much work to do in terms of building our capacity to do that peacefully and respectfully." As she considers pursuing interfaith ministries and looks for ways to spark conversation, she is inspired by Thomas Merton, who took great interest in inter-monastic dialogue in his day. She sees possibilities for continuing this kind of work within the Bay Area and beyond. She believes strongly that the Church can learn much from other religious traditions and that striving for harmony and mutual enrichment is a necessary and integral part of God's call to Christians. "It is part of our ongoing quest for truth and the advancement of love and mercy, which is to be a true follower of Christ."





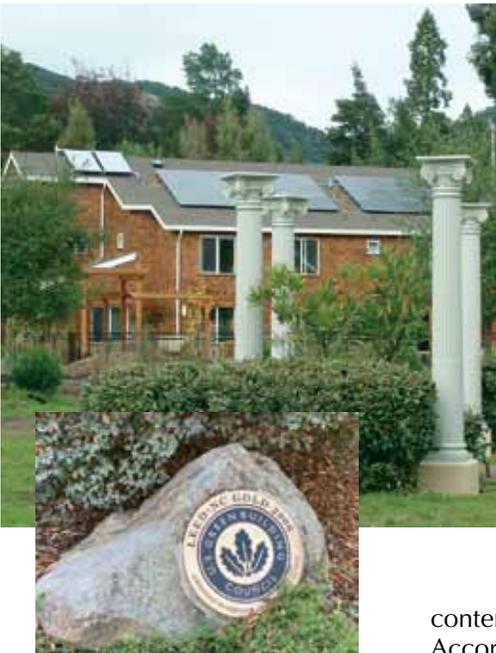
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## Living Community in New Ways



*Vocation ministry is a primary responsibility for new First Councillor Sr. Cathy Murray, OP, and she is eager to find new opportunities to connect young adults with the Dominican way of life. One central aspect of being a Dominican Sister of San Rafael is the opportunity to live in community. So as she considers her work as Director of Vocations, she is interested in how to promote the community lifestyle as a way to engage discerning young adults. Sr. Cathy lives in community in the Jane d’Aza Convent, which has served as the House of Formation for the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael for the past fifteen years since it opened its beautiful doors.*

There has been talk in the congregation of the promising developments of the Houses of Welcome started by the Dominican Sisters of Peace in the Midwest. They renamed their “House of Formation” to a “House of Welcome” which is the place sisters discern their call within the context of a faith-filled and inclusive community. Recently they opened a second House of Welcome in Columbus, Ohio. This home houses five sisters with room for visitors, and Sr. Cathy was able to pay a visit in October and learn more.



According to Sr. Cathy, this arrangement is a concept that is gaining traction and really has characterized Jane d’Aza since its inception. “As our community forms this year, the time may be right to recommit to this call and the call to be inclusive and inter-generational. We can reflect on the example of other Houses of Welcome and through discernment, determine what type of community we might offer in San Rafael.”

Annie Killian, a young woman discerning religious life and the newest resident of the House of Welcome in Columbus was recently quoted in an article in the Columbus Dispatch about the home as saying, “I think living in larger community is important in this early formation period. In our world right now that is so divided, our multi-cultural and inter-generational community is a sign that we can live together.” Sr. Cathy agrees and is very committed to the exploration and inner work needed to foster this sort of community. “By having room in a home of sisters so as to be able to invite discerning young adults to experience what it means to live in a faith community and share in the sisters’ way of life for an extended period of time or simply a visit goes a long way in attracting vocations.” This concept is also in keeping with the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael recent Chapter directions to “share underutilized spaces ... and commitment to creating community that is welcoming to all.”

Sr. Cathy also visited Sophia House in Berkeley – a house of spirituality and contemplation and part of the ministry of the Society of the Sacred Heart (RSCJ). According to their website, “The mission of Sophia House is to reach out to women and young adults in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Currently, five RSCJ sisters live in the community, and there is room for more. The community at Sophia House regularly welcome people to the house, as individuals and groups, for prayer, meals, discussion, and celebrations. Each member carries out her own ministry, but each has also committed herself to the shared ministry of the House.” Sr. Cathy was impressed with “how the community places an emphasis on simplicity of life, care for the environment, contemplation, and community life” and can envision something similar being beneficial in the San Rafael community. “I am inspired by what some other congregations are doing in creating a welcoming environment for people to explore their faith and spirituality and look forward to exploring the possibilities of how we can engage more people. I can envision a number of ideas from day retreats, space for people seeking a spiritual place, casual social gatherings, and more.”

Sr. Cathy believes that “these efforts to strengthen and build community and model a type of community that we hope all can practice in society – being inclusive and welcoming to all” is truly the hope for the future. Just as the construction of Jane d’Aza has earned the gold standard for architecture and design, so too can the spaces and programs of the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael be the gold standard for hospitality and welcome as we look to build and foster community by our example and our invitation.

*Taking to heart the Dominican Sisters’ commitment to protecting Mother Earth, the Jane d’Aza Convent building was crafted to the highest LEED standards, earning the gold level in certification for building and design and architecture.*

# LOVE *ministry*



## Smoothies with Sisters

We love our neighbors! It was all smiles at “Smoothies with Sisters” on a warm afternoon in September. As has become tradition near the start of a new school year for Dominican University of California, the Sisters served up some tasty treats in the courtyard for all the students and staff who stopped by and used the opportunity to tell guests more about the Sisters.



## San Domenico’s Garden of Hope

Sr. Gervaise Valpey, OP and the entire San Domenico community welcomed guests to their annual Garden Fair on October 12, where their celebrated commitment to sustainability and eco-literacy program were put on full display against the backdrop of their beautiful 1-acre Garden of Hope which has served as the ultimate outdoor K-12 classroom at the San Anselmo campus for the better part of the last 20 years. Visitors enjoyed live entertainment, a petting zoo, and plenty of activities, and were able to purchase various garden products and student crafts. Students were busy in the outdoor kitchen jamming, pickling, flavoring salts, and learning by doing leading up to the even – as they do all year long! Read more about the SD Sustainability Program: <https://www.sandomenico.org/academics/sustainability>



## Annual Alzheimer Walk

Thank you to Adrian Dominican Sr. Mary Soher, OP and the Dominican University of California Campus Ministry team for their efforts in the annual Alzheimer’s Walk which began at Our Lady of Lourdes Convent. It was a beautiful early autumn day to walk the grounds and to raise awareness while partnering with our neighboring college students.



by Sr. Anne Dolan, OP

Sr. Anne Dolan, OP celebrated her 60th Jubilee this past summer and has devoted much time in recent years to immigration and border issues. "The fact that my parents came from two foreign countries gave me an appreciation for different cultures. Particularly in relation to cultures, I received a gift that has enhanced my life: 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." God bless Sr. Anne Dolan as she tends to and cares for all of God's creation.

## Reflections from the Border

One day I attended Mass in Spanish and heard an old entrance hymn: "*Vienen con alegría.*" The verses include the line, "...*los que caminan por la vida...*" I had always translated it as "...those who walk the road through life..." Now, however, in this experience with people who have come to El Paso after travelling a long road, I immediately saw that the line could mean, "...those who walk the road for their lives."

From late November to mid-December of 2018 I made my second trip to El Paso to help with those fleeing life-threatening situations in Latin America. In June of 2017 I had a similar experience, but in 2018 I saw that the people fleeing their countries were more desperate than those we provided for just 18 months prior.

Almost a month before the news of the migrant caravan hit the mainstream media, the Leadership Council of Women Religious sent a letter asking for help because the number of people crossing the border at El Paso had grown significantly. The shelters in El Paso were opening new venues to provide for people's basic needs. I worked at one of the newer locations which proved difficult with only a tent for meals when the weather was getting cold.

Most of the people in need came from Central America and were there seeking asylum after having been detained. Through a random poll I came to learn they were either from Guatemala, El Salvador, or Honduras. The services offered provided housing, food, and contact with their people already in the U.S. who could assist with transportation.

When those who cross the border at the port of entry ask for asylum, they are typically detained and then released after several days. Some adults must wear an ankle bracelet. An I.C.E. vehicle and driver brings them to one of the different sites set up for receiving the newcomers. At our site a large group of about 90 people: only 3 adult men and the rest were women and children, stands out in my mind. When groups first arrive, they are brought to the largest room where they hear a welcome speech telling them what to expect while at the shelter.

Next volunteers fill out forms with their name, date of birth and the contact information of the relative or friend who will buy them transportation to the place where they will stay with the family member. Another volunteer phones the sponsoring family advising them of the need for transportation and asks them to phone back when they have the information about the plane or bus tickets, and another fields calls from sponsors who provide transport. Meanwhile the newly-arrived are given toiletries, an option to select a clean change of clothes, and a shower. Local people donate used clothes which are often too large for the adults from Mesoamerica. There is need daily to sort and organize donations, a task which does not require Spanish skills.

Other volunteers are involved in serving and cleaning up after breakfast which consists of cereal, milk, and fresh fruit provided by the Annunciation House, the umbrella organization sponsored by Catholic Charities of the El Paso Diocese. Coffee and other treats have been provided in the tent by generous people of El Paso. Church and civic groups bring lunch and dinner. Among them I have been aware of an Orthodox priest, and a group from Unitarian Universalist, and local Catholic parishes. Other groups such as employees of a school district also donate, fix, and serve lunch and dinner. If no group is stepping up to the plate (no pun intended) for a meal, the Annunciation House budget provides for

*Reflections continued on page 10*



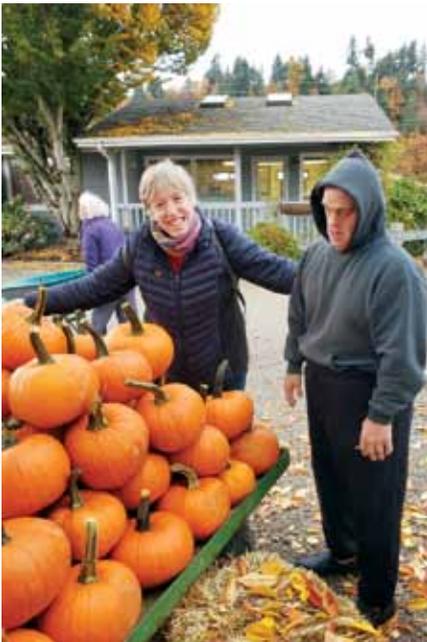
### Service Award Recognition

Congratulations to Sr. Katherine Hamilton, OP who was awarded her 15-year service pin by St. Joseph's President and CEO, Don Wiley, at the annual Employee Service Awards luncheon on Thursday, October 3. Sr. Kit has been serving at St. Joseph's Medical Center in a couple of capacities. She is the coordinator of Friends of Seniors, a program with 20 volunteers serving 60-70 seniors with anything from assistance in getting to medical appointments, shopping, and friendly visits and conversations. Sr. Kit is also involved in a special program called Homecoming which is a collaboration between St. Joseph's and Catholic Charities that offers services to patients at the time of discharge such as transport and housekeeping. Prior to her time in Stockton, Sr. Kit served in a leadership capacity in San Rafael and prior to that was part of the Religious education program at St. Dominic's in Benicia. Congratulations on this milestone and prayers of gratitude for your ministry that touches the lives of so many!

# LOVE *ministry*

## Called to Be a Light for Others

*Sr. Sally Lowell, OP Serves at L'Arche in Tacoma, Washington*



The ministerial reach of the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael stretches far and wide, including the Pacific Northwest. A Seattle native with an undergrad degree in special education from Seattle University, Sr. Sally Lowell, OP feels right at home engaged in important and life-giving ministry work in nearby Tacoma. Although it was through an early friendship with Sr. Helen Bendick, OP that led her to San Rafael some years ago where her discernment of religious life began. She earned a master's degree at USF, engaged in work with the poor and homeless, served as a teacher and shared her gifts working with developmentally disabled adults, and in the late 90s, she professed her final vows. She had always hoped that one day her visions of life as a Dominican Sister and her heart's work with those with special needs would align.

As an undergrad in Seattle, she was introduced to L'Arche, an international organization committed to making known the gifts of people with developmental disabilities revealed through mutually transforming relationships. In what Sr. Sally refers to as "a lot of grace and answered prayers," she seized an opportunity to serve as a Day Support Assistant at L'Arche Tahoma Hope located in Tacoma, WA. Sr. Sally provides home health care and assists residents with daily activities. What began as a "come and see" sort of volunteer opportunity has turned into full-time work. Her time in this community has been a "profound experience." "It has been a real gift to answer God's call in living the mission of Dominic this way, and the support of the Sisters in San Rafael that allows me to serve here has been tremendous."

In addition to being open to God's call and always listening, Sr. Sally truly appreciates the beauty of God's creation that surrounds her. "Each morning I drive to the farm to be in ministry, sometimes watching the sunrise upon Mount Rainier on clear days. And with the light of the day, I can be filled with awe, light, and beauty that surrounds me. There is something about this light that speaks to me. We are all called over and over again to carry our light and to be light for others wherever we might go. I am in ministry with L'Arche because it gives me life, and I am overwhelmingly grateful for my local Tacoma community and my greater Dominican community that allows me to experience this gift."

According to Prioress General Sr. Carla Kovack, OP, who has been instrumental in facilitating and encouraging Sr. Sally's ministerial outreach, the Dominican mission to preach through action allows for many possibilities. "Our mission statement says we 'celebrate and live God's Word in community.' Sally carefully discerned her call to serve in the L'Arche community and she is gifted in her capacity to bring compassion to all those she counts as companions on the journey of life. Her relationships with loving mutuality in the community of L'Arche in Tacoma allows all of her sisters in San Rafael to be with her in spirit."

Sr. Sally takes to heart and truly feels the spirit of her fellow Dominican Sisters with her. She recounted a story she heard a little while ago at a community night about the meaning of L'Arche as "bringing our own threads to L'Arche to make something beautiful together, and this is true in Dominican life as well. It is a real ministry of presence and learning, again and again, more fully than before how to be myself, to trust, and go beyond comfort zones in many ways."

Community really is at the heart of Sr. Sally's ministry. L'Arche Tahoma Hope's mission cites that "mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our journey together. [They] celebrate the unique value of every person and recognize [their] need for one another." As Dominicans we are called to "reverence and affirm the inherent dignity of each person," and as Sr. Sally reminds us, "to be a light for others." We are grateful to share in Sr. Sally's journey and be with her in community.

To learn more:  
<https://www.larchetahomahope.org/>

fried chicken or hamburgers and fries to be delivered by an Uber driver. During my stay, a motorcycle group from El Paso brought some Christmas joy in the form of Santa Claus with gifts to distribute.

There are many other tasks needed. Some local volunteers provide transport to the airport; bus depot shuttle rides are called for by Annunciation. Among those providing rides were a grandmother from Albuquerque and a couple from Denver who come on weekends, but most are local. Many religious women, such as myself, came from near and far: one a student from Brazil. We pack bags of sandwiches, and other necessities for travelers; one sponsor told me on the phone that the bus trip he paid for would last 54 hours.

The most rewarding part of the experience was simply providing for the people who have undergone so much. A woman wrote a note thanking us for providing a bed; she said that for three days she and her son had been sleeping on the ground with only a flimsy fabric to cover them. I am inspired by seeing the refugees who help the volunteers when they can. The people from Central America show their gratitude by being cheerful. I did not hear or see a single expression of complaint even when they were eating breakfast in an unheated tent and when the milk for their cereal was partly frozen. They are invariably thin. When I answered a request for over-the-counter medications for their children, I had asked their age to select the right dosage. Most of the time I expected the answer to be two years younger than the age reported.

While the news from the border and the needs of the people are ever-changing, there are always people for whom to pray. If an opportunity to return to El Paso arises, I would welcome the chance to serve once again.

## Climate Action for Peace



Sisters and friends gathered in prayer at the Lourdes Convent Chapel in September to celebrate the UN International Day of Peace. The theme this year was: Climate Action for Peace. A new panel was added to the Peace Pole following prayers and a moment of silence and culminating in the ringing of the bell for peace. In these days of global conflicts, climate crisis, social upheaval, and economic policies that favor the wealthiest, it is right that we should pause to pray for peace and celebrate the efforts at the United Nations to address these injustices and crises.

A new panel was installed on the pole in the Lourde's Convent Garden and was made brighter thanks to a sweet collaboration between the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael and K-8 San Domenico students. The base of the pole was adorned with beautiful hand-painted "peace rocks" created by art students of Ms. Suzanne Kelly, SD Art and World Religions teacher. Inspired by the peace and justice work of Sr. Judy Lu, OP and Ms. Lyn Kirkconnell, Mr. Mirza Khan, SD Director of Philosophy, Ethics, and World Religions wanted to bring the Peace Pole tradition to the SD community and has hosted annual celebrations adding panels



in various languages each year. This year he added the collaborative art project component and ensured there were enough rocks not only for their own Peace Pole festivities but also to share the broader community and the Sisters. Beautifully decorated, many of the peace rocks include the word "peace" written in different languages. According to Sr. Patricia Riley, OP, Moderator at Lourdes Convent, the Sisters and staff alike were moved by this clever addition to the event. "The Sisters were impressed and delighted in the variety of designs of the rocks. Some

put their rock at the base of the peace pole while others took them home for their rooms are chapels! The Lourdes staff were delighted as well. They were struck by the uniqueness and diversity of color, shape, and words placed on the rocks. They took their rocks home to share with their families and friends. Their own children were awed that these rocks were painted with a message by students their age. It made the Peace Pole a real celebration!" It was a team effort indeed – Sr. Marion Irvine graciously transported the completed rocks from Butterfield Road to San Rafael. And then to close the loop on this year's event, Sr. Judy Lu and Ms. Kirkconnell were able to visit Ms. Kelly's class and personally thank her and her students. According to SD President Emerita Sr. Gervaise Valpey, OP, "It was a spontaneous set of gestures that brightened our ceremonies and extended the joy of it all." We are grateful to San Domenico for working to promote peace, justice, and care of creation with young people and for sharing your gift of art with the Sisters and staff in San Rafael.



### The National Catholic Reporter Launches EarthBeat with Plenty of Support from Women Religious

Through prayer, study, and reflection, the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael are called to respond with compassion and commitment to the critical issues of the times. Perhaps the most critical issue of our day is one with a focus on right relationship with mother earth that calls for a renewed awe but also individual and societal sacrifice. As such, we are proud to be a sponsor of a new website and publication of the *National Catholic Reporter: EarthBeat*. Their website is chock full of news and information as well as ways to take action. Be sure to take a look and sign up for their newsletter.



## Creating Heightened Awareness of Human Trafficking

*"I call on all people of goodwill to take action against human trafficking and new forms of slavery." –Pope Francis*

Through their work with the Northern California Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking, a local organization which is part of the U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking, our Dominican Sisters of San Rafael Co-Promoters of Justice, Peace and Care of Creation, Sr. Judy Lu McDonnell, OP and Ms. Lyn Kirkconnell were recently honored with other members of the coalition by District Attorney for Alameda County Nancy O'Malley – earning her "Nancy's Hero Award."

According to Lyn, the local coalition made a commitment at their retreat last year to help with the work of distributing Human Trafficking Awareness posters throughout the Bay Area in accordance with SB1193 and Civil Code 52.6. to the thirteen kinds of businesses (including hotels and motels, transportation centers, non-medical massage parlors, truck stops, farm labor contractors, hospital emergency rooms and urgent care centers, "adult" book stores; etc.) that must prominently display an informational poster with specific information regarding human trafficking and with the national hotline number: 888.3737.888.

"We kept stats regarding our work, and I can summarize by indicating that as of July 15, 2019, we had visited 972 businesses with the aid of 392 volunteers. We are also part of CAST (Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking) with whom we are now working on ways to ensure enforcement of the poster display mandate."

"In a letter announcing the award, Ms. O'Malley shared, "I am so grateful for the commitment you and your fellow Sisters have shown to educate the community about human trafficking. Your work makes a huge difference. Your hard work ensures that Human Trafficking Awareness posters are placed in businesses so victims can reach out and those in the community can recognize human trafficking."

Sr. Judy and Lyn were humbled and honored to receive this award that recognizes the efforts of the Coalition members and the hundreds of volunteers who make this work possible.



### **MOC Honors Sr. Marion Irvine, OP**

The Marin Organizing Committee (MOC) has been involved as advocates for those in need in Marin for ten years now, and the Dominican Sisters, have been part of MOC since the beginning! We were thrilled to join in celebrating their 10-year anniversary on Sunday, October 27 as Sr. Marion Irvine, OP was among three honorees recognized for their contributions to the forward momentum of the Committee. Undeterred by the power outage and last-minute change of venue, several Sisters enjoyed the event, as the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael are founding members of this important community organization.



### **#justiceOPportunity Thursdays**

The Dominican Sisters of San Rafael are preaching online – join us! Whether Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, you can follow @SanRafaelOP and keep up with the Sisters and their various ministries, join them in prayer, and join them in taking action – especially on their own #justiceOPportunity Thursdays. See you online.

#justiceOPportunity  
Preachers of Truth. Love. & Justice



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 March 1 and October 31, 2019.**

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*The Dominican Sisters of San Rafael gather each summer to honor and celebrate the Jubilarians, each of whom was profiled in the last issue of OP Ignite. Watch for information about Jubilee 2020!*

# OPignite

Autumn 2019 Volume 35, Number 1

**OPignite** 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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**Join the Conversation!**



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## Santa Sabina Center UPCOMING 2020 RETREATS

**FEBRUARY 6 – 9** Retreat weekend with Jane Hirshfield  
*Invitations, Inventions, Inventories, and Turnstiles: A Poetry Writing Retreat*

**MAY 28 – 31** Retreat weekend with Patricia Bruno, OP  
*Grace Abounds – Exploring Our Own Spiritual Narrative*

**JULY 7 – 12** Retreat week with Joe Nassal, CPPS  
*Making All Things New: Becoming a New Creation*

**AUGUST 4 – 9** Retreat week with Anthony Gittins, CSSp  
*Seek First the Realm of God*

**NOVEMBER 12 – 15** Retreat weekend with Kayleen Asbo  
*Finding Our Way through the Dark Woods: A Retreat with Dante's Divine Comedy*

**DECEMBER 5** Advent retreat day with Veronica Mary Rolf  
*The Story of Our Lives in Sacred Scripture*

**For more information go to [santasabinacenter.org](http://santasabinacenter.org) or call 415-457-7727**