

Weavings

Women making a difference

SUMMER 2024



Gathering threads of
compassion

The Magazine of the
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill

Dominican Convent of
Our Lady of the Rosary
Office of Communications
and Mission Advancement

175 Route 340
Sparkill, NY 10976
845.359.4179 | sparkill.org

SUMMER 2024

Leadership Team

Sister Irene Ellis, OP
PRIORRESS

Sister Marie Peter Buckley, OP
Sister Aileen Donovan, OP
Sister Grace Anne Hogan, OP
Sister Nancy Richter, OP
COUNCILORS

Communications and Mission Advancement

David L. Coppola
**DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
AND MISSION ADVANCEMENT**
dcoppola@sparkill.org

Bernadette Donohue
**MISSION ADVANCEMENT
ASSOCIATE**
bdonohue@sparkill.org

Patti McCallion
**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT/
DATABASE COORDINATOR**
pmccallion@sparkill.org

Sister Jeanne Shary, OP
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR
jshary@sparkill.org

Volunteers

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On Cover

Prayer Shawl Ministry Members:
(left to right) Ellen Oates, Helen
Delarghy and Sandra Padilla.

From the Prioress ...

Dear Friends,

Archaeologists have noted that many royal and religious garments in antiquity incorporated gold thread—a tradition passed down through generations often signifying spiritual wisdom, generosity, divinity, purity, and blessing.

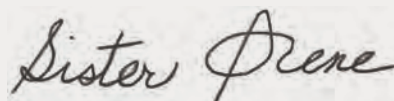
The gold thread that connects us to all creation is our faith and sacred origins when we were made in the image and likeness of God. The creative weaving of God’s Spirit among us in the world continues in the many ways we treat each other with love and compassion, especially those who are most vulnerable.

This issue of *Weavings* connects our rich heritage of relationships and service with our Mission and Dominican charism found in our commitment to serving young people in St. Louis and involvement in education for high school and college students, as well as leadership development for some of our Sisters in Pakistan. We also are happy to share our continued pastoral outreach through a parish’s Prayer Shawl Ministry and our vibrant One-to-One Learning ministry. These efforts and others are threaded together with our prayer and action for justice as we seek to live the ideals of *Laudato Si’*, in our responsible stewardship of God’s creation and those people and facilities in our care.

In this issue, you will also see that we were blessed to celebrate with our Jubilarians on Foundation Day. These dedicated women have preached the good word with their lives for many years, and we are all beneficiaries of their generous response and fidelity to the call of God.

Thank you for your faithful financial support and encouragement of our Mission. Know that you remain in our prayers as together we make a positive difference.

Sincerely,



Sister Irene Ellis, OP
Prioress



Dominican Sisters
of Sparkill



SISTER IRENE ELLIS, OP
Prioress, Dominican Sisters of Sparkill

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Gratitude and thanks for your donations and prayers.

Is meekness really a **VIRTUE?**

**THREADS OF WISDOM
AND GRACE ...**

SHUANG PAUL WANG/GETTY IMAGES

I have very clear memories of being taught a simple prayer when I was a child in Catholic school: “Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto thine.”

I am quite sure that, at the time, I didn’t really understand what I was asking for. Even today, while humility may rank high on our *to do* list of virtues to nurture, I wonder how many of us would say that we aspire to be *meek*. Indeed, the very idea of meekness seems to counter all our instincts in the very competitive world we live in.

But Christian meekness is not a milquetoast timidity. Rather, it is the profound awareness of the great love and mercy of our gracious God who provides us with all that we need to face the challenges of life—and does so despite our sins and failings.

The hallmark of true meekness is *trust in God*. The meek trust more in God’s help than in their own strength. And, as Jesus himself promised, they *shall inherit the earth*. So, as we face the challenges and uncertainties of life, let us remember to pray for ourselves and for one another ...

*Jesus, meek and humble of heart,
make our hearts like yours! ●*

SISTER MARGARET PALLISER, OP

Sister Margaret earned a doctorate in sacred theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and is the director of the Congregation’s Office of Dominican Life.



The Threads in My Hand

Only one end of the threads, I hold in my hand.
The threads go many ways, linking my life with other lives.

One thread comes from a life that is sick; it is taut with anguish
And always there is the lurking fear that the life will snap.
I hold it tenderly. I must not let it go ...

One thread comes from a high-flying kite;
It quivers with the mighty current of fierce and holy dreaming
Invading the common day with far-off places and visions bright ...

One thread comes from the failing hands of an old, old friend.
Hardly aware am I of the moment when the tight line slackened
and there was nothing at all—nothing ...

One thread is but a tangled mass that won’t come right;
Mistakes, false starts, lost battles, angry words—a tangled mass;
I have tried so hard, but it won’t come right ...

One thread is a strange thread—it is my steadying thread;
When I am lost, I pull it hard and find my way.
When I am saddened, I tighten my grip and gladness glides
along its quivering path;
When the waste places of my spirit appear in arid confusion, the
thread becomes a channel of newness of life.

One thread is a strange thread—it is my steadying thread.
God’s hand holds the other end ...

BY HOWARD THURMAN

Howard Thurman (d. 1981) was an American author, philosopher, theologian, Christian mystic, educator, and civil rights leader.

2024 ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SPARKILL



On Monday, May 20, 2024, the Dominican Sisters welcomed supporters to the New York Country Club in New Hempstead, New York, for their 27th Annual Golf Tournament. The weather was picture-perfect and the memorable event drew 110 attendees who enjoyed the breathtaking views of New York City whether on the course or talking with friends on the patio. That evening, the golfers, their guests, and generous sponsors feasted on a delicious dinner at the Club's ballroom, followed by the presentation of prizes, and the annual 50/50 Raffle.

Many golfers enjoyed the return of the air cannon which propelled the ball more than 300 yards toward a designated hole (replacing the tee shot) to get as close to the pin as possible. The results were humorous and humbling.

Many thanks to our longtime supporter and donor Dr. Robert Gregory, chiropractor, for being on hand to assist golfers with an arm/hand adjustment before hitting the links.

We congratulate all the winners and extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who helped to make this outing such a success.

The proceeds from the golf tournament benefit the missions and ministries of the Dominican Sisters. ●



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- Our 2024 Golf Committee for their time and efforts.
- The Dominican Sisters of Sparkill for your prayers and support.
- Many Dominican Sisters who donated gift cards.
- Christopher McSherry and Kathleen Pollina



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Memories FOR A LIFETIME

On March 16, Kaleigh McGuinness and Alexandra (Allie) Falesto, Seniors from Albertus Magnus High School, and their basketball co-players became the New York State champions — a feat the Falcons had not achieved since 1992. Overcoming the heartbreak endings of recent years, the 67-50 victory in the NYS-PHSAA Class AA Final at Hudson Valley Community College saw a motivated and unified team effort for the Falcons. When the final buzzer sounded, the teammates rushed to the court to embrace each other with laughter and tears.

Coach Pat Buckley was an Albertus Magnus student when the team last won a state title. He said, "It's been such a long time, this is amazing. We've developed strength from the pain of losing recently in title games."

Kaleigh and Allie are from Stony Point in North Rockland and are parishioners at St. Gregory Barbarigo in Garnerville where the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill have served for many years. Encouraged by family and friends, both started playing basketball in third grade at St. Greg's and later at CYO, and they also played on an AAU travel team together. Basketball has been a huge part of their lives and they love the game so much that they would one day like to give back as coaches.

Kaleigh said, "I was honestly going to Albertus since I was born. My dad went there and all his siblings. So, it is a family tradition and I just loved how Albertus was a small community and everybody knew everybody. When you're walking in the hallway, a teacher will say hi and ask how you are. It's very individualized and everyone cares about how you're doing."



Allie agreed: "I also love how [after a game] all the teachers congratulate you. And all the kids are just so happy for you."

Both students highlighted the closeness of the team and the great chemistry that developed from pasta parties the nights before games as well as intense practices when they built each other up and encouraged unity and selflessness. Allie said, "I've learned just to have more confidence in myself because that's something I used to struggle with on the court."

"I'm going to miss playing at Albertus [because] I've created so many memories that will last a lifetime. I can't wait to be able to tell my kids that I won a state championship with my best friends, and that banner that we have in the gym will be up there forever."

Kaleigh said that after winning the championship, "It felt like my sisters and the coaches really cared. These were the best years of my life with this team and these coaches. This is a memory I'll never forget my entire life and it was the ride of a lifetime. I've learned so much."

Kaleigh is attending Clemson University majoring in engineering and Allie is going to Belmont Abbey in North Carolina to become a special education teacher. They will undoubtedly positively contribute to their new schools, carrying memories of Albertus Magnus High School with them. ●



A Legacy Continues

St. Thomas Aquinas College (STAC) continues to renovate the former St. Agnes Gym as a state-of-the-art volleyball and athletic center. Under the lease agreement with the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, STAC is embarking on a comprehensive interior remodeling of the Boys Gym. This ambitious project is not just about creating a modern sports facility, but also about enhancing the overall experience for those who use it. The remodeling includes a new lobby, offices, locker rooms, showers and baths, a training room, a golf simulator, and even batting cages, promising a new era of modernity for the gym.

The entire building is undergoing an overhaul, including new heating and air conditioning, electrical, plumbing, a new fire alarm, door controls, and a security system. In addition to these improvements, STAC has ambitious plans for the adjacent field which will be developed as an outdoor running track for sports, and exercise, and as a commitment to environmentally sensitive stormwater management. The track will be a cutting-edge facility and a beautiful new natural green wall will be installed to separate this busy facility from the Convent.

If you had asked any former St. Agnes Home and School for Boys residents who lived for sports, you would have found this was always a state-of-the-art gym. From 1884 to 1979, the Sisters housed, educated, and cared for hundreds of orphaned and at-risk children at St. Agnes Home in Sparkill.



During World War II, St. Agnes coach, Jim Faulk, took a leave of absence to serve as a Marine captain artillery units commander in the Pacific. While serving there, he had an “accidental” meeting on Guadalcanal with a couple of men who were alumni of St. Agnes. That small group made plans for building a memorial gymnasium for “the House Kids,” as the residents proudly became known (while others referred to them as “Convent Kids”). This gym would be a tribute to the memory of those St. Agnes “boys” who made the supreme sacrifice and a testament to their bravery.

Thus, the St. Agnes Alumni Association was born. Many World War II and Korean War veterans and other Saint Agnes Alumni, families, and friends donated as little as \$5 to build this special gym for the next generation. Their hopes and

plans came to fruition and the alumni association raised more than \$40,000. St. Agnes Memorial Gymnasium was blessed and dedicated on June 9, 1955.

Athletic director, an inspirational leader, mentor, and father figure, Coach Faulk was referred to as Mr. Everything, and was beloved by the St. Agnes boys. According to alumnus Gerald Merna, who resided at Saint Agnes from 1944-46, and whose oldest brother George was one of the WWII veterans to whom the gym was dedicated:

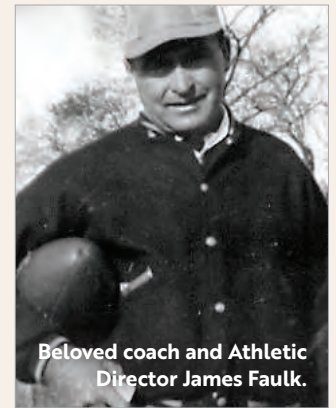


My high school coach was at St. Agnes Home for Boys in Sparkill, New York, one of the two orphanages I was raised in. Jim Faulk was an unsurpassed inspirational leader when he was inducted into the Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame in 1978. The program citation reads that Jim Faulk was the coach and “Mr. Everything” at St. Agnes. He produced football teams that were so challenging that few schools wanted to play him. One of the schools that accepted the challenge was St. Cecilia’s High School in Englewood, New Jersey. Their young coach was just out of Fordham and later went on to fame as head coach of the Green Bay Packers and the Washington Redskins: Vince Lombardi.

Coach Faulk was always caring, inspiring, encouraging, and motivating St. Agnes boys and men to excel and achieve. Many St. Agnes graduates heard his message and followed in his footsteps. As many as 600 young men, alumni of St. Agnes, fought in World War II. Over 40 were killed, hundreds were wounded, and many were decorated for bravery. Hundreds of St. Agnes men, including two brothers and myself, joined the Marine Corps inspired by the example set by Coach Faulk.

There is some sorrow in giving up this beloved gym, but at least it is not being torn down and will be helpful to students at the college. I hope they appreciate where it came from and why.

The legacy of developing character through body, mind, and spirit through athletics at Dominican Convent, Sparkill, continues from young men in St. Agnes to alumni dedicated to serving their country, to the upcoming St. Thomas Aquinas College students.



Beloved coach and Athletic Director James Faulk.

A LIFE'S JOURNEY

BY CAROLE DAVIDE

A SPARKILL DOMINICAN ASSOCIATE SINCE 1980

I went to Cathedral High School on Lexington Avenue in New York City. Academically, I was an average student and I loved all the high school activities: student government, the Drama Club, Travel Club, writing and speech, and of course, the Legion of Mary. Sports was not my forte. I was friendly with many of the teachers and often would stay after school just to talk and hang out and help with whatever activity was happening.

Looking back, I became curious about the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill because they were not like any other Sisters I knew. In my Italian grammar school, the Sisters were serious and old-fashioned. Here in Cathedral, they were happy and fun-loving. They made learning fun. My biology teacher, Sister Bridget Kiniry, would dance while teaching about the digestive system. Each one was charismatic and had certain gifts to hold one's interest.

It was probably in my junior year that I began to think of being a possible candidate as a religious Sister. I thought I might have a calling but what if I didn't want to go? Would God be angry with me? Would I be destined to have a tough life? I wanted to trust God, but back then I pretty much had all the answers ... or so I thought.

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and the future." (Jeremiah 29)

Fast forward one year later, September 3, 1969, Entrance Day into the Dominican Convent. My mom was not happy and Dad was very quiet as we drove up to Sparkill on that sunny day. My sister wondered how I could make such a big decision for the rest of my life. And what about having children?

Truthfully, the first year was very tough, but somehow, something was instilled in me. I felt strongly about keeping my spirituality alive and growing. I was hooked. This was my new life.

Years later, I was teaching at Saint Anthony and Saint Augustine School, leading YCS groups, having fun, and having a prayer life and community. I was always in the middle of the action. My family grew to love the Sisters and they would help out with many of the community and school activities. Everything was going smoothly. This was my life for 11 years. I honestly was very happy.



But it's strange how God works in our lives. I loved what I was doing, but something was tugging inside. I couldn't put my finger on it. I just didn't know. I began to feel that I had to do things that I thought I should do simply because I was a Sister. None of it was bad or wrong, but I just felt it was a little hypocritical. Who was I being true to? Surely not to God, and not even to myself. Finally, I got the courage to say, "Time to think about

something else." At 29 years old, as happy and content as I was, I felt it was time to spread my wings. In the convent, I felt I had to be true to myself. It was time to make some big decisions.

When I told my family they were upset. They thought something was wrong. They had become close to many of the Sisters, friends, and their families. I guess they thought that that was the end of an era.

In June 1980, the day I left the convent, I attended my best friend's wedding. She was so happy and was also a former Sister. We had worked and lived together for many years. I couldn't hold back the tears. People thought I was crying for the newlyweds, but I was really crying for myself. Did I make a mistake? What would become of me?

"Father, I put my life in your hands." (Psalm 31)

After 11 years of convent life, I began teaching the next year at the Elizabeth Morrow School, a private school in Englewood, New Jersey. It was a bit of a culture shock for me. A new school, a new apartment, new friends, new freedom. Wow! What was I turning into? Luckily, my former Sister-friend who had left the convent a few years earlier and was now married, was also in the same school. We spent many hours reminiscing and dreaming about how things used to be. We are still friends and family to this day.

In 1983, I made another adventurous career move, one for which I was not prepared. I had applied to the public schools because unsurprisingly, the pay was much better than in the private school. I needed to prove to myself that I could make it on my own wherever I was. It was a risk. My school was on 190th Street and Jerome Avenue in the Bronx—an old roller skating rink with no windows and iffy ventilation on a good day.

For the next 30 years, I ministered to many of God's neediest children. Many times, it was difficult to talk to them because of the lump in my throat. The poverty,

Associates in action

BY SISTER NANCY RICHTER, OP

As is their tradition, the New York Associates gathered in June to share food and community as they closed out another year. This meeting allows sharing of delicious food but most importantly celebrates the many activities that have taken place throughout the year that deepen their commitment to live the Sparkill Dominican Mission, as well as anticipating new opportunities that will be offered when meetings reconvene in September.

After a delicious treat of pizza and ice cream, it was time to express gratitude to Diane Dunne as she completed her six-year term as co-director. During her time in this capacity, Diane graciously shared her gifts and time in helping to plan study and reflection days, commitment ceremonies, and many other activities. Co-Directors Yesenia Kopperman and Sister Diane McSherry, along with Sister Nancy Richter, leadership team liaison, expressed gratitude for all she had done over the years.

The evening was also an opportunity to welcome the new Co-Director, Patti McCallion, who is looking forward to working with the New York Associates in planning meetings and events for the coming year. Patti's three-year term will begin on September 1, 2024.

The Sparkill Dominicans are blessed to share their Mission with Associates, both in New York, as well as in St. Louis, where Gwen Tresch and Sister Maureen Stocking serve as co-directors. ●



(left to right) Sister Nancy Richter, OP, and Associate Diane Dunne

sadness, and hunger were the worst I had ever witnessed. It seemed that teaching was regularly put on the back burner, while the necessities of human life took over.

"I am the vine and you are the branches. Abide in me and I in you." (John 15)

I grew to love these children. I witnessed them experiencing success in their own learning and I greatly appreciated the people they were becoming. Above all, helping children to understand that they were needed, valued, and loved was the most rewarding.

There have been many parallels in my life. As I look back, I see that God has shown me the way and has directed me to be exactly where I was supposed to be, doing exactly what I was supposed to be doing. I believe that I will continue to answer the call from so long ago. I used to think I had a temporary vocation because I left the convent. But in hindsight, I see that is not true. The seeds that were planted way back then were not planted in vain. My work and life are still in the same heart and soul of God.

In 1980, the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill initiated a lay Associates Program. The Associate Program is for lay men and women interested in seeking out the truth of their own spiritual journey. It is having a relationship with a diverse group of intelligent people who work together, support each other, and promote the Mission and charism of the Congregation. The Associates Program offers me a place to grow spiritually, a place to share with like-minded people and participate in activities, prayer, and celebrations. It is a path on which I can continue my journey and a connection that allows me to belong to something greater than myself. It has grounded my life in truth and service to others while giving me a deeper sense of myself.

I have been so lucky to have the most supportive family and friends throughout my whole life. What a wonderful feeling to belong to this community. I was never married and I have no regrets about any of my lifelong decisions. I am blessed and I know it. I am just happy being me.

So, I may not be living in a convent or getting up at 6 a.m. for morning prayer, but my faith and trust in God throughout my life has been unwavering. It has given me the responsibility and confidence to stand up and lead, teach, preach, be a caretaker and friend, and, above all, to seek the truth in all things. This has been my life's vocation, my life's journey. I know that I am blessed and I don't take that lightly. It is with great love and gratitude that I bow down before my God who has taken my hand and shown me the way. It is a great life. ●

If you are interested in finding out more about how you can become a part of this wonderful group of women and men, who seek to give witness to the Gospel in the times in which we live, visit: sparkill.org/associates

Hugged By God

BY SISTER PAT HOGAN, OP

Sister Pat Hogan, OP, pastoral associate at St. Francis of Assisi in West Nyack, New York, is part of a parish Prayer Shawl Ministry where members create handmade crocheted items to deliver comfort, healing, and solace to those in need. One member explains:

“We meet one day a month. We sit and crochet together in a very friendly, comforting place. We buy yarn. We always begin with prayer. We don’t know who will receive it, but whatever we do, we get thank-you notes, and we regularly crochet and knit for Birthright, and they are very grateful.”

The crocheters begin each creation with prayers for the unknown recipient, and intentions are continued throughout the creation of the blanket, hat, sweater, or scarf. Some of the recipients include the sick and dying, veterans, babies, frail elderly, unhoused persons, those experiencing grief, and those in crisis. In short, the members form a connection and become a family taking care of others and having a common purpose. One member recalled:

“I was making a baby blanket and I was sitting bedside at the hospital with my father-in-law, who was recovering from a brain injury. He had surgery for that and went through rehabilitation. My yarn got all knotted up, so I had to undo some of those knots. Like me, in a way, I was so determined to untangle those knots as I was waiting for him to get healthier.”



Members of the Prayer Shawl Ministry and Father Robert McKeon pray before beginning their work.

Another member joined the group after retirement at the invitation of her mother. She remarked that she loves making beautiful things and that her time is like a prayer and many times the recommended stitches are in threes, reminiscent of the Trinity.

Some members find crocheting therapeutic as they offer gifts of hope. Recipients find comfort in knowing that another cared enough to spend the time to make such a gift for them. One member shared her story:

“I’m just so thrilled. Oh, and you know what? Our gifts travel very far. I made a blanket maybe 30 years ago with brown and orange colors. My daughter lived in Manhattan by the 59th Street Bridge and we used to visit her and go to dinner. Once we were visiting and I looked across the street, and this homeless guy was in his wheelchair, and there was my blanket under the bridge bringing comfort to this man!”

The Prayer Shawl Ministry brings comfort even to its own members. One woman related a story:

“Everyone made a square for a member who became terminally ill and stitched them together into a blanket. They gave the blanket to her husband and told him it was blessed



Sister Pat Hogan, OP, proudly holds up a finished product to be given to a child in need.

and made for his wife to receive all those prayers and to wrap himself in it, as well. Now and then, he would leave a message on the phone saying, “I’m wrapping myself in the blanket. Please continue to pray.” We knew he felt comfort after his wife passed on. It was like getting hugged by God.”

New members are always welcome, and the group is happy to accept gift cards to Michael’s for more yarn. Sister Pat is always available for consultation if people would like to organize their own Prayer Shawl Ministry. ●



Days For Girls – A Global Community Service

BY SISTER MARY DUNNING, OP

In 2008, when Celeste Mergens, an American woman working in Kenya, discovered that girls and young women were missing days of school every month because they were unable to afford feminine hygiene products during their menstrual periods, she founded Days for Girls, a global not-for-profit, to provide health education and kits of washable, reusable, homemade hygiene products to girls in need. Studies conducted by the United Nations have repeatedly shown that the best way to address poverty in developing countries is to educate the women. Days for Girls assists young women in completing their education and living with dignity and opportunity.

For the past ten years, the Sparkill Dominican Sisters have welcomed Associates, faculty members, and students from Albertus Magnus High School and St. Thomas Aquinas College to Dominican Convent to work with the Sisters in the Days for Girls program. The inspiring scene of teenagers working alongside eighty- and ninety-year-old Sisters tracing patterns, cutting fabric, operating the sewing machines, and assembling the finished kit bags was described by Kathy Goldrick who introduced the program to the Sisters:

Bringing completely different age groups together for a cause that all women can relate to was so amazing. After learning about this issue and what the project does, my first reaction was shock and disbelief that this problem still exists. The high school girls identified with the less fortunate girls who are their age and wanted to make sure they stay in school and get educated. When everyone got to work ... it just did not matter how old you were or who you were. Everyone in the room had a common goal – to help women.

The comments of three Albertus Magnus High School students show their enthusiasm for Days for Girls:

“My experience was wonderful and I would recommend it to anyone who wants to take part in community service that will affect people in need. I was able to organize the fabrics and pin them together, and I was even taught by a Dominican Sister how to use the sewing machine. I loved all aspects of the Days for Girls project and I was able to pick up a new skill. My classmates and I were able to have a nice bond with the Sisters.”

– Elizabeth

“Being part of Days for Girls was an incredible

experience. I participated because I wanted to help other girls in third-world countries. I came back each time not only to help women who undergo shame for just having a menstrual cycle but also because the atmosphere at Days for Girls was so welcoming. Working alongside the Sisters made me realize how much work they put into helping those in need.” – Erica

“I chose to volunteer because of the thousands of women and girls who go through the same experience as me but have fewer resources than I do. I am humbled to be part of an organization that helps girls all over the world. It makes my heart full to know that using my talent for sewing these hygiene kits is helping others.” – Priscilla

Sisters Patricia Cody, Eileen Cunningham, Bridget Kiniry, Kathleen O'Connor, and Associate Yesenia Kopperman were among the early leaders who brought the Days for Girls project to Dominican Convent and Rockland County. Currently, the meetings are coordinated by Sisters Patricia Cody and Ann Eigenbauer working with Kathy Goldrick.

The Dominican Sisters have provided the funding for purchasing and repairing sewing machines, fabric, scissors, and other project supplies, and for the shipping costs when packages of kits have been sent to Haiti, the Solomon Islands, Bali, Uganda, and Nicaragua. Over the past ten years, the circle keeps widening as other generous Sisters, Associates, students, and friends join the six evening gatherings to lend a hand and a heart to young women all over the globe. ●



Dominican Sisters Kathleen O'Connor and Pat Cody prepared the material for sewing.



Sister Dolores Shortal, OP, and girls from Albertus Magnus High School create colorful products for girls in need.

Dominican High School Preaching Conference

BY SISTER DIANE MCSHERRY, OP



The Dominican High School Preaching Conference was held at Siena Heights University in Adrian, Michigan, from June 27–July 2. Students and their mentors, representing ten Dominican Catholic high schools, attended the conference. The conference empowers high school students to discover and deepen the preacher within themselves through prayer, study, community, and interaction with other members of the Dominican Family.

Three Albertus Magnus High School students - Thomas Castelluccio '26, Andrew Castillo '26, and Elizabeth Guzman '26 – attended the preaching conference accompanied by Sister Diane McSherry, Director of Campus Ministry. The conference featured presentations and experiences on preaching in the Dominican tradition, Preaching the Signs of the Times, Preaching through the Creative Arts, and Preaching in Action.

Besides attending workshops, the students, under the guidance of trained liturgists, had the opportunity to plan morning and evening prayers as well as the Sunday Mass and closing liturgy. They also had the chance to participate in various prayer experiences: walking a labyrinth, praying the rosary, meditating on a sacred image, laying down burdens, and receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Student Reflections

“The Dominican Sisters Preaching Conference was the most educational and important trip I have had the joy of going on. We were all able to learn so much about preaching and sharing God’s words, having a super fun time while doing it, and not being overwhelmed.”

– **Thomas Castelluccio**

“When I attended the conference, I learned many new things about the Dominican faith and social justice issues. I met amazing people and learned what truly happens with the immigration system and how racism affects people. This conference motivated me to strive for change and work toward a better future for our future generations.” – **Andrew Castillo**

“We got to witness a multitude of countries, backgrounds, adventures, and faith journeys of each Sister. I am eternally grateful to have been able to go to this conference, meet new people, and realize the treasure it is to be surrounded by a faith-based community.”

– **Elizabeth Guzman**



Thomas, Andrew, and Elizabeth with Sister Diane McSherry, OP, were participants at the conference.

National College Dominican Preaching in Action Conference

BY SISTER PEGGY SCARANO, OP

From May 21-26, 2024, Kevin Delucci, '26, Trishita Day, '26, and Bryanna Ely, '27, students at Saint Thomas Aquinas College (STAC), joined by Barbara Keegan, a staff member of STAC's Pathways Program, Kevin Nesbitt, VP and Dean of Student Development, and Sister Peggy Scarano, OP, '70, member of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, attended the National College Dominican Preaching in Action Conference. The conference was hosted at Molloy University, Rockville Centre, New York, and sponsored by the Dominican Youth Movement USA. Attendees came from nine colleges/universities founded by congregations of Dominican Sisters and a tenth college founded by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

The conference seeks to empower college students to “put their faith into practice and awaken within them their call to be preachers of the Good News.” Focusing on the Four Pillars of the Dominican Order – Prayer, Study, Community, Service – the students learned about Dominican traditions, varying forms of prayer, the importance of responding to the signs of the times, ways to navigate the challenges of college life, and the many Dominican family connections. A Day of Service included: serving meals at a soup kitchen; learning the importance of developing solutions to environmental problems; stocking shelves in a food pantry; planting and landscaping at a community garden; and assisting with recreational activities for the Sisters at the Amityville Dominican Motherhouse.

Reflecting on Their Experience

“As someone from a Hindu upbringing, I found the conference to be incredibly informative, exciting, eye-opening, and amazing. I learned a lot from the presentations and prayer services and my faith in the Lord grew stronger.”

– **Trishita**

“As I reflect on the days at the conference there are the memories, new friends, and especially what I learned about the Dominican family. It's not how you pray but what you pray about that deepens a connection with God; choosing peace over anger; and realizing and cherishing the gifts and talents of each person.”

– **Bryanna**



The conference seeks to empower college students to “put their faith into practice and awaken within them their call to be preachers of the Good News.”

“Personally, I increased my knowledge of the Dominican charism, deepened my relationship with God, and further developed skills that will help me to become a preacher of God's Word. We are truly a family, embracing our differences. Yes – this is what it means to be part of the Dominican family, a blessing!”

– **Kevin**

St. Dominic, be our guide! ●

Reflective Walks

ON THE MOTHERHOUSE GROUNDS



Encouraged by the Sisters' *Laudato Si'* Committee, the Dominican Sisters developed a reflective walk on Earth Day, April 22, 2024, singing "This is Holy Ground" and giving thanks to God for the beauty of the universe and the blessing of life. All prayed in the words of Pope Francis, "Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is." (*Laudato Si'*, 2015)

The group was led by Sister Mary Murray, OP, and began at the entrance of the Motherhouse which is located on the Sparkill property acquired in 1894. As they walked to different parts of the property, the participants gave thanks for God's abundant blessing in the fields and beautiful trees, the lake which is home to various species of birds and wildlife, and the wetlands that border both the Convent and Saint Thomas Aquinas College. Formerly an ancient river, the wetlands are now a habitat for many of God's creatures as Earth's geological history continues.

The reflective walk concluded with closing prayers in the Community Room with Sisters who could not

physically walk the grounds but were in union with them. All who gathered pledged to honor God's sacred land and each other and prayed together from the Sparkill Dominicans' Direction Statement 2022, "We face forward towards a world in desperate need of healing and renewing, peace and compassion." This place continues to be holy ground.

A second reflective walk, also led by Sister Mary Murray, OP, on June 11, 2024, began by giving thanks to God for vocations of service in religious life, and the Mission and history of the land and buildings in which the Sisters worked. The walk began with the participants giving thanks to God for the use of the farmland and

buildings that enabled the Sisters to serve the community and take care of the most vulnerable at the St. Agnes Home and School for Children for more than 100 years. The group then progressed to the affordable housing community for seniors at Thorpe Village (since 1981) and Dowling Gardens (since 1996).

Those on the reflective walk continued and paused at the gymnasium that was built for the St. Agnes boys (see related story in this issue on p. 7 of *Weavings*) and across the street to Rosary Academy where the Sisters happily taught young women until 1981. Then all walked toward St. Thomas Aquinas College which began as a teacher preparation school for the Sisters and grew into a thriving co-educational college community.

As with the previous reflective walk, the group concluded in the Community Room where additional Sisters had been praying at the same time in union with the walking group. A prayer of gratitude was offered as the Sisters thanked God for the honor of giving their lives in ministry, education, and service to others in the footsteps of Saint Dominic, Saint Catherine of Siena, and the Congregation's foundress, Mother Catherine Antoninus Thorpe.

A third reflective walk is scheduled for the Fall of 2024 and will honor the Dominican and religious heritage that connects and gives life to the Community and those they serve. ●



Dominican Sisters Mary Murray, Nora McCarthy, and Christine Ferrar lead a reflective walk on the grounds of Dominican Convent.

Ups and Downs at Dominican Convent

An elevator, which had taken Sisters up and down in the south wing of Dominican Convent since 1964, needed to be replaced. As a group of actively engaged Apostolic Religious Women, getting out and about is very important to foster the mission.

Two of the many Sisters who have directly experienced the benefits of the elevator replacement are Sisters Catherine O'Leary and Jeannine DeClue. Both Sisters Catherine and Jeannine are members of the 1956 "band" and are in their 68th year of religious life. Sister Catherine has served as an educator and health benefits specialist, and Sister Jeannine has served as an educator, campus minister, and pastoral associate. Both Sisters are engaged in community and prayer life, contributing to the Mission, and reside on the south wing's third floor.

Sister Catherine:

The south wing elevator went out on January 8. I remember the date vividly because I had been preparing for this eventuality. I lived on the third floor and was determined not to be confined to my room. I didn't have the energy to pack up, so before the elevator went out, I practiced. Jeannine would follow me, and I'd go down with my cane. I had a walker at the bottom and a walker at the top. I went to the chapel for Mass and prayer and the dining room to eat. And I did everything slowly, carrying groceries up and down, garbage, whatever, on the stairs.

It wasn't the end of the world. We eventually did use a room downstairs because some people were concerned for my safety. So, if we were down at lunch and I wanted to stay longer, I could go to this room and read or kick back and watch the news. And once, when I had one of my chemo treatments, I stayed in the room. When Jeannine left on vacation, I did the stairs slowly and all was well.



Sister Jeannine: The elevator repair project began in January and was completed by April 8. This timeline is crucial to understanding why Catherine was relieved to have a working elevator by April 8.

Sister Catherine: We had just returned from retreat, and I had a cold. I went out of the shower and told Jeannine, "I can't breathe. You need to get me oxygen." So, she ran and called the ambulance. And, of course, the elevator was working by that day, although I did not know it. The police came. The ambulance came. I had difficulty breathing and

I was wondering how they would get me down the stairs, picturing myself on a gurney going bump, bump, bump down the stairs. Then to my surprise, we all got in the elevator and went down. So, someone was looking out for me. I feel much better.

Now, life is back to normal. This means I can get where I have to be. I can get to the car if I have to or sit outside. I can come here, have lunch, go back upstairs, and go wherever. Yes, there's always something going on.

Sister Jeannine: Going up and down the stairs helped Catherine tremendously. It increased her heart rate and ability to breathe. And then, when she unfortunately developed pneumonia and needed rehab, she was better prepared to recover. Her strengthened legs and lungs from going up and down those stairs were providential, but we like the new elevator even more.

The company did an excellent job and we have a reliable elevator that even talks, which benefits those who can't see very well. It's lovely.

Next, we will replace the old elevator in the north wing. ●

One to One

LEARNING FLOURISHES

On May 3, 2024, One to One Learning celebrated 27 years of empowering immigrants by offering English classes and other supportive services with a festive gala at the Nyack Seaport. A family and a community of learning and affirmation grow more robust each season at One to One Learning.

In her welcoming remarks, Founder and Director Sister Cecilia LaPietra, OP, referred to John 10:10, “I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.” She said, “As I contemplate the experiences and activities of our honorees, who are full of life, all sharing themselves with others, I feel tremendous hope. As never before, we have reached our maximum registration with 300 students this year. Most students come from Ecuador, with some from Central and South America and Ukraine. Services have expanded also to accommodate students from Haiti.

Honorees included Bob Stein and Enid Weishaus (Advocate Award), Father Thomas Kunnel (Humanitarian Award), Sister Margaret O’Doherty, OP, (Founders Award), Charlotte and Thomas Murray, Barbara Bedway, Jacinto Tenezaca, Rilma Mazariego (Service Awards), and Pedro Aguilar (Youth Service Award). As each honoree received his or her award, Sister Cecilia shared their particular story and how they contributed to One to One Learning. They then had the opportunity to offer remarks, some of which are here:

Honoree Sister Margaret O’Doherty, OP:

“I thought I knew what One to One was all about. But now that I help at Marydell, I realize the program is much more than learning to speak, read, and write English. Sister Cecilia LaPietra has created a total life-giving, safe, and peaceful environment where immigrants can gather and celebrate their customs and friendships. Through this program, they get help navigating difficult documentation for citizenship and transportation and have better access to food, clothing, and housing.

Marydell’s land and beauty have been blessed by the Ramapough Lenape Tribe’s Sacred ceremonies and the Sisters of Christian Doctrine’s care for all their campers and others who come to enjoy God’s creation. I am grateful to the Dominican Sisters, who help with toys, gifts, and treats for special holidays and support our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program for immigrant children.”

Honoree Charlotte Murray:

“My most significant reason for wanting to volunteer for One to One Learning is that we are helping immigrants reach their potential. We are helping them to show their abilities and achieve their dreams. This connects me to my ancestors who first came here in the 1850s on my father’s side and in 1895 on my mother’s side. They could have jobs and enjoy life in the USA, and their children could also. This is what we wish for the students in One to One. I was also inspired to act by my sister Margaret (Sister Margaret Murphy, RIP 2018) being on the board for many years and how I learned about this organization through her.”



Honoree Barbara Bedway:

“When I started teaching, one of my students was astonished to find out that all the teachers at One to One were volunteers. He said to me, “You mean you’re all doing this for free, and you’re not even nuns?” Even I can’t quite believe I’ve been teaching for 12 years, but the reasons I keep returning year after year are sitting at my table tonight. I want to say “thank you” to all my students, especially those who are here. I’ve always felt our classes were a cooperative venture – I teach you grammar and writing skills, and you teach me what it’s like to live in this world with your heart in two places, here and in El Salvador, Guatemala, Ecuador, and Mexico. You and your families have taught me so much about courage and resilience. Our country is lucky to have you here, working and raising your families among us. It has been one of the great privileges of my life to be called Teacher Barbara, your Teacher Barbara. *Muchas gracias desde mi corazón.*”

After the awards were presented, the One to One Gala continued with dancing and people enjoying one another’s company. Anyone who attended would have picked up the positive, friendly feeling which exemplifies One to One.

Sister Cecilia has a homemade raffle container decorated with pictures of children who used to attend the program with their parents. These children are now supporting the program as adults. One to One is now a multi-generational family— Language empowers; language unites. ●



The Aguilar family supports the work of One to One.

Sister Ann Eigenbauer Reflects on **Sister Margaret Murphy’s Mandalas**



Sister Margaret Murphy, OP

God looked at everything he had made and found it to be good.

(Genesis 1:31)

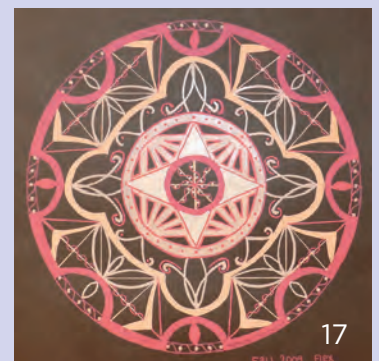
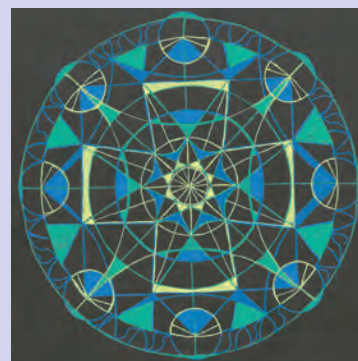
God is our teacher of life, and the beauty of creating with him makes us great craftspeople. The recent art displays of the works of our co-creators and our Sparkill Sisters overjoy us here at Sparkill. No work goes unnoticed.

Each work brings joy to the human heart.

Let me introduce you to one special Sister who described her mandalas as representing “*an oasis of peace and creativity, glimpses of Light in the very dark times, and opportunities to be in prayer and contemplation without the need for words.*” (Sister Margaret Murphy, OP, RIP 2018).

Many Albertus Magnus High School alums, whom Sister Margaret taught during her 11 years of service, will not be surprised to see that her art is very geometric. We are most thankful to Margaret and the other artisans who showed their creativity and shared their inspiration with us. Who knows, future space might allow us to continue this view.

Sister Margo Saich, OP, Administrator of Dominican Convent, showcases the Sisters’ art throughout the house and orchestrates a rotating exhibit of their art in the gathering space to the dining room. ●



Ministry Grants in 2024

Our Partners in Mission



work with those in need of companionship and compassion gives testimony to how AMHS students are embracing the Dominican Charism.

■ Days for Girls International

For several years Dominican Sisters have collaborated with Days for Girls International, an endorsed United Nations NGO. The project and funds provide education and access to materials vital to removing the stigma and limitation of menstruation for girls throughout the world. Dominican Convent hosts a gathering of volunteers who prepare the kits—sewing, cutting, and assembling the materials. Dominican Sisters and Associates are joined in Days for Girls by Albertus Magnus HS and STAC students. The grant reflects our *Direction Statement, 2022*: “The signs of the times compel us to act collaboratively, broadening our circles of relationships and entering into diverse partnerships, as we begin to see ourselves as members of a global sisterhood.”

The Leadership Team affirms the following grants for 2024- 2025. Ministry grants focus on the needs of our world, our ministry of justice, our enablement of the poor, and reverence for all creation.

■ Technology Enhancement Project

This grant request enables us to be Sisters and Associates of a global sisterhood. The Technology Enhancement Project supports educational and empowerment programs for women religious ministering in Sub-Saharan Africa through education, networking, and collaboration for Mission as they respond to the needs of women and enablement of the poor. The funding addresses internet access and provides tools needed for women religious in professional and spiritual development. This will impact the lives of people in Cameroon, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Leaders of congregations in all countries have been invited to support this project. The Dominican Sisters of Sparkill join with the All-Africa Conference of Sister to Sister Technology Advancement honoring our commitment to our *Direction Statement 2022* and *Laudato Si'*.

■ Capuchin Family Summer Outreach Week

This ministry grant request sponsored by the Capuchin Family Ministries provides opportunities for high school students to respond to Jesus’ call to ministry and outreach. The grant will support students from Albertus Magnus High School who will participate in the week-long endeavor—engaging young people to share their gifts in collaboration with the Capuchin Family. Students will have the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel as they visit the elderly in nursing homes, those in hospice care, and summer Bible camps enriching the lives of those most vulnerable—the young and the elderly. The Albertus Magnus HS Students engage in a program that includes Prayer, Community, Service, and Study. At the end of each day, students will join as a community and share their experiences of the day’s ministry and how they discovered the presence of God. The students’ volunteer

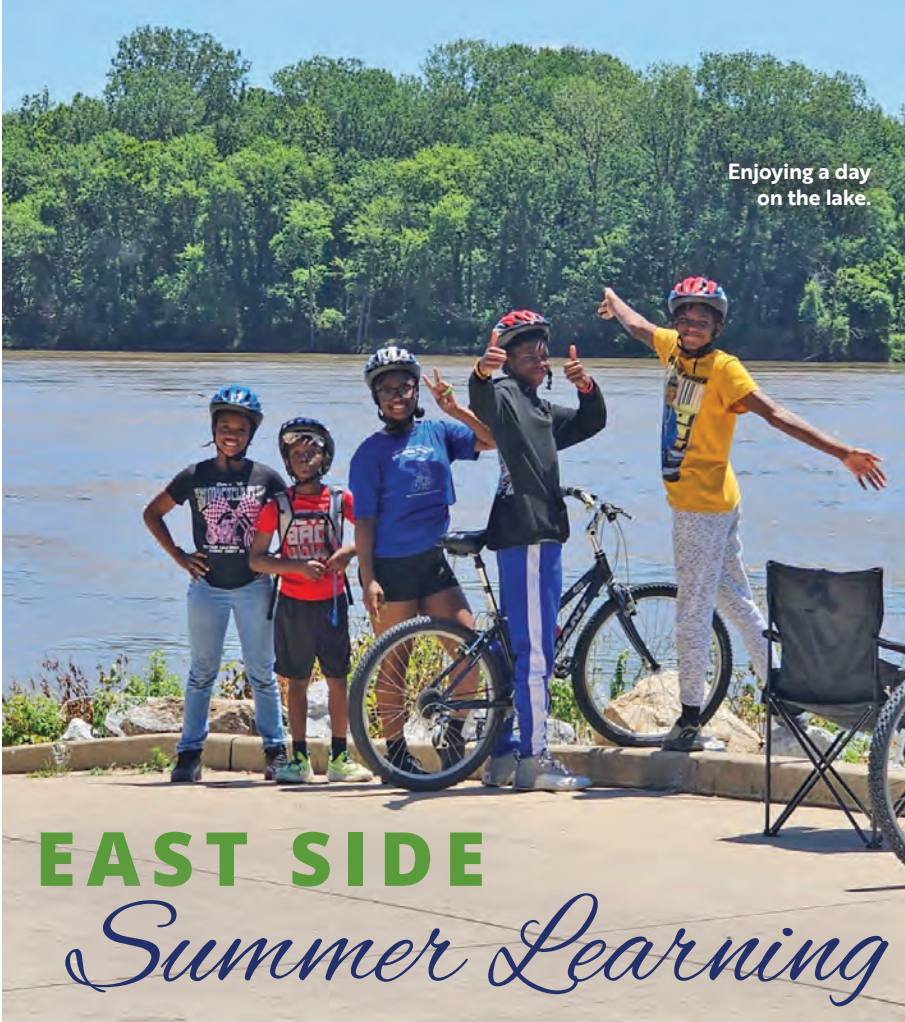
■ Promoting the Dominican Charism

The Dominican Youth Movement USA introduces college students to the Dominican Charism and the four pillars of Prayer, Study, Community, and Service. Founded by congregations of Dominican Sisters, Brothers, and Priests, under the leadership of the Dominican Youth Movement, the program is hosted at the campus of one of the Dominican colleges or universities. The first gathering was held at Saint Thomas Aquinas College, (STAC) Sparkill, New York, twenty-five years ago. STAC students participate in the five-day conference and notably, STAC will host the May 2026 program. The Dominican Sisters support Saint Thomas Aquinas College in providing funding that will enable college students to be immersed in the Dominican Charism.

■ Kelp Farming

This grant reflects the commitment of the Dominican Sisters to *Laudato Si'- On Care for Our Common Home*. Project Kelp Farming (Healing Waters) addresses the management of the first Indigenous-owned kelp farm on the United States’ East Coast. Shinnecock Nation people have lived on Shinnecock Bay on the east end of Long Island, New York, since the end of the last Ice Age. Overdevelopment on unceded tribal land has led to nitrogen pollution which is devastating marine life. The support of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill will enable the Shinnecock women managing the farm along with support from the Brentwood Sisters of St. Joseph who own a retreat center on the bay and Stony Brook, to continue to attend to the growth of kelp which releases good oxygen and supports other vegetation and shellfish growth. The Dominican Sisters are pleased to collaborate with others as we lend support for this project acknowledging the early residents of the Shinnecock Bay. ●

Enjoying a day on the lake.



EAST SIDE *Summer Learning*

Dominican Sisters Carol Lehmkuhl and Mary Ann Buhr, along with dedicated staff and volunteers, are at the heart of the East Side Heart & Home Family Center’s transformative ministry. Their unwavering commitment and tireless efforts continue to make a profound difference in the lives of the community in East St. Louis, Illinois. Together, they foster collaboration and co-creation, nurturing a sense of ownership among the participant families.

This inclusive leadership model is woven into the Center’s mission:

To invite individuals from varied backgrounds to be catalysts for change by providing them with opportunities to work side-by-side on programs and projects that cultivate positive changes in their lives and communities.

The Center offers a comprehensive range of alternative education programs that cater to different

learning needs and styles and foster a love of learning. These include a youth program, tuition assistance, educational field trips, and a course in home ownership and maintenance.

Currently, the Center is promoting education through its Read and Ride Club and the Back-to-School Supply Drive. The Club’s purpose is to expose inner-city youth and their families to fun and explorative adventures outside their



communities while reading books and engaging in open discussions.

This summer’s Read and Ride Club seamlessly combined literacy and play. Families had fun riding together and learning at the same time. Harold Bailey led approximately 25 children, teens, and adults in this year’s program. During each Saturday trip, the individuals rode their bicycles on trails around the Metro Area, stopping for picnic lunches and ending up at the library to discuss a popular children’s novel. An overnight campout was the culmination of the six-week program.

School begins in mid-August, so a back-to-school supply drive is underway. Many donations have been delivered as the Amazon wish list is published on our East Side Heart & Home Family Center Facebook page. A heartfelt thanks to all who support this important ministry. ●

Friends having fun.





Still Preaching with Their Lives:

Celebrating our Jubilarians

DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

“A diamond earns its sparkle from the pressure it endures.”

– Matshona Dhliwayo (author, philosopher)

On May 5, 2024, those marking 60, 65, 70, 75, and 80 years of religious life were honored at the 148th Congregational Foundation Day celebration. The gathering resounded with joy at the enduring commitment of the jubilarians, each of whom was recognized as an indispensable part of the tapestry and history of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill. With a collective total of 1,910 years of religious life, these women have been unwavering in their service to God’s people, a testament to their dedication and love.

Pope Francis once said, “You can’t announce the Gospel of Jesus without the actual witness of your life. Preach with your life, with your witness.” The Jubilarians personified this ideal.

Reflecting on the milestone, Sister Carrol Coble said, “Being a Dominican Sister of Sparkill fulfilled my dream ever since I met the Dominican Sisters in grade school through high school. This life gave me many opportunities to minister to children and adults about God’s love, care, and presence with us. When I asked to go to nursing school, I still remember the day Sister Marie Paul came to see me to tell me my permission was granted. I started nursing school in September 1972 at Saint Mary’s in O’Fallon, Missouri; the rest is history. Thank you, God,

Dominican Community, and Saint Dominic. I ended up with over 50 years of fulfilling my dream.”

Sister Suzanne (Sue) Walker said the best thing about being a Sparkill Dominican Sister is the support she received from the Congregation, which allowed her to follow Jesus’ invitation to “go and teach all nations.” She recalled the joy she felt on the day she became a novice and received the long, white habit 60 years ago. And despite the many challenges in the Catholic Church and our Community, she said, “I truly believe and constantly tell myself that our Lord Jesus has a plan for all of us. We need to be faithful, listen to the plan, and follow His way.”

Sister Loretta Keller expressed gratitude for those who supported her through all her years of teaching and working. She also said that she sees great promise and hope in the Associates to continue the Dominican charism. Similarly, after 75 years of religious life, Sister Rosemary Kelly was grateful to belong to “a community of love, compassion, peace, and a Mission to make a difference.” She said, “I am living out these last years of life, enjoying each moment God gives!”

Reflecting on her 80 years of religious life, Sister Anne Connelly said, “For me, it was a deepening of my relationship with God. For most of my life, I have worked with adult catechesis. It was my favorite ministry and gave me hope. I also met others who helped me on my journey—my dear friends Sisters Marie Jean Dempsey and Mary Reynolds were outstanding. ●



Congratulations ON YOUR ANNIVERSARIES

(Left to right in photos)

80th

Sister Anne Connelly *(Sister Anne Dolores)*

75th

Sister Rosemary Kelly *(Sister Paul Thomas)*

Sister Patricia Cody *(Sister Marie Vianney)*

Sister Anne Simms *(Sister Anne Christine)*

Sister Catherine Viggiano *(Sister John Cecilia, RIP)*

70th

Sister Barbara Paul *(Sister Mary Barbara)*

Sister Patricia Anne Murtha *(Sister Richard Patrice)*

Sister Marie Hess *(Sister William Agnes)*

Sister Anne Eigenbauer *(Sister Marie Anton)*

Sister Carole Coble *(Sister Germaine)*

65th

Sister Margaret Tiernan *(Sister Martin Therese)*

Sister Lillian McNamara *(Sister Brendan Mary)*

Sister Daniel Catherine Connolly

Sister Maureen Robinson *(Sister Kevin Maureen)*

Sister Cecilia LaPietra *(Sister Francis Theresa)*

Sister Eileen Richard Leavy

Sister Mary Ann Buhr *(Sister Janet Marie) **

Sister Loretta Keller *(Sister Lorentine) **

60th

Sister Virginia Brodowski *(Sister Stella Rose)*

Sister Marie Peter Buckley

Sister Barbara Mueller *(Sister Ann Peter)*

Sister Patricia Hogan *(Sister Joseph Christi)*

Sister Lorraine LaRocca *(Sister Anne Lorraine)*

Sister Margaret Palliser *(Sister Ann Monica)*

Sister Margaret Scarano *(Sister Anne Kieran)*

Sister Joan Correia *(Sister Teresa Edward)*

Sister Maria Garguilo *(Sister Alba John) **

Sister Carol Lehmkuhl *(Sister Robert Ann) **

Sister Suzanne Walker *(Sister Suzanne Marie) **

**not pictured*





CULTIVATING LEADERS

in Pakistan

Seven Dominican Sisters in Pakistan and 154 participants from 45 countries participated in a Leadership Development program sponsored by the Dominican Sisters International Confederation (DSIC). This interactive, online training allows the Sisters to develop their leadership skills and deepen their connection with Dominican Sisters worldwide who share a common mission and charism.

This leadership development program aims to provide Sisters with the necessary skills and knowledge to accept leadership roles within their communities and wherever they are present. The Sisters seek to bring harmony and transformation according to the needs of the times and to enhance communication and collaboration through their participation.

Sisters Catherine Bashir, Noreen William, Zubeda Tarcis, Sumaira Patrick, Shahnaz Nazir, Philomena Victor, and Nazia Shafi are attending this program.

The Faith & Praxis for Global Leadership Program sponsored by DSIC is a unique and effective learning journey that entails four modules. Our Sisters in Pakistan have already completed the first two modules in April and May and will continue with the next two in the fall.

The first module delved into Integral Leadership and Conflict Transformation, while the second module explored the dynamics of Power and Rank. This program is offered in five languages and provides a rich learning experience. PowerPoint presentations are prepared in Italian, and translations are available in English, Chinese, French, and German, ensuring the content is accessible.

Those participating in the program were grateful for the opportunity to grow and serve in a leadership role in the future.

Sister Nazia Shafi affirmed and echoed what Alison Vidotto (author and professional speaker) had said: “There is a leader in all of us.” Sister continued, “This program is more than just a forum for leadership training; it is a powerful catalyst for personal and collective growth. It’s about shifting from ‘I am’ to ‘I am becoming,’ and stepping out from what is familiar. It’s about embracing change and growth and becoming the leaders we are meant to be as part of a global sisterhood.”

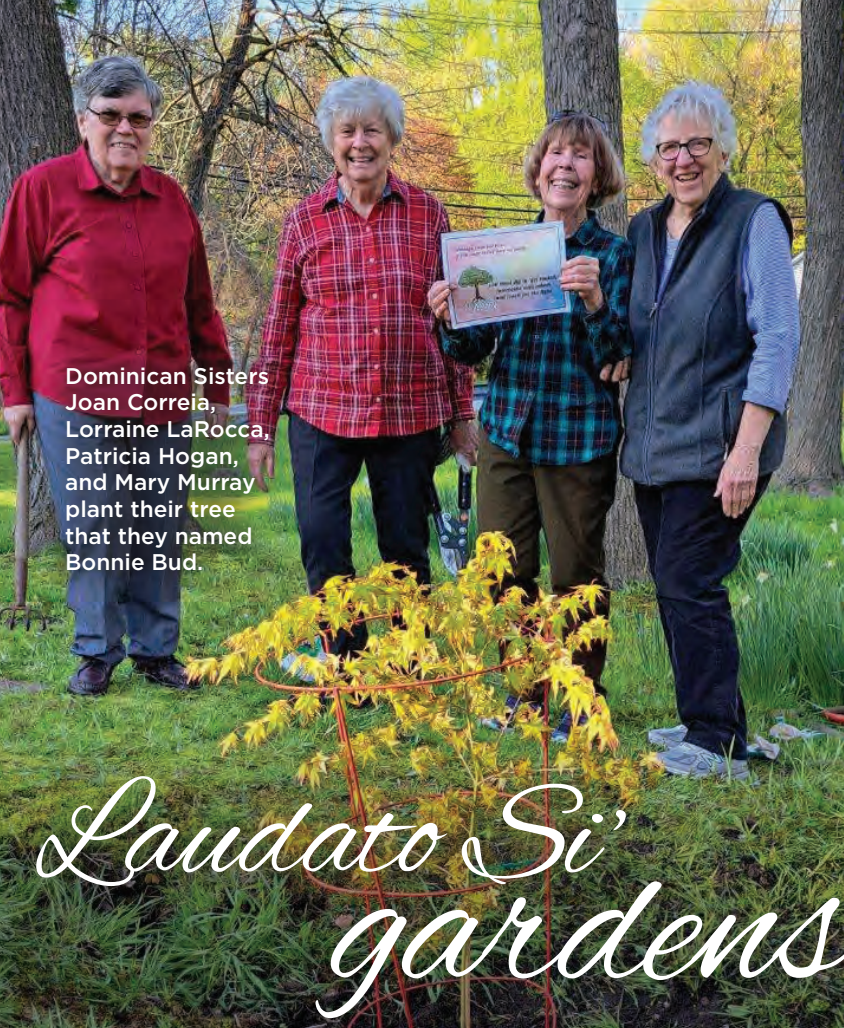
Sister Philomena Victor agreed and said, “I am learning many things I will use. Leadership training is a source of growth also in spirituality. The topics are excellent and reflective yet challenging for all of us. For example, the topic of power has a different meaning here. Power does not mean someone has lots of money, but this topic concerns inner power. Using our inner power, we can do the right thing and change negativity into positivity. Overall, leadership training is beneficial in our religious life and will be useful in the future.”

Leadership training is a source of growth also in spirituality. The topics are excellent and reflective yet challenging for all of us.

Sister Shahnaz Nazir said she enjoyed working with others. She said, “I learned to handle challenges in ministry and community life by sharing and listening to others. The best thing I learned for my personal growth was to face conflict and understand we do not have to avoid conflict. Rather, face it and we can bring a positive change and promote peace through love, mercy, and forgiveness.

Being positive, giving a listening ear, respect, and patience can always help us live better together ... I am inspired by the transformative nature of this journey and the hope it brings for our future. God bless the organizers.”

Through this program, the Sisters are receiving an opportunity to engage with various experienced leaders within the larger Dominican family to learn from their wisdom and experience. Through this program, they will strengthen their communities and better serve those in need. ●



Dominican Sisters
Joan Correia,
Lorraine LaRocca,
Patricia Hogan,
and Mary Murray
plant their tree
that they named
Bonnie Bud.

Laudato Si' gardens

"The trees are not just silent witnesses; they are the storytellers of our past."

– Elif Shafak, author of *The Island Of Missing Trees* (2021)

A neighbor gifted the Sisters' Threshold of Transformation group with a small red maple tree. The Sisters welcomed this sapling into the group and it was named Bonnie BUD. At each of the meetings, Bonnie had a prominent spot beside a candle and bowl of water and all looked forward to when the tree would be planted in the Earth where she would have a new community of various trees and creatures.

On April 7, 2024, five Sisters in the group took turns digging a hole deep enough to plant Bonnie in her new home among the other vegetation and trees and asked our creator God to bless this tree to live among us as a message of hope for the future and a reminder of God's call to care for all Creation.

A suggestion from discussions on Laudato Si' was to acquire raised bed planters to allow for gardening while standing. This idea was proposed at the Spring region meeting, with only one Sister expressing interest. But when the warm weather came, flowers and seeds started "miraculously" to appear—so much so that two more beds were purchased that are now filled with tomatoes and two more beds are on the way. The lure of the relationship with Earth has captured the Sisters' hearts and hands.



Sisters enjoy gardening at Dominican Convent.



Committed to teaching children about planting, growing, and harvesting vegetables, working in the gardens is a favorite activity every year at the Marydell Faith and Life Center, Nyack, New York.

We prayed:

"As the roots grow deep and strong, may our faith grow ever deeper and more compassionate. As its branches open wide to the sky, may our arms open wide to embrace the greatest and smallest of God's creatures. And as its leaves provide food and oxygen, may we provide food for the hungry and hope for the lost. Gracious God, bless this tree as a living reminder of your love and grace always among us."

"Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves.

Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is ... life is good when you are happy; but much better when others are happy because of you."

–unknown



After serving for many years in the Bronx, Sister Louise Mifleski, OP is finally able to grow a garden.



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