

And the conversations continue...

New Orleans EMD • Pre-Chapter Meeting • November 10-12, 2006

Eighty-eight percent of the members of the Eucharistic Missionaries of St. Dominic met at St. Catharine, KY, for Pre-Chapter meetings November 10-12. Besides the hospitality of the Kentucky Motherhouse community and their participation in two sessions, the EMDs were blessed with one observer each from four other Cluster congregations for a day and a half. Dan Ward, OSB, reviewed canonical perspectives on voting for a Union. Panelists from Akron, Columbus, Great Bend, Kentucky, and the EMDs explained each congregation's unique understanding and living out of the Dominican charism.

The Sisters discussed the first draft of the Constitutions, reviewed the Cluster's financial report with Kentucky *Sr. Marie Jeanne Surette*, both on video and in person, and reflected with Dan Ward and the invited

observers on concerns about the vote in April, 2007. Saturday morning was spent recounting the "post-Katrina new normal" experience, and that evening the congregation celebrated the 98th birthday of its oldest member, *Sr. Madeleine Davis*, who has resided in Sansbury Care Center since September 2005.



Right: Members of the Inter-Congregational Panel included Peggy Sause (Columbus), Rachel Sena and Noel Toomey (EMD), Rene Weeks (Great Bend), and Teresa Tuite (Kentucky).



Above: Srs. Luisa Derouen, Fara Impastato, Cecilia Stubblefield, Suzanne Brauer, and Diane McOsker

New Orleans St. Mary • Pre-Chapter Assembly • December 2, 2006 & February 3, 2007

On December 2, 2006, St. Mary's second Pre-Chapter Assembly took place at Our Lady of Wisdom Health Care Center with 95 percent of members in attendance.

Prior to the assembly, Prioress *Sr. Angeline Magro* sent each Sister a timeline of St. Mary's "journey in faith," which reviewed its Chapter directives for a process for reconfiguration with other congregations and outlined the congregation's history of collaboration, dating back to 1984. This document

proved most helpful during the assembly.

A lovely contemplative

prayer by *Srs. Hilary Simpson* and *Mary C. Daniel* opened the day, followed by a PowerPoint presentation on congregational and Cluster statistics. Discussions around questions of the future, the options, and implications of not accepting Canonical Union produced lively conversations at each table. Sisters also considered what they would do individually if the Chapter chooses autonomy.

In the afternoon, all sat in a large circle, and each Sister spoke about where she saw the congregation being called and why. It was an awesome moment as the group sat together listening with respect to one another.

On February 3, the congregation gathered for a third Pre-Chapter Assembly. Discussion that morning addressed two main questions: *What will our congregation do if some of the others do not accept Union?* and *What will the congregation do if we do not accept Union?* Later, echoing the previous meeting, the congregation once again sat in a large circle as each Sister shared her feelings on the question, *Where do I see the Spirit leading the congregation now?* Once again, Sisters expressed gratitude for this powerful experience.

Overall, evaluations of both meetings were positive and gave the Sisters much to consider as they continue in the discernment process.



Above: Srs. M. Jordan Langenhennig, Teresa Mittelbronn, and Mary Ann Culotta



Right: Srs. Dorothy Lorio and Judene Lillie

...Congregational Pre-Chapter Meetings

Great Bend • December Pre-Chapter Meetings • December 29-30, 2006

More than 90percent of the Great Bend Sisters gathered for Pre-Chapter discussions December 29-30.

The days began with an inspirational PowerPoint presentation of the Order's 800-year history. The slides and text were built upon visions and dreams – from the dream of Jane of Aza before the birth of Dominic and his godmother's vision of the eight-pointed star at his baptism through the vision and dream of Dominic at the Seignadou. The vision of Dominic came to fruition through Prouilhe and the history of the Dominican Family down through the ages. For the Great Bend congregation, this history included the story of Regensburg, Germany; Brooklyn, New York; and Mother Antonina Fischer's arrival in Kansas in 1902. The presentation ended with the current conversation of the Cluster communities. The story was woven together with a song by **Sr. Amy McFrederick**, adapted for the day: "It's a journey in faith,/ It's a movement in hope,/ And the vision continues,/ And the vision continues . . ."

To begin the discussion of the draft Constitutions, four inter-congregational panel members – **Sr. Peggy Martin** (Great Bend) and guests **Srs. Joanne Caniglia** (Akron), **Barbara Kane** (Columbus) and **Jeanne Moore** (NOEMD) – shared their reflections on the document. Then, the community shared among themselves at their tables what they found hopeful in the documents and what challenges would call them to growth. Each one also voiced how she viewed herself as "catching the fire of Dominic's vision" at this time.

Another major portion of the meeting was the discussion and nearly unanimous support for adoption of the corporate stance on nuclear disarmament, proposed by the Federation of Dominican Sisters USA.

The Pre-Chapter days closed with a memorial service for the four Sisters and two Associates who died in 2006, with Homecoming Day activities of fun and games, and with midnight prayer for the new year of 2007.

Kentucky • Regional Pre-Chapter Meetings • January 20, February 3 & February 20, 2007

The Dominicans of St. Catharine, Kentucky, held regional winter meetings in preparation for Chapter. Regional meetings were held in Boston on January 20, in both Memphis and Chicago on February 3, and in both Nebraska and St. Catharine on February 17.

Following prayer, the morning session of each meeting focused on the "Alternate Model," a separate option for revitalization that Kentucky will be considering in addition to the Union option. A PowerPoint presentation was presented to the group on the "Web of Relationships" booklet outlining the history, purpose, and hopes for the Alternative Model, followed by group discussion. The groups discussed the changes called for in the Alternate Model and the risks involved in choosing this model. Each Sister answered a sheet of pertinent questions that will be integrated into the model. The Sisters were promised a cumulative report later. Reflections from other regions also

appeared in a PowerPoint presentation.

The afternoon sessions began with insightful reflections on the impact of the reconfiguration process and the practical possibilities regarding a Union. This session was followed by quiet reflection on the Union model and sharing of thoughts in large groups. Some of the responses included Sisters sharing how they saw this could be good for them personally.

The last piece of information given was an outline with details about Pre-Chapter polling, the Chapter voting process, and dates of Cluster congregational Chapters.

The different regions recognized that they want what is best for the congregation and are striving to remain open, looking to the Holy Spirit to guide them.



Above: *Srs. Paschala Noonan and Kathleen Corrigan participate in Kentucky's Boston regional meeting.*

Right: *Srs. Madeleine Louise McCune and Cathy Galaskiewicz participate in Kentucky's Memphis regional meeting.*

Reflections

after recent Congregational Pre-Chapter Meetings

Where are you now in the Cluster Journey?



I was a bit nervous prior to the assembly. I thought the data shown in the PowerPoint slides and the handouts were effective and sobering. Our facilitator's questions brought me to the edge of nervousness, but I believe that we need to stand there for a while. I was delighted with the large circle in which each Sister stated where she believed the Holy Spirit was calling the congregation at this time. For the moment, this helped me see where each Sister stands. I thought it was well done.

Shirley Bodisch
New Orleans St. Mary

Even with all the days of discernment, the readings, sharing, reflections, and prayer, I still go back and forth in my own personal process of decision-making. I guess this is what "staying open" means. I hope by the time we vote on our decision, I'll have a leaning toward one of our choices. I see advantages to both, and I also see the risks involved in each.

Marilyn Pierson
Kentucky



Hurricane Katrina gave the EMDs a real thrust into the Cluster process. After losing four residences from the flood in New Orleans, we looked to our friends for safety and support at this unfortunate time. Since August of 2005, I, along with other EMD retired sisters, have lived with the Kentucky Dominicans. I have found this situation life-giving, like-minded, and pleasant. I believe a Cluster Union would be a gift we could give ourselves.

Juliana Savoy
New Orleans EMD



My image of Union: Gifts to be received; Gifts to be offered! As I enter into my golden jubilee year, my heart comes alive with expectation when I anticipate being welcomed into the richness of the unique charisms of our Sister congregations. And how eager I am to offer the gift of our own beloved Eucharistic Missionary Dominican charism, especially with our Eucharistic focus. . . . I, too, fear the losses, pain and difficulties, but what unbelievable possibilities and treasures await us if we have the courage to enter this new death-resurrection experience.

Alberta Schindler
New Orleans EMD



Realizing that whatever choice I make in April will require sacrifice and radical change, I know I need to continue to keep my mind and heart open and listen respectfully to others. Right now I am leaning toward Union. The motivation for this inclination derives from my experiences at Cluster meetings, the Lands of Dominic tour, an artists' retreat at Ossining, and membership in Dominican Institute of the Arts. Most important has been the Federation Convocation, where the open-space gathering on reconfiguration gave me a clearer understanding that clustering could be a realistic step toward "Dominicans USA." I also believe joining the Union would be a more hopeful sign for the younger Sisters. When the final decision is made, I trust the wisdom of each Sister and feel it will be God's spoken word for me.



Thomas Marie Shelley
Kentucky

Story-telling, and hearing others' stories, really do rekindle the embers in our lives. (At our recent meeting, reviewing the 800 years stoked our fires, and hearing the stories of other congregations encouraged the flames!) Sharing stories is very important as we move forward in the preaching mission Dominic bequeathed to us. At our table, we talked about sharing fire – in Nigeria, where wood fires are still in use, a family whose embers have gone out during the night will go to another family which still has some live embers and take a few coals back to their compound to start their fire again. It is good for us to receive live coals from others' embers when our own fires need to be "jump-started!"



Terry Wasinger
Great Bend

We have not had new members in a number of years to bring us fresh questions and insights. This draft of the Constitutions, which we discussed at our Pre-Chapter meeting, includes fresh ways of stating our Dominican life. This challenges us to deepen and broaden our living out of Dominic's charism.



Janice Thome
Great Bend

I was very pleased with our assembly meeting. The small table discussions were useful. Somehow, it seems that we could deal more with the details and the personal feelings in this setting. The finale in the huge circle was moving - it was important that we had the prior half hour of reflection. The replies were most encouraging. The Mass was very well planned, simple singing, not too long or overloaded.



Carmelite Zibilich
New Orleans St. Mary

Reflections

What gifts would the other congregations bring to a Cluster Union?

The Sisters of **New Orleans St. Mary** are gracious, hardworking, spiritual women whose love of the South radiates through their gracious hospitality. The Dominican charism is reflected and sustained through their dedication to the education of high-school women. The Sisters preach with an articulate voice that reflects a deep sense of the needs of the world yet offers a consistent word of hope. They are a community that speaks and lives the reflected Truth that arises out of the lived sorrows and joys of their Southern experience.

Dorothy Sarachene, Akron



The **Great Bend** Dominicans are a wonderful example to us of community and outreach. They number just enough to be very connected to one another in community, in prayer, in their deliberations, and in their wonderful music ministry. Yet they are expansive in their outreach to the poor and in their incredible awareness programs and action on behalf of peace and justice in a world that sorely needs these.

Maxine Shonk, Columbus

The Dominican Sisters of **Oxford** bring to other Cluster communities a creative and yet very down-to-earth loving presence. The interactions that I have had with each person I have met in the community are filled with delight and liveliness. There is a great sense and appreciation of their history, and yet a willingness to continue growing and meeting the challenges of the present. I love the spunk they exhibit and the respect for all of life. The balance is beautiful! My association with them has blessed me. I am excited about the possibilities that lie ahead for all of us!

Renee Dreiling, Great Bend



But one and the same Spirit produces all gifts, distributing them individually to each as he wishes.

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:11-12

And God gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ

Ephesians 4:11-12



The **Columbus** Sisters are a strong witness to the Dominican Charism, evidenced in their life of study and commitment to higher education, especially for women. They have a commitment to working for justice and peace, concern for the disenfranchised and poor, especially women and children, and they have a strong ministry outreach. They are a group of women faithful to holy preaching. They have a history of struggle that gives testimony to living an ecclesial life while working toward bringing about change in the Church – that is in the tradition of Dominic – what a wonderful gift to bring to the Union.

Laetitia Anne Campbell, Kentucky

What say we of the gifts of these noble women, the **Kentucky** Dominicans? Their sincere kindness, sincere concern for our welfare and sincere generosity overwhelm us. Their deep perception of every need, followed by gracious implementation, excels beyond imagination. Their gifts extend to all. They are as prisms of variegated hues of brilliant color in their devotion to duty, in their diligence to their individual responsibility to the common good. Their relationships with one another and bonding with employees are exemplary of Gospel witness. Their gifts, without doubt, reflect the Divine.



Mary Thomas Ranzino, NOEMD



One thing that impresses me about the **Eucharistic Missionaries** of St. Dominic is their dedication to mission. Their focus is on Eucharist, and they bring the reality of Incarnation to the people with whom they work. I believe that this gift will not only enhance a new Union, but it will be a model for all of us to imitate. Isn't this what our founder Dominic de Guzman did?

Shirley Bodisch, NOSM

I think the Dominicans of **Akron** would bring humility and diligence in the pursuit of truth and the sharing of the results of that wisdom on all levels of education. They would also gift the Cluster with the preservation of the legacy of Dominic in contemplation and unfolding the mysteries of the kingdom of God through preaching.



Teresita Lipar, Oxford

Looking Ahead: Praying for One Another

Cluster Chapter Dates 2007

Oxford	March 31
Akron	April 9
Columbus	April 10-13
Kentucky	April 11-15
Great Bend	April 13-15
New Orleans EMD	April 24-26
New Orleans St. Mary	April 28-29

In this season of Lent, we Dominican Sisters pray for each of the seven Congregations engaged in the Cluster conversations as we journey into decision-making regarding union.

We pray for faithfulness as we trust the presence of the Spirit in each Sister.
And so we continue to pray...

Come Holy Spirit,
enkindle the fire of your love.
Transform all that is fearful into
boldness of heart.

Inspire us, your Dominican Sisters,
with trust and hope in your presence
as we contemplate our shared life.

Be gentle discernment
on our journey of faith.

Grant us reverence
in the face of diversity
and patience
with the unfolding of our future.

Amen.

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