



Cluster: a Dominican journey in faith

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Intercongregational Gatherings: The Journey Continues...

Preparations continue for the Intercongregational Gatherings planned for this summer. The Transition Team and many committees have been working on everything from transportation to prayer rituals, and from centerpieces to PowerPoint presentations.

Almost 190 Sisters are slated to participate in the New Orleans gathering June 20-22 at the Hilton New Orleans Airport, and more than 200 have registered for the Columbus gathering July 18-20 at the Embassy Suites Hotel.

With the theme “The Journey Continues...,” the Intercongregational Gatherings represent a significant step on our journey together, as we work toward uniting into one new congregation. One of the main purposes of the gatherings is to provide opportunities for Sisters to connect with one another – to nurture bonds created at past intercongregational meetings or other settings, and to meet and develop relationships with new Sisters. Recognizing that this will be the first official intercongregational function since we were granted formal permission to unite, an atmosphere of celebration and hope certainly will permeate our time together.

While the tone of the gatherings will be light and joyful, there will be a few tasks to accomplish as well. Prior to the meetings, materials will be mailed to all

Sisters in preparation for several discussions that are planned. At the gatherings, there will be time to consult on the internal government structure provided by the Government Structures Task Force and on the Provisional Directory provided by the Constitutions Committee. There will also be significant time for us to reflect together on materials provided by the Dominican Life and Mission Committee. And throughout the weekends, information booths will exhibit the work of each Transition subcommittee, task force, or other working group. The booths will provide opportunities for Sisters to meet committee members, learn more about the group’s work, ask questions, make suggestions, and, in many cases, partake of some festive fun!

Participants in the New Orleans gathering will also have an opportunity to take a formal tour of New Orleans, with highlights of the Katrina devastation, on Sunday. Some members have also elected to stay an extra day in the city to participate in a service outreach project on Monday. In Columbus, participants will have the opportunity on Friday to take a tour of nearby ministry sites, including the congregation’s Motherhouse, Mohun Health Care Center, Ohio Dominican University, Shepherd’s Corner, and the Dominican Learning Center.

Cluster Connections: Family Visits

As they customarily do when in the United States, Columbus Sisters *Germaine Conroy* and *Susan Leslie*, (missionaries in Chimbote, Peru) visited family in Massachusetts this spring while here for congregational meetings. But this time, traveling separately, each took the opportunity to also stop in Watertown to connect with Kentucky Sisters residing there.

“I enjoyed our visit with the Sisters – meeting new members of the ‘extended family’ and thinking about possibilities for new ministry or living arrangements in the future,” shares Sr. Germaine. “Several of us plan to be at the New Orleans meeting in June, and we look forward to continuing to get to know one another.”

Standing: Srs. *Christine McManus*, *Susan Leslie*, *Mary Costello*, *Liz Thomson*
Sitting: Srs. *Rita Imelda* and *Michelle Sherliza*



Meet the Relatives

Program helps acquaint Cluster Sisters with their sister congregations

There is an old saying that says you can't truly know someone until you walk a mile in their shoes, and it was that saying that **Sr. Teresa Tuite** (Kentucky) had in mind when she created a series called "Meet the Relatives."



Sr. Agnes Conway learns about the New Orleans St. Mary congregation.

"I wanted a way to capture the heart of each congregation," Sr. Teresa said. "It is one thing to have knowledge [of each congregation] but unless you touch their heart, you don't really begin to know them."

The series was originally developed for Kentucky Sisters unable to travel to intercongregational events, but soon it became clear that it could be a useful tool for all Sisters and Associates to learn more about their new "relatives" in the seven congregations.

The presentations were created on PowerPoint and recorded to DVD for easier viewing. "Having it on video puts a face to it," Sr. Teresa said.

The videos present historical background, the current ministries, some of the Sisters and Associates, and programs of the featured congregation. Most material was taken from the web site and/or histories of each congregation. Photos were also submitted by the congregations' communicators.

Each video runs about 30 minutes, but with added material and sharing, an hour and a half is suggested for a session. The videos are presented in an atmosphere of prayer to foster a sense of reverence as the viewers approach the story of each community.

There are places in some DVDs where the presenter is asked to pause in order to give time for reflection, sharing, or adding material not on the video. Doing this helps to make the relatives more real to those who may not know members of the other congregations, and also enables the viewer to see how all the stories have common elements, Sr. Teresa said. "It helps us see where each person came from for a little while – to see the similarities and differences."

Also, when a program is presented in Kentucky, a little fun is added – everyone is invited to share in songs that each congregation may sing, participate in traditions they might have, and even eat food that is specific to each congregation or region. For example, when the series on the Eucharistic Missionaries was given, the Sisters enjoyed the New Orleanian fare of beignets and King cake.

At the end of the session, Sr. Teresa passes out names and addresses along with a piece of stationery and envelope. She asks the Sisters to write to someone on their list, to introduce themselves and to let them know that they were learning about the new relatives.

The "Meet the Relatives" program has been prepared for other congregations to use to show to Sisters, Associates, employees, students, and other interested groups. Keep your eyes open for news of "Meet the Relatives" coming to a congregational location near you!



Kentucky Srs. Mary Helen Thieneman and Ruth Anne Rezek and EMD Sr. Jeanne Moore (in background) are absorbed in meeting their relatives.

Fun Facts

Our Oldest Sisters...

Our oldest Sister is 101-year-old Rose Angela Burke, of Kentucky, who was born in 1906. Only one other Sister can boast centenarian status: Sr. Mary Urban Cullen, of Columbus, who was born in 1907. Others of our elders range in age from 99 years to 95 years and include

Marie Michelle Lavin (Kentucky)
Marian Keane (Columbus)
Madeleine Davis (NOEMD)
Mary Elizabeth Noel (Akron)
Salesia Schneweis (Great Bend)
Kathleen Mattingly (Kentucky)
Monica Kebisek (Oxford)
M. Celine Hete (Akron)
Mary Martha Pitschmann (Akron)

M. Teresa Mittelbronn (NOSM)
Vincent de Paul Hutton (Kentucky)
Francis Marie Lawler (Columbus)
Rosemary Yonkers (Akron)
Benedicta Beckes (Oxford)
Mary Anne McSweeney (NOSM)
Loretto McManaman (Kentucky)
Villana Sheeran (Kentucky)

Our Youngest Sisters...

Our youngest Sister is 30-year-old Mary Vuong, of Kentucky, who was born in 1977. Others range in age from 39 years to 54 years and include

Rocío Torres Leon (Columbus)
Mai Dung Nguyen (Kentucky)
Susan Olson (Columbus)
Mary A. Deane (Oxford)
Ruth Hamel (Oxford)
Patricia Connick (Columbus)
Catherine Arnold (Columbus)
Susan Leslie (Columbus)
Robin Richard (NOSM)

Joanne Caniglia (Akron)
Barb Lolli (Columbus)
Carol Gerke (Great Bend)
Charlotte Brungardt (Great Bend)
Marcellino Dung Nguyen (Kentucky)
Lisa Zucarelli (Columbus)
Hoa Nguyen (Kentucky)
Rachel Sena (NOEMD)
JoAnn Hohenbrink (Columbus)

Upcoming Dates

- June 20-22, 2008** Intercongregational Gathering in New Orleans
- July 18-20, 2008** Intercongregational Gathering in Columbus
- October 30-Nov 2, 2008** Pre-Chapter Assembly in St. Louis
- April 12, 2009** Foundation Day (Easter Sunday)
- April 14, 2009** Founding celebrations in St. Louis & at Motherhouses
- April 15-21, 2009** First General Chapter in St. Louis

Reflections

What are your hopes for the Cluster Union in this new year?



I pray we continue to respectfully work through the details of our unification process.

Also, that we take the time to truly feel the love and rhythm of God and each other as we further integrate our procedures and practicalities, new and old ideas, dreams and underlying spiritual movements as listening Dominican women in today's world.

Sr. Mary A. Deane
Oxford



My hopes for the Cluster's movement toward the union would be that we would truly seek out the Spirit's guidance, be open to whatever that seems to be, and respond to it.

Sr. Diane Hooley
New Orleans EMD



In our Cluster process, I feel like we have been involved in a very long, high-risk pregnancy. And like a pregnancy, we have had times of "morning sickness" times of joyful anticipation, times of doubt and worry, times of wonder and awe. Whenever there is a "multiple birth" with more than three babies, the press comes out in full-force. Well, we are about to give birth to a congregation of more than 700 Sisters, and 500 Associates. So, instead of reading about it, we *are* the event! Why? So that we can continue to be the Holy Preaching; so that we can say "yes" to the invitation to deep personal and communal conversion; so that we can bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a Gospel that says there is another way of being in this fractured world of ours; so that together as Sisters we can be about the Mission of Jesus. We are now in the process of labor. In April 2009 we will officially give birth. I feel tremendous excitement and hope, and a sense of new life, when I consider our future together.

Sr. Susan Leslie
Columbus

I hope we can now begin the healing process. I pray that we all may come together as a true community of St. Dominic.

Sr. Margie Millet
New Orleans
St. Mary



For greater solidarity, I would hope for more opportunities for each member to learn to know other members now unfamiliar to them. That by some means we may begin to share in common ministries utilizing membership from all seven original units.

Sr. Loretta Petit
Akron



My 2008 Cluster hopes are three: That our Associates, employees, sponsored institutions, ministries, and benefactors will be supported by increased dialogue and shared communications during this transition time; that each Sister will continue to internalize the reality of the union decision by doing her "homework" of study, prayer, and honest dialogue within her own and with her new sister congregations; and that transformative planetary consciousness, our essential values, and our "herstories" will become more integrated within and among us.

Sr. Elaine V. Shaw-Coté
Kentucky



The more I think about linking the resources, energies, gifts and good will of our individual communities into a strong chain of solidarity for a new Dominican Congregation, the more I rejoice. I am living in this time and in this place. I truly believe that Dominic's vision and passion for a committed life together will also be the anchor and inspiration for our achievement of new ways of being with each other, and living the life Dominic bequeathed to us.

Sr. Diane Traffas
Great Bend



Transition Team Travelogue

When members of the Transition Team (TT) gather for their monthly meetings, they generally come together at a site where there is a significant presence of Cluster/Union Sisters. Doing so has enabled them to meet more members on a personal basis, to be available for answering questions and gathering input from local Sisters, and to have opportunities to visit Motherhouses, convents, and ministry sites related to the congregations.



At the Collaborative Dominican Novitiate: (left to right) Srs. Rene Weeks, Bernie Baltrinic, Juliana D'Amato (secretary), Anne Kilbride, Therese Leckert, Ruby Cribbin (facilitator), Gene Poore, and Barbara Rapp.

St. Louis

October 28-31, 2007

With many of the Transition Team members participating in the 10th Anniversary celebration of the Dominican Alliance held in St. Louis, it was the perfect opportunity for the TT to gather afterward for their monthly business meeting. The Collaborative Dominican Novitiate graciously hosted them, and Team members enjoyed participating in Mass and prayers with the directors and novices. Being again in St. Louis brought memories of the intercongregational events held there as part of the Cluster discernment process and ignited enthusiasm for the new congregation's Pre-Chapter meeting, Founding celebration, and first General Chapter that will take place in St. Louis between late October 2008 and April 2009.

Great Bend

The Transition Team set out west to gather in Great Bend for their meeting last October.

While there, they visited the Great Bend congregation's Heartland Center for Spirituality (HCS). HCS offers a setting of hospitality, serenity, and personal growth with spacious grounds conducive to renewal. The goal of HCS is to be an oasis where all will feel welcome, whether they come for spiritual enrichment, educational programs, staff development, conferences, retreats, or just quiet time and space.

Another ministry on the Transition Team's itinerary was Cedar Park Place. This residence for seniors in Great Bend enjoys a sterling reputation for having

October 28-31, 2007

created a stable, vibrant, and program-enriched healthy community for seniors who lack economic resources to otherwise access quality, safe housing opportunities. The Transition Team was impressed with the many residents who expressed gratitude for such a great living space and such an outstanding manager.



Cedar Park Place resident Mary Adams (left) chats with Srs. Barbara Rapp, Rene Weeks, and Bernie Baltrinic.

Akron

December 10-14, 2007

Winter weather did not prevent the Transition Team from visiting Akron's founded ministries, including Crown Point ecological center in Bath, Ohio, about 40 minutes from Our Lady of the Elms. The mission of Crown Point is to demonstrate the practical applications of ecology under the guiding principles of community, sustainability, justice, and spirituality. The Team also visited Our Lady of the Elms School campus, on the Motherhouse grounds, which includes a coeducational preschool and kindergarten, as well as an all-girls elementary, middle, and high school. Team members especially enjoyed their precious interactions with the youngest students and were impressed to find the school and its students so clearly imbued with the Dominican charism and spirituality.



An OLE pre-schooler with Sr. Therese Leckert (New Orleans St. Mary)

Ponchatoula & New Orleans

The Transition Team and Leadership Teams met at Rosaryville Spirit Life Center (Ponchatoula, LA) in January. A ministry of the New Orleans St. Mary congregation, Rosaryville provides spiritual growth opportunities for individuals and groups. The picturesque grounds offer a wonderful atmosphere for connecting with God and creation, and provided a welcome respite for the Team and other leaders as well.

After their meetings, the TT traveled to nearby New Orleans. There they visited ministries of the Eucharistic Missionaries, including the Archdiocesan Spirituality Center and St. Maria Goretti Parish. They also visited ministries of the St. Mary congregation, including St. Anthony of Padua School and St. Mary's Dominican High School. Team members were impressed that, in spite of the devastation each

of these ministries experienced during Katrina, they have been rebuilt. The TT also saw firsthand other dregs of Katrina in the area, as well as some signs of rebirth. In their final stop, the Team spent time visiting the St. Mary Sisters in residence at Our Lady of Wisdom Health Care Center, a collaborative health care center for religious, priests, and lay persons in New Orleans.

January 3-6, 2008



The Transition Team & Leadership in New Orleans



Srs. Loretta Sullivan (Columbus) and Bernie Baltrinic (Akron)

New Haven & New York

Feb. 10-14, 2008

In February, the Transition Team visited New Haven, Connecticut, and New York City, where the Columbus congregation has several founded institutions and many Sisters and Associates serving the areas. In New York, they visited St. Vincent Ferrer High School, which Columbus Sisters have staffed since 1888, and Dominican Academy, founded by the congregation in 1897. In New Haven, the Team had the chance to tour Albertus Magnus College, a co-educational liberal arts college offering undergraduate, graduate, and adult learning programs. They also were impressed with the work of the Springs Learning Center, a literacy program serving its mainly immigrant, Latino neighborhood with one-to-one tutoring in English as a Second Language.

Transition Committee Updates

Founding Event Committee

The Founding Event Committee met for the first time in New Orleans December 7-9, 2007. The committee began working on its tasks with gusto. **Sr. Thoma Swanson** (Columbus) of the Arts Resource Group attended and inspired creativity in all as she drew some preliminary art ideas. And the committee was pleased to learn that Don Goergen, OP, will be joining us all for the founding event. Ideas flew around the room, and by the end of the meeting, a rough sketch of the founding event began to emerge. Committee members continue planning via conference calls and emails, and will share more details of the founding event as they are confirmed.

The Founding Event Committee
Standing: **Srs. Andre Krevac, Chair & Shirley Bodisch, Liaison**
Sitting: **Sr. Eleanor Fabrizi, Sr. Ellen Dunn, Anita Davidson (Assoc), and Sr. Valerie Noone**
Not pictured: **Sr. Joel Christoph**



Vocation Ministry Task Force

Much work on a draft of the Vocation Ministry Plan was accomplished when the VMTF met in Columbus, January 15-19, 2008. Creating this Plan has been a creative and energizing process and has required much study, writing, editing, and revision. VMTF members have since met via conference calls and, with input from ten reader-consultants, have created a revised version that they've submitted to the Transition Team. Soon, a draft will be presented to congregational leaders for their input. The VMTF is grateful to **Srs. Thoma Swanson, Rebecca Otter, and Joel Christoph** for their artistic contributions and to all members for their interest and support, which have been evident in the questions and comments many have shared. Task Force members are preparing a booth for the Intercongregational Gatherings and look forward to sharing the plan with those who attend.

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Visit the Cluster website at www.dominicancluster.org