

DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SPARKILL

Weavings

Women making a difference

SUMMER 2025



Celebrating

150

YEARS

1876

2026

The Magazine of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill

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

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SUMMER 2025

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Mother Alice Mary Thorpe
with Child.

Artist: Rose Marie Morris, OP

From the Prioress ...

Dear Friends,

The beautiful grounds of Sparkill are again in bloom with color, and Dominican Convent is filled with activity and anticipation. We have much for which to be grateful, especially your prayers, friendship, and support, which enable our shared mission to continue. Our commitment remains strong to fostering justice and compassion for the poor and vulnerable in our time.

This year, we also will be remembering and celebrating with gratitude 150 years of service by the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill. Since our 1876 founding by Alice Mary Thorpe and her small group of Sisters, who began caring for destitute women and children in New York City, and serving in parishes, schools, and hospitals across the United States and Pakistan. Our more than 220 Sisters and Associates remain committed to bringing the good news of the Gospel to others by the witness of their lives and compassionate service.

We ask you to join us in prayer and invite you to participate in the various celebrations throughout our Jubilee Year, which are printed in this edition of *Weavings* (page 5) as well as updates and articles online at sparkill.org/one50.

We hope to connect with you this year. You remain in our prayers as together we make a positive difference.

Sincerely,

Sister Irene Ellis, OP
Prioress



SISTER IRENE ELLIS, OP
Prioress, Dominican Sisters of Sparkill



Dominican Sisters
of Sparkill

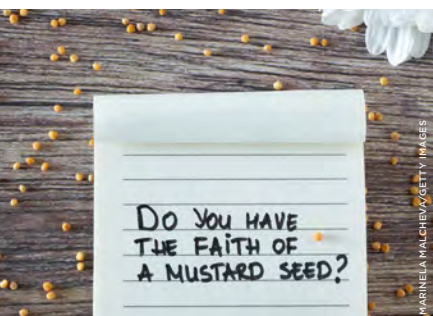
To donate, visit sparkill.org and click “Donate.”

Gratitude and thanks for your donations and prayers.

THREADS OF WISDOM AND GRACE ...

Even a hint of faith is ENOUGH

I've been thinking a lot about faith these days. Our early pioneer Sisters had tremendous faith when they set out in 1876 on the path that eventually led to what we now know as the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill. And when I look around at our troubled world today, I find myself in awe of the strength of the faith that so many people demonstrate in the face of incredible trials and devastating loss.



Have you ever experienced a real crisis of faith, a time when you may even have found it impossible to pray? Perhaps it came as the result of the overwhelming confusion caused by a diagnosis of cancer, a betrayal

by a spouse, the death of an innocent child, or even scandalous behavior by a trusted religious leader. Or perhaps it came seemingly out of nowhere, leaving you bewildered and adrift.

At such times, faith in God can seem out of reach. Sometimes the best one can manage to say is, "I would like to believe," or even a very hesitant, "I *think* that I would like to believe."

But, of course, that is the remarkable power and paradox of the gift of faith. God is able to do great things with even the tiniest hint of faith—precisely because it is *real*! That tiny "I'd like to believe" is the authentic "mustard seed" that Jesus refers to. When we are willing to be honest with God about what we are feeling, that tiny seed of faith takes root in the depths of our soul. And it will surely bloom in God's time. ●

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.



SPOTLIGHT ON MISSOURI ASSOCIATE



Sparkill Dominican Associates are lay women and men who walk with our vowed Dominican Sisters in their ministry for justice and peace among God's people. The Sisters are blessed with associates in New York and Missouri. Here we introduce

you to **Katie Patterson, Associate of St. Louis** for eight years running.

Learning from her mother's example, Katie began volunteering at a young age. "Do unto to others..." growing up in St. Louis County. Early volunteering led to great success assisting the homeless with fundraising drives for toiletries, socks, and underwear.

Katie had the great fortune to meet with Sister Marie Daughtery, Sister Carol Kopp, and Sister Loretta, who all loved to sing at Epiphany Parish. That experience, along with shared beliefs, grew into assisting at the East Side Center and becoming an Associate. Her volunteering has been enormously full of gratitude and very rewarding for not only helping with meals but sharing companionship with the Women's Circle and people of all ages and needs. Joining the Sparkill Dominican Associates and being part of a dynamic group has changed Katie's life in a very positive way. Helping people makes her feel closer to Jesus. Katie is inspired by the Holy Spirit to sit and sing, play interactive games, or recite from the Bible at the East Side Center, whatever the need is.

Her message to us and the world is "Love One Another. Perhaps life would be a bit sweeter." We couldn't agree more.



150 YEARS OF *making a difference*

“With grateful hearts, the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill celebrate 150 years of service to God’s people. Since their 1876 founding by Alice Mary Thorpe and her small group of Sisters, they have cared for destitute women and children in New York City, served in parishes, schools, and hospitals, and continue to be attentive to the cries of the suffering people of our time.” – Sister Irene Ellis, OP, Prioress

Their stories of service are numerous and are reflected in several congregational publications: *Fifty Years in Retrospect* (1926); *We Have Known Them* (1951); *The Vision is Tremendous* (1975); and *We Walk By Faith* (2021). Each volume acknowledges that the stories contained therein were representative, not complete. On the occasion of the 150th anniversary, many of these stories are being recounted on the website sparkill.org/one50.

Early History

Alice Mary Thorpe, the Congregation’s founder, was born in 1844 and was a member of the Anglican Church before becoming a Catholic. Shortly after opening St. Joseph Mission House at 697 Second Avenue in Manhattan, she requested to observe a religious rule. Rev. John Rochford, OP, helped her to begin the Congregation of the Holy Rosary on May 6, 1876. Alice Mary Thorpe and her sister Lucy took on the white habit of St. Dominic, and Alice chose the name Sister Catherine M. Antoninus.

After she died in 1879, Mother Dominic Dowling led the fledgling congregation, which had already moved twice, to a firm legal and financial basis. In 1880, she suspended the care of indigent women to attend to the urgent need of caring for neglected children wandering the streets. Around the same time, a benefactor helped the Sisters procure property on

East 63rd Street in Manhattan, where they built Holy Rosary Convent, which continued in use until 1971.

Within a year of its opening, the convent had taken in 128 children, many of them committed by the city, and the numbers were increasing to the point that a wing had to be added in 1882. To provide a more suitable environment, in 1884, the Sisters bought property in Sparkill, where 25 boys were housed in what was called St. Agnes Home. Many more had to be turned away, while the Sisters planned to construct cottages to enlarge the facilities. During construction, they erected tents to shelter the children, and by 1889, the complex had grown to 11 buildings.

The Congregation’s Motherhouse and novitiate were moved to the 100-acre Sparkill property in 1895. There were 71 professed sisters and 15 novices. However, disaster struck on Aug. 28, 1899, when fire destroyed the home. The Sisters and boys were moved to the former archdiocesan seminary in Troy until a new building opened in Sparkill in 1902. By the 1950s, however, changes in foster care resulted in more children being placed with families rather than in institutional settings such as St. Agnes, and the home was closed in 1979.

In 1952, the Sisters opened St. Thomas Aquinas College, now a four year accredited college, on a 35-acre campus. Also, on property carved out of the congregation’s Motherhouse campus in Sparkill, Thorpe Village, a 200-unit complex of affordable housing for the elderly, opened in 1981, and Dowling Gardens, an assisted living facility with 111 units, opened in 1996.



In Our Time

Considerable work by the Sisters has also taken place beyond their Sparkill property. By 1900, the Congregation began to expand to other states, such as Missouri, Montana, and 23 other states. A community in Pakistan established 67 years ago has 19 Sisters, where three women are currently in the novitiate, and two were professed earlier this year. Additionally, an Associate program begun in 1980 now has 40 members.

As Dominicans, the Sisters are members of a religious order founded in the 13th century by Dominic de Guzman. Dominicans, who use the religious initials OP, for Order of Preachers, are dedicated to bringing the Word of God around the world through a range of ministries. They have served as school administrators and teachers at all levels of education, childcare workers, social workers, nurses, artists, counselors, spiritual directors, librarians, and researchers. Today, more than 220 Sisters and Associates are committed to sharing the good news of the Gospel with others through the witness of their lives and compassionate service.

Vatican II (1962-1965) brought much that is positive to the Congregation and opened many new ministries to them in areas of peace and social justice, housing, pastoral care, and more. Continuing their commitment to the Congregation's values of prayer, preaching, and the ministry of justice, carried out by responding to the needs of the time, the Sisters are looking ahead toward their mission wherever God will lead. They continue to make a difference today by working for climate justice and extending compassion to those most in need, such as immigrants and those suffering from abuse or poverty.

To mark their anniversary, several events have been scheduled—many at Dominican Convent, Sparkill, New York. ●

For more information or opportunities to participate or donate, visit:

sparkill.org/one50



UPCOMING EVENTS

Foundation Day and Inauguration of Sesquicentennial Year
Sunday, May 4, 2025

Rockland Chorale Performance
Sunday, May 18, 2025, 4 p.m.

Welcome Day at Dominican Convent
Saturday, Sept 13, 2025, 1:30-4 p.m.

Cycling for Peace
Saturday, Sept 27, 2025, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

125 Years Celebration
Sunday, October 5, 2025, 3 p.m.
Holy Spirit Parish, St. Louis, Missouri

All Souls Liturgy Remembrance of Sisters
November 2, 2025

Sparks of Light Gala
Thursday, Nov 6, 2025, 7 p.m.;
Hilton, Pearl River, New York

St. Thomas Aquinas College Annual Tribute Dinner
Nov 13, 2025, 7 p.m.;
(The Rockleigh, Rockleigh, New Jersey)

St. Thomas Aquinas College Annual Mission Moments
February 2, 2026;
(St. Thomas Aquinas College and online)

Dr. J.T. Vincent Lou Lecture
February 17, 2026, 7 pm
Dr. Barbara Reid, OP

Closing Liturgy for the Jubilee Year
Sunday, May 3, 2026, 11 a.m.



AN UNEXPECTED PATH:

Roxana Lopez at One to One Learning

BY SISTER JEANNE SHARY, OP

Roxana Lopez never expected to become a teacher. But at One to One Learning Inc., the unexpected often leads to transformation.

Roxana first came by to drop off a bag of clothing donations. "I have known Sister Cecilia for years . . . so I called her and said, 'I have some clothes—can I bring them by?' I've known her for years," Roxana explained. "We started talking, and she asked where I was working. I told her I was looking for a job—and right away, she said to come in.

With a background in bookkeeping, Roxana assumed she'd be helping out in the office. But one evening, when four teachers called out sick, Sister Cecilia asked her to step into a classroom. "I didn't want to," Roxana laughed. "I was scared, I didn't think I could teach. I'd never done anything like that before. But Sister said, 'Just give it a try.' And to my surprise, I enjoyed it."

That night led to more teaching, and eventually, a full-time role. Roxana now works during the day with Sister Cecilia and returns to volunteering on Monday and Wednesday evenings. She commutes from Weehawken, NJ, so she spends the in-between time locally at her mom's home, resting and recharging for the evening classes. "I do a little bit of everything—bookkeeping, hanging up clothes, ordering T-shirts, and calling students. . . whatever is needed."

Now that summer is here, preparation for fall is in full swing. Roxana recently contacted more than 30 new students to register for September. "We already have a waiting list, so we figured we'd start early." She is also helping to distribute certificates to students who couldn't attend the end-of-year celebration. "A lot of our immigrant students live in tough circumstances. Some haven't been able to come to this event, and we want them to know they're still part of this community."



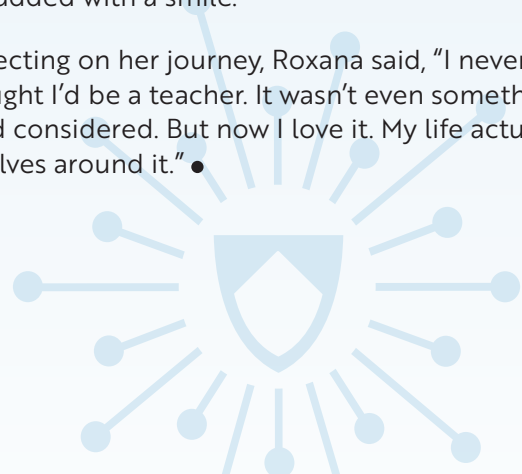
Participants at One to One enjoy learning and community.

Roxana's students come from all over the world—South and Central America, Haiti, Russia, Korea, and India. "When I don't see them for a while, I text or call to check in. It becomes very personal," she said. "I didn't expect that kind of connection, but now I'm very close to them. I even rearranged my schedule to make time for this."

Though she had no teaching experience, Roxana quickly adapted. "We use a book—it's pretty self-explanatory—and Sister Cecilia showed me how to use it. Sometimes you improvise, especially when students come in with little or no English. But you don't need experience. You just need heart."

One to One is always in need of volunteers, especially for evening classes from 8 to 9:30 p.m. "It's late for some people, but that's when our students are available. And for college students, it's not late at all," she added with a smile.

Reflecting on her journey, Roxana said, "I never thought I'd be a teacher. It wasn't even something I had considered. But now I love it. My life actually revolves around it." ●



Audio-visual upgrade: *it's all about community*

Community is at the heart of the Dominican charism.

As the Sisters age, many are unable to physically attend Mass, meetings, or social events. But they are able to remain active within the community with the help of audio-visual equipment. This link is an important one. During the COVID pandemic it became clear how important it truly is. And it also became clear how many problems we have with our current equipment!



After many years of use, the audio-visual equipment in the Sparkill Dominican Convent (and Sacred Heart Chapel) is in need of replacement. Numerous repairs have kept the equipment going, but now much of it is obsolete. As the world has transitioned to smart TVs, streaming, and apps, the Sisters are struggling with old, heavy TVs, DVD players and speakers that unfortunately crack, buzz, and frequently stop working!

With the new equipment, we can record events in the Dominican Convent, livestream, and transmit with clarity. Sisters can continue their mission of outreach to the public with equipment that is reliable.



Exciting Update:

We have received an overwhelming response from our supporters and friends. Replacement of the projector in the Community Room is scheduled and will be underway within the next couple of weeks.

The Congregation is a-buzz with excitement over the year-long project and all the improvements in communications it promises. We thank everyone who has contributed so far, we couldn't have moved forward with this project without you! Thank you and God Bless. ●



If you would like to make a gift towards this project, it can be done online at:

sparkill.org/make-a-donation
or you can also call **845-359-4179**.

The Sparkill Scholarship:

BRIDGING TWO SCHOOLS

At a ceremony on May 16, 2025, William A. Kay, Jr., presented the inaugural award of the Sparkill Scholarship at the St. Austin School in St. Louis, Missouri. Members of the 5th Grade class were invited to write an essay to earn the Sparkill Scholarship, a gift from the St. Richard School, Class of 1984, that pays tribute to the ministry of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill in Missouri. Although due to many excellent submissions, the selection was difficult, the chosen recipient was Vincent Yallaly.

In addition to being a proud St. Austin Dad to a second grader, William Kay is also a graduate of St. Richard School Class of 1984. He shared that his classmates had gathered for their 40th Anniversary Reunion—what they called the “Everyone Reunion.” They invited classmates, teachers, parents, coaches, and teammates. He said that his class of 25 has stayed close—maybe because they’ve never seen a reason to stop reconnecting.

Mr. Kay noted that his class and today’s student body were blessed with extraordinary teachers, but three women stood out. From 1966 to 2005, the now-named St. Austin campus

was served by the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, whose Motherhouse is located about 30 miles north of Manhattan. Part of the global Dominican family founded by Saint Dominic in the 13th century, the Sparkill Sisters will celebrate 150 years of service this year, with 125 years in Missouri. The three women chosen to be honored through the scholarship are Dominican Sisters Ann Gregory Bischof, Raymond Louise Zimmerly, and Jeanne Clare Scheer. To recognize their lasting impact, the scholarship is appropriately called the Sparkill Scholarship.

From 1966 to 2014, nearly 1,000 students graduated from this

campus—and this year, the number grows again for the first time in over a decade—from a different school, but with the same spirit.

Sister Raymond and Sister Jeanne passed in 2016 and are laid to rest at Dominican Convent in New York. Sister Ann lives in the Hill neighborhood of St. Louis, served as a judge in this competition, but was unable to attend the event.

There have been many examples of the warm welcome that the St. Richard Community has given the St. Austin community, and perhaps the Sparkill Scholarship is one more way to build that bridge.

Quotes from student applications:

“I will carry lessons of hard work going into middle school, high school, and into college. The lesson that I have learned at St. Austin is that hard work helps me understand what I am learning in school. I will never forget my class and my teachers.”

“Through my understanding of the Mass, I find myself in more awe of God. My teachers and classmates have inspired me to encourage non-believers to believe. I have learned how to connect my suffering to Jesus’ suffering on the cross. This faith-filled education is important to me because my goal in life is to be a saint.”

“Now that we are at the St. Richard building and have a church, I get the opportunity to have confession, mass, and learn in the church sometimes. I really like being in the presence of Jesus while I am learning, and I know that He is always there in the church. I am constantly reminded of that when I look over there during school.” ●



Sister Margaret Mary O'Doherty

HONORED WITH DOCTORATE FROM ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

On May 18, 2025, Sister Margaret Mary O'Doherty, OP, received a Doctorate of Humane Letters from St. John's University in recognition of her lifelong commitment to education, ministry, and service. Surrounded by her companion Sparkill Dominican Sisters—Aileen Donovan, Grace Hogan, Gloria Lowe, Diane McSherry, and Louise Mileski—Sister Margaret Mary was celebrated with warmth, pride, and joy.

A native of Queens and a Dominican Sister since 1957, Sister Margaret began her teaching ministry in Catholic schools across the Bronx, Manhattan, Middletown, N.Y., and St. Louis. In 1983, she answered a call to serve on the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation in Montana, where she spent the next 37 years in a ministry marked by mutual respect, cultural exchange, and deep love. "I've learned more from all these people than I could ever do for them," she reflected.

Now living in Bardonia, N.Y., she continues her ministry by sharing the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd with immigrant children at the Marydell Faith and Life Center in Nyack. "I'm working with immigrants right now, and I love it," she said with characteristic joy.

The commencement ceremony at St. John's University was led by Dominican President Father Brian Shanley. He emphasized the university's Vincentian values—values that align closely with the Dominican pillars of service, community, study, and prayer. Five honorees, including Sister Margaret, were recognized for a lifetime

of service. "It was a powerful message to the graduates," said Sister Louise. "This is what we hope the students will do with their gifts."

During his address, President Shanley reminded the graduates that the lives and witness of these honorees were meant to inspire: "In years to come, you too could be people like these, who devote their lives to service." Another speaker described every person as a puzzle piece in a greater mission, encouraging students to carry forward what they've learned at St. John's—especially the importance of embracing diversity, learning from others, and building a more just world.

The celebration was as joyful as it was meaningful. "From the moment we arrived, we were treated like royalty," said Sister Gloria. "It felt like we were part of something much bigger." Confetti fell, names from across the globe were read, and a spirit of unity filled the place. "It was beautiful," Sister Diane added. "Everyone was received with such kindness and dignity."

Sister Margaret was warmly greeted by many, including Dr. Teresa Delgado of the Theology Department, who sought her out to hear more about her ministry's impact. In particular, Law professor Thomas Giordano played a key role in nominating Sister Margaret, who had been his fifth-grade teacher at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Middletown, N.Y. He said that Sister Margaret's faith and love for her students were palpable, and they all loved her. He considered his life to have been "inordinately enriched from her attention and radiant spirit."

For the Sparkill Dominicans, this honor extended beyond one individual. "When one of us is recognized, it's all of us," said Sister Diane. "It's a reflection of our shared commitment." Sister Margaret's recognition is a reminder that service, done with love and humility, is not only worthy of celebration, but it is the foundation of lasting change. ●



PHOTO BY ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY



PHOTO BY ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY



DOMINICAN SISTERS
OF SPARKILL

Annual Golf Tournament | 2025

On Monday, May 19, golfers enjoyed a new venue at Blue Hill Golf Course in Pearl River, New York for our 28th Annual Golf Tournament. The weather was perfect, especially after days of rain!

It was a memorable event that had 115 attendees enjoying the breathtaking views of the Rockland County hillsides whether on the course or having a cocktail on the patio. That evening, the golfers, their guests, and our generous sponsors feasted on a delicious dinner at the Club's restaurant Castle on the Green, followed by the presentation of prizes, raffle baskets and the annual 50/50 Raffle.

At the dinner reception, participants enjoyed a presentation by St. Thomas Aquinas alum and author Tim Connolly. His memories and tributes to the Dominican Sisters were fun and entertaining.

We congratulate all the winners and extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who helped to make this outing such a success for our 28th year.

The proceeds from the golf tournament, for which we are most grateful, benefit the mission and ministries of the Dominican Sisters. ●



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Special thanks to:

- Our 2025 Golf Committee for their time and efforts.
- The Dominican Sisters of Sparkill for their prayers and support.
- Thank you for the many Dominican Sisters who donated gift cards.
- Additional thanks to: Peg Gordon, Christopher and Kate McSherry ,
and Church of St. Raymond (Bronx)

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WillsWay Equestrian Center
Yogi Berra Museum

Sisters visit congregation members

in Pakistan

Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, Irene Ellis (Prioress), Aileen Donovan (Leadership Team), Margaret McGirl, and Valorie Lordi, traveled to visit their Sisters in Pakistan in February 2025. The group arrived in Multan on a Saturday and attended Mass in the parish church on Sunday. They were warmly welcomed by parishioners, who surrounded them, some asking for a blessing, and others embracing them.

The next day, the team visited their school in Multan, where children made presentations. Sister Valorie brought cards from the children of St. John Chrysostom in the Bronx to share with them. All were delighted.

On Tuesday morning, the Sisters from the U.S. left Multan for Bahawalpur but first stopped at the Pastoral Institute, where Dominican Fathers teach and where young adults are studying to be catechists. The environment was welcoming and alive with learning.

Arriving in Bahawalpur, the Sisters were welcomed by students from Dominican Convent School. At the entrance of the convent, large pictures were displayed on the walls of two Dominican Sisters who had contributed to the school's success while serving in Pakistan—Sisters Suzanne Dolan and Violet Sampour—a reminder of the dedication and commitment these Sisters shared with the community.

The Bahawalpur house is full of young Sisters, most of whom work in the Dominican Convent Higher Secondary

School, actively involved in teaching and indirectly developing Christian-Muslim dialogue, as most of the students and staff are Muslim. The harvest is rich, but the laborers are few, and although their community is small, they said they believe they are like yeast, which brings great change and provides bread for the hungry.

The following day, the Dominican Fathers invited the group to tea. On the outside wall of their house are pictures of all the missionary sisters and priests who had served in Bahawalpur. Wonderfully, the Dominican brother there had been



Prioress, Sister Irene receives the vows of profession from Sister Naseem.

“The harvest is rich, but the laborers are few, and although their community is small, they said they believe they are like yeast, which brings great change and provides bread for the hungry.”





taught by Sister Peggy many years ago. The legacy of Dominican ministry and compassion lives on!

The following days were filled with great joy for the Congregation at the solemn profession of vows for four Sisters: Sisters Robina Nazir, Shabnum Francis, and Sadaf



Sisters Robina, Shabnum, and Sadif profess final vows.

William on February 8, and Sister Naseem on February 9, 2025.

On the way to Loreto, traveling through several villages and passing large fields of beautiful yellow mustard, the beauty of the campus and bright, open space lifted the spirits of all. Je, a man who had been raised in the Loreto hostel, was waiting to welcome Sister Peggy, who had taken him under her wing as a young child. He was accompanied by his wife and three grown sons. It was a beautiful reunion.

In truth, the entire visit was a reunion of faith and community. Since 1958, when 8 Sisters traveled to Multan laying the foundation



for a native-born Pakistani community of women religious, there are now 19 Pakistani women in the Sparkill Dominican Congregation, each continuing to minister wherever needed, each opening doors through which people can enter and be reunited with the love of Christ. ●



Sisters Zubeda and Catherine came to support the professions of vows.



B-I-N-G-O

BY BERNADETTE DONOHUE, CMP

On Wednesday, April 2 the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill had their first Designer Bag and Restaurant bingo event at the convent. Seventy-five of our great donors, friends, birthday girl Pat Ryan, past students, and Sisters enjoyed an evening of laughter and comradery while concentrating on obtaining BINGO from the traditional, lucky seven and the ever-challenging full card game.

Winners won designer bags from COACH, Kate Spade, Dooney & Burke, Marc Jacobs, and Michael Kors. Additional winners received restaurant gift cards donated by the following establishments in the area:

Bailey's
Biddy O'Malley's
Del'Arte Restaurant
Fiesta Mexico
Gerry's Place
Hikaru Japanese Fusion Sushi
Hudson Mill
Luigi O'Grady's Deli
Northvale Diner
Ruby Bar & Tapas

The evening saw not only winners of designer bags and restaurant gift cards; but also door prizes, gift baskets and a 50/50 raffle. All participants went home with an inspiring themed notepad.

Our thanks go to Fiona Parahus and her family, who donated their time and talents to making the BINGO electronic set up and number calling so much fun. We hope to see you again next year! ●



Midnight Run

WWW.MIDNIGHTRUN.ORG

A VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO FINDING COMMON GROUND BETWEEN THE HOUSED AND THE HOMELESS

Midnight Run coordinates over 1,000 relief missions per year, in which volunteers from churches, synagogues, schools, and other civic groups distribute food, clothing, blankets, and personal care items to the homeless poor on the streets of New York City. The late-night relief efforts create a forum for trust, sharing, understanding, and affection. This human exchange, rather than the exchange of goods, is the essence of the Midnight Run mission.

Midnight Run is not a solution to homelessness. Its goal is to forge a bond between the housed and homeless people by establishing a foundation of sharing and caring from which solutions may evolve. Through Midnight Run, volunteers come to see people on the streets as real people, not a commodity. And homeless men and women interact with mainstream adults and teenagers whose commitments and concerns go beyond their own lives and families.

Thirty years ago, Dominican Sisters Helen Robert Boyd and Jeanne Micelli introduced the Midnight Run service trip to the Albertus Magnus High School community. Ever since then, Sister Diane McSherry and Sister Nancy Richter, along with students, staff, and parent volunteers from Albertus have participated in Midnight Runs to New York City. The purpose of these service trips is to provide food, clothing, and personal-care items to people who are unhoused in the city but also to share conversation and words of encouragement with those who seek assistance from our group.

Each of the four grades at Albertus participates in a Midnight Run. Twelve to 14 students sign up for the trip. Students who volunteer for the Midnight Run prepare for the trip by organizing clothing and personal care items that the group will distribute at the four designated stops in Manhattan. On the night of the trip, the students gather in the school kitchen to make sandwiches and to pack bins of clothing



The 2025 Midnight Run team from Albertus Magnus High School.

and bags of personal care items into the cars. We pause to pray asking God for a safe trip, to guide our efforts, and to bless the people we will meet. At 8 p.m., this group departs to the city in a caravan of four cars driven by Mr. Chris Power (the Assistant Head of School) and three parent volunteer drivers. When the group gets to the first of the four scheduled stops in the city, people who have been patiently waiting for our arrival are there to greet us. Mr. Power serves coffee from the back of his SUV, the three parent volunteers oversee the distribution of clothing from the trunks of their vehicles, and the students offer sandwiches, toiletries, winter weather accessories, and conversation to the people they meet. Our group stays at the stop for 20 minutes, and then travels to the next designated stop. At 11 p.m., we head back to Rockland County and arrive at Albertus around midnight.

Students who experience a Midnight Run quickly get into the flow. At the first stop, most students are tentative, but by the second stop they are efficiently distributing food, clothing, and

toiletries. More importantly, they are easily conversing with the people who have come seeking assistance. The students are eager to find items of clothing that folks request, and they are quick to offer an extra sandwich, snack, or cup of coffee as the people prepare to move on to wherever they will spend the night.



Smiles and sandwiches for others.



Students who participate in a Midnight Run witness the challenges people who are unhoused face in the city. They see people sitting outside surrounded by their belongings and others living in cardboard boxes on a city sidewalk. Students have shared

that when they return home from the trip, it is difficult to forget the images of people sleeping outside in the cold as they climb into their own warm beds for the night.

Feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, and clothing the naked are acts of charity that students perform when they go on a Midnight Run. Participation in the Midnight Run is a real and tangible way that students at Albertus respond to Jesus' call to care for people in need.

The experience of going on a Midnight Run would not be possible for students at Albertus without the adults who serve as chaperones and drivers. Our school community is grateful for the generosity of benefactors who support the service trip through their financial assistance and their donations of coats, clothing, and personal care items. ●

"Meeting people was a humbling experience because it reminds you that there are so many people living on the street living such different lives from you, and how blessed and fortunate that we are."

– Elizabeth Guzman

"I remember going and seeing all these vulnerable people for the first time. It really opened my eyes to how homeless people lived and how we need to help them more."

– Tara Costello

"I feel like every little deed helps, even if it's just small. So, just like giving them clothes they need and food. That could be their only source of food for the day. And also they want you to hear their story; they just want to talk."

– Grace Gavigan

"In theology class and when we pray, there's always a story of Jesus showing compassion to the less fortunate. This is what Jesus did."

– Elizabeth Guzman

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE PREACHING IN ACTION *Conference*

The National College Preaching in Action Conference, sponsored by the Dominican Youth Movement USA, took place from May 20-25, hosted at St. Thomas Aquinas College, Sparkill. The conference was founded in 1952 by the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill. Attendees included students, mentors, and presenters from eight colleges/universities, founded within the Dominican tradition, who came together for a week of study, prayer, and sharing community. The conference empowers attendees to 'put their faith into practice and awaken within them their call to be Preachers of the Good News!'

Sessions ranged from the spirituality of preaching to responding to the signs of the times through Catholic Social Teaching, to a deeper understanding of the Dominican Charism,

Dominican prayer forms and the Four Pillars of the Dominican Order, to participating in a service day at sites that gave an appreciation of care for Earth to learning about the global vision of the Dominican Order. At the closing liturgy, the participating schools shared their commitment to an action plan, how they would take what they learned back to their home campuses.

For the three St. Thomas Aquinas College students and their mentors, the conference experience connected them to the college's mission, vision, and values as they re-committed themselves to continue to provide opportunities for their classmates through participation in and promotion of the college's Mission and Ministry Program and connections to the college's founders. In their own words:



Fiona Daly, Class of 2028

"The conference taught me we can preach God's message in our everyday activities if we treat each other with love and kindness. I learned how to 'preach from the pulpit of my own life,' making Jesus' love known to all people through the sharing of my gifts, talents, and services."

Michael Keegan, Class of 2026

"I learned a lot about the Dominican Order's commitment to service and prayer, along with a good deal about St. Dominic and especially about how he would pray as he walked from village to village, preaching God's word. The conference was a great opportunity to meet and be with people from throughout our country—truly a wonderful experience for me."

Kelwyn Sanguillan, Class of 2025

"The conference gave me the opportunity to learn about the history of the Dominican Order and different ways of preaching—through my actions and how I treat others. This experience has had an impact on me that I bring with me as I begin my post-college career and, yes, I am committing myself to be an active alum!"

Anne Schlinck, Mentor, Coordinator of the STACares Closet

"This was a meaningful experience for me. I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the Dominican traditions, being inspired by them, and will support and encourage efforts to weave them more deeply into the fabric of the St. Thomas Aquinas College community."

Sister Peggy Scarano, OP, Mentor and Co-Director of the Mission and Ministry Program

"For me, having the privilege of journeying with 25 young women and men studying together, sharing prayer, and participating in a day of service—what a blessing as together we brought to life the Four Pillars of the Dominican Order: Prayer | Study | Community | Service."



Cleaning the Sparkill Creek; justice in action.



Preaching companions and friends on the journey.

The Preaching in Action Conference encourages us to take what we learned and blend it with both the College's mission, vision, and values, and the connections

to its Founders, the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, celebrating 150 Years (1876–2026) of Women Making a Difference. Truly a blessed experience for all of us! Our days often included the beautiful Dominican Blessing;

*May God the Father bless us
May God the Son heal us
May God the Holy Spirit enlighten us!*



Participants and supporters from St. Thomas Aquinas College.

Founded in 1999, the Dominican Youth Movement USA, through high school, college, and young adult programs, makes the connection between the traditions of the world-wide Order of Dominican Sisters, Brothers, and Priests (Friars) while providing leadership training and preaching opportunities. The college preaching program began 24 years ago, held at St. Thomas Aquinas College, and will once again be hosted at the college May 2026! ●

Dominican Sisters Association hosts **INAUGURAL ASSEMBLY**



On Saturday, June 14, 2025, the Dominican Sisters Association (DSA) held its inaugural assembly—a joyful and hope-filled gathering that marked a significant step forward in our shared journey. Many of our Sisters and Associates were in attendance at this landmark event.

The day began with prayer, song, and a meaningful ritual celebrating the five Dominican congregations that form the DSA: Amityville, Blauvelt, Caldwell, Hope, and Sparkill. This moment symbolized the strength of our shared mission and the deep bonds of collaboration.

Throughout the day, participants engaged in rich dialogue and communal discernment, culminating in the affirmation of the DSA Focus Statement, which offers a unified path forward for our collective ministry.

A historic highlight was the election of the DSA's first Executive Committee—a leadership team entrusted with guiding us into this new chapter. Warm congratulations to Sister Theresa Rickard (President, Blauvelt), Sister Mary Hughes (1st Executive Committee Member, Amityville), and three additional members of the Committee: Sister Connie Kelly (Hope), Sister Mary Murray (Sparkill), and Sister Pat Tavis (Caldwell). Their shared vision and dedication to Dominican life and service will help lead us with purpose and grace.

The assembly concluded with a blessing of the new Executive Committee, sending them forth with encouragement, trust, and



hope. As the DSA begins this exciting new chapter, may we be energized by bold ideas, deep listening, and the spirit of communion that defines our way of life.

Sister Sheila Brennan, DSA Delegate and Task Force Member,

shared her reaction to the Assembly: "As the Morning Prayer began at the DSA Assembly, I was overwhelmed with emotion. I didn't expect tears of joy to collect in my eyes as we sang Gary Ault's beautiful hymn, 'All that we have and all that we offer comes from a heart both frightened and free.' I was so happy that we were in this place together to strengthen the bonds of collaboration and support among my Dominican family members."

Sister Grace Anne Hogan, DSA Delegate and Task Force Member,

stated: "It was wonderful to see the fruits of the years of planning come together on Saturday at the Inaugural Assembly of the Dominican Sisters Association. There was a tremendous spirit of sisterhood as together we witnessed to our Dominican Mission." ●



Sisters share their vision for the DSA.



Sister Diane McSherry greets a long-time friend.



Sister Kathleen Donnelly leads a prayer.



All who gathered affirmed the proposed statement.



Ministry Grants in 2025

Our Partners in Mission

The Leadership Team affirms the following grants for 2025-2026. Ministry grants focus on the needs of our world, our ministry for justice, our empowerment of the poor, and reverence for all creation.

■ One to One Learning Safety

The One to One grant is dedicated to creating a safe and supportive environment for students participating in the One to One Learning program at the Marydell Faith and Life Center. Given the rising concerns about ICE immigration raids and the potential threat of intruders, this grant aims to significantly enhance safety measures. It will fund the installation of additional emergency exits in the three buildings designated for classes, ensuring that all students, teachers, and staff can evacuate quickly and safely in case of an emergency. By investing in these improvements, we are committed to fostering an environment where education can thrive without fear.

■ Presentation Arts Center

The Mission of the Presentation Arts Center is to reach out to marginalized and economically disadvantaged individuals, offering enriching opportunities for both young children and older adults. Nestled in a struggling neighborhood in St. Ann, Missouri, the center represents a remarkable transformation; what was once an area devoid of resources has become a vibrant haven. Through engaging programs in music, dance, art, and crafts, we aim to inspire creativity and connection within the community. This grant reflects well our Direction Statement, emphasizing collaboration and enabling us to expand our network of relationships.

■ Promoting the Dominican Charism

This grant affirms our commitment to the Dominican Youth Movement USA, which introduces college students to the Dominican Pillars of prayer, study, community, and service. This year, the annual meeting was hosted by St. Thomas Aquinas College, the same venue where the first gathering took place 25 years ago. Our ongoing collaboration with STAC is highlighted in this initiative; the residents of the Dominican Convent had the opportunity to meet and greet a wonderful group of young college students, individuals poised to make a significant difference in the world.

■ Communities of Chaplains

Sister Margaret Oettinger, on behalf of the HealthCare Chaplaincy Network, requested support for a part-time position to fund a part-time chaplaincy director position. The program, which commenced at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, focuses on providing peer support, mentoring, spiritual direction, and an opportunity for chaplains to share. This grant will support the Mission of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill by providing support for those involved in healthcare and pastoral ministries.

■ Days for Girls International

The Days for Girls initiative grant is vital to the elimination of the stigma and limitation of menstruation for girls throughout the world. Days for Girls is endorsed by the United Nations NGO and broadens our circles of relationships as we begin to see ourselves as members of a global sisterhood. We are grateful to all who join us in this initiative— especially, St. Thomas Aquinas College and Albertus Magnus High School students.

■ Pakistan Dominican Study Centre

The Dominican Study Centre Girls' High School was transformed from a clinic into a school in 1986 by Sister Suzanne Dolan, OP, to serve orphans and children from impoverished families. The current building has aged and requires multiple renovations to ensure its safety and continuation. The project is crucial for the ongoing mission of the Dominican Study Center Girls' High School. Timely repairs and renovations will prevent further damage to the building and ensure the continuation of the Center's commitment to education and the Dominican pillar of study. ●

Walking with Two Feet of Love in Action

Since their founding in 1876, the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill have responded to the most vulnerable and those in need while also working to educate others to work for greater social justice. Today, the Sisters and Associates continue to work for ethical change and also provide food, volunteer at homeless shelters, teach, preach, pray, and participate in ways to make the earth beautiful.

At a recent congregational meeting, Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, former executive director of Network, a Catholic Social Justice lobby, reminded those gathered that advocacy for justice will happen only when our hearts are broken. A few years ago, the mass shooting at Uvalde broke the

hearts of many. The killing of 17 children and 2 teachers resulted in our continued contact with the children at Sacred Heart School in Uvalde. The Sisters write cards, send valentines and Easter candy, lobby for common-sense gun laws, and support Moms Demand Action.

One to One, a sponsored ministry of Sisters, provides English classes, citizenship, literacy, and GED training, and other supportive services for immigrants, people who are coming to this country because of poverty and to escape violence. The Sisters and Associates advocate for fair and compassionate immigration laws, recognizing that God has called us to "Welcome the Stranger" (Matthew 25:43).

The Sisters and Associates collect food for Catholic Charities, support an interfaith food drive, and write letters and call legislators in support of Bread for the World's advocacy for nutrition programs to ensure that no child in the U.S. or around the world goes hungry.



When the earthquake occurred in Haiti ten years ago, some of the Sisters went there to provide whatever services were needed. Today, the living conditions in Haiti have destroyed most of the infrastructure we had supported. Families we have come to know and love are plagued by gang violence. We continue to support them financially

and by our presence, and we join with others to stop the flow of guns from the U.S. to Haiti. Without the guns, the gangs would be powerless.

When Pope Francis spoke of "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" being connected, this resonated strongly with the congregation. Earth has suffered, and the Sisters and Associates have committed to the *Laudato Si* Action Plan, paying attention to planting a wildflower garden, eliminating plastic, recycling, and monitoring our investments in light of the environmental distress in our world today.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops describes the two vital responses to those in need as "Two Feet of Love in Action," two complementary ways that people of faith can walk the path of love. The first is to work together to achieve social justice by addressing the root causes or structures that contribute to suffering and injustice. The second is through charitable works, which respond to specific situations and immediate needs, such as direct services or providing food, clothing, shelter, or monetary assistance to help others.

For 150 years, the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill have been walking with the two feet of love in action and look forward to future opportunities to cultivate justice and peace. ●



JUBILARIANS 2025

** Not pictured*



80th



75th



70th



65th



60th



50th

80th | Band of 1945

Sister Dorothy Russell—Alice Thomas
Sister Jeanne Margaret Stoltz
Sister Marie Louise Ruggeri*
Sister Ann Matthew O'Shea

75th | Band of 1950

Sister Dorothy Farley*—Marie de Montfort
Sister Margaret Rita Bergin
Sister Patricia Neary—Ann Loretta
Sister Anne Tahaney—Loyola
Sister Florence Flynn*—Thomas Aquinas
Sister Rose Patrice Sasso

70th | Band of 1955

Sister James Louise Downey*
Sister John Rose Hartling
Sister Margaret Strychalski—Raymond Mary
Sister Martha Marie Jaegers
Sister Joan O'Connor—Peter Noreen
Sister Stephen Gerard Miick
Sister Jeanne Armeno—Frances Marie

65th | Band of 1960

Sister Ellen Joseph Moore
Sister Elizabeth McLaughlin—Grace Edward
Sister Elizabeth Hasselt—Lawrence Marie
Sister Bernadette Marie Nonnon
Sister Maryann Summa—William Edith
Sister Kathleen Gallagher—Patrick Edwin
Sister Elizabeth Graham—Matthew Ann
Sister Margaret Riordan*—Rose Patrick
Sister Marilyn Fallert*—Theresa Rose
Sister Catherine Naughton—Mary James

60th | Band of 1965

Sister Mary Jane Bookstaver—Jane Therese
Sister Patricia Conway—Thomas Christi
Sister Christine Ferrar—Joseph Martin

50th | Band of 1975

Sister Maureen Bradshaw



Laudato Si' gardens

Since its construction in 1964, Dominican Convent in Sparkill has been a place of hospitality, prayer, study, song, and faith sharing.

Cloistered within the Motherhouse is St. Joseph's Garden with benches, a fountain for birds, and perennials. The space has provided a place of reflection, camaraderie, and beauty for generations of Sisters. It has been a blessing, especially in the warmer months, providing reading spaces, tables for having lunch, and opportunities take a walk in the fresh air.

In the Sisters' younger years they were able to weed, plant, and maintain the garden themselves. But that has become difficult and over the decades, tree roots have caused many of the pavers to tilt making the outdoor garden less navigable, particularly for walkers and wheelchairs.

We are happy to announce that after we received a generous donation, we are in the process of upgrading the garden. Dead trees have been removed, new trees have been added, and additional landscaping will be done. Most importantly, new pavers are scheduled to be installed making St. Joseph's garden a hospitable space again for the Sisters to enjoy! ●



SISTERS GATHER IN *Rome*

MAY 4-17, 2025

On behalf of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, Sister Irene Ellis, OP, participated in two weeks of meetings in Rome, which began somberly following the death of beloved Pope Francis; however, the time was also marked by happiness with the election of Pope Leo XIV, the first pope born in the United States, a missionary in Peru, and a member of the Augustinian order.

Week I

The Union of International Superiors General (UISG) met the first week and brought together women Superiors General from around the world. Established in 1965, UISG promotes a prophetic voice in the Church and society. Its members span geographic, linguistic, and cultural boundaries to build a global network of solidarity, support, and collaboration among religious women.

Over 950 congregational leaders from around the world gathered to reflect on the theme, "Consecrated Life: A Hope That Transforms." Religious women from diverse cultures, community lives, and ministry experiences engaged in prayerful reflection and a synodal process of dialogue with one another. The method of simultaneous translation allowed each participant to hear the presentations in her language.

Sister Mary Barron, OLA, UISG President, opened the Assembly with heartfelt words that set the tone for all that followed. She shared,

"In a world marked by conflict and division, religious women are called to be witnesses of peace, hope, and unity. By embracing our vulnerability, we can open ourselves to God's love and become instruments of compassion and mercy for all."



If you would like to make a gift towards this project, it can be done online at:

sparkill.org/make-a-donation
or you can also call **845-359-4179**.



capacity; yet embracing grief, sorrow, anger, and fear with faith in God's future. As "midwives," those gathered honored the past and looked with hope to usher in the next phase of Dominican women as they seek to accompany younger Sisters into an unknown future.

The keynote speaker of the Assembly was Sister Kelly Connors, PM, who reminded

Sisters ministering in demanding, sometimes dangerous situations in Myanmar, Amazonia, and at the border between Mexico and the USA shared their experiences under the topic, "Religious Life: Sowing Hope at the Frontiers of Pain and Exclusion." "Religious Women, Hope in a Synodal Church" included Sisters ministering in the Dominican Republic, Ivory Coast, and India, who all affirmed the essential role of women religious in advancing a truly synodal Church.

At the conclusion of the Assembly, the Superiors General committed to becoming more and more:

- Women of peace, resilient, who remain at the foot of the cross
- Women at the margins, who reject exclusion and discrimination
- Women who keep vigil in the night and, like the moon, reflect the light
- Synodal women who build evangelical and inclusive communities
- Prophetic women who, in old age, illness or weakness, continue to be signs of hope

Week II

The Dominican Sisters International Confederation (DSIC) met at the

Passionist Fathers' retreat center in Rome, providing a beautiful, park-like setting for our global Dominican family of prioresses. These meetings provided the opportunity for participants to reflect together on the future of being Apostolic Dominican Sisters. The five-day gathering focused on the theme, "Widows and Midwives...Where Past and Present Meet."

DSIC International Coordinator and Amityville Dominican, Sister Margaret Mayce, set the tone by sharing: "As we reflect on who we are as Widows and Midwives, we need one another as sources of support and encouragement for the work ahead of us. We need one another to help us let go of the elements and sentiments of the past that are no longer helpful, and we need one another's encouragement to make decisions that will help us create a future full of hope and promise in which our larger Dominican charism will flourish."

Through prayer, deep listening, dialogue, and reflection, the leaders reflected on their condition as "widows" facing decreasing membership and diminished

those gathered that the witness of consecrated lives depends neither on age nor what one does, but rather how and why we are present. She suggested that who Sisters are today is exactly what the world needs, and lives of service have meaning as we seek and share love, compassion, and peace. As Dominicans, all gathered affirmed continued efforts toward justice and peace.

During the Assembly, representatives spoke from smaller congregations nearing completion, some requesting a Commissary (appointed leader), and others considering the possibilities of association or merging. The Leadership Development Program also shared ideas and offered proposals from the younger members who had participated in a pilgrimage to the birthplace of St. Dominic, Caleruega, Spain, last summer.

The Eucharistic Liturgy on the last day together was a celebration of the hope and joy that reaffirmed one, global, Dominican sisterhood. Father Gerard Timoner, OP, Master General of the Dominican Order, was presider at this liturgy. ●



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