



BLAUVELT

Connections

THE SISTERS OF SAINT DOMINIC OF BLAUVELT, NY

Spring 2023

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A MESSAGE FROM *Sr. Michaela, Prioress*

Spring 2023



Dear Friends,

It is a joy to write you during this beautiful Easter Season and share with you some of what has happened in our congregation over the last few months.

During our February Chapter of Life and Mission, we set direction for the next five years and focused on topics that will shape our congregation into the future. We committed to a Spirituality of Justice, rooted in our Catholic faith, Dominican tradition, and our experience of and response to God in the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

In reflecting on our quality of life, we committed to being seekers who support each other and are supported in that seeking in the context of Dominican life, spirituality, and theology. We are grateful that we are the legacy of those who have gone before us and want to be proactive in passing on the fire and joy of our Dominican preaching charism to the next generation.

Then at our Chapter of Elections in April, we chose a new prioress and council to lead our congregation for the next five years and assist us in living into our Chapter Directives. They will be installed on June 25th and are introduced in this issue.

At our Celtic Tea during Catholic Sisters week, we were delighted to be able to welcome guests in person after going virtual for two years. It was a wonderful event and enabled us to reconnect with many friends and family members.

In this issue you will read of our students from Dominican University who spent their spring break volunteering with young children in El Salvador and of Sr. Jenn and her students from Yale University who ministered in Guatemala. You will also meet some of our sisters who have recently been honored for their ministry.

Our spring Gala provided an opportunity to honor longtime friends and benefactors of the congregation. Our liturgy in memory of our deceased sisters and associates on May 7th brought their friends and relatives back to the motherhouse to renew their relationships with our sisters. You will see photos of both events here.

Thank you for the support and friendship you continue to offer our congregation. It is truly appreciated by me and by all of our sisters. Be assured that you and your intentions are remembered in our daily prayers and in our masses here at the convent. May God bless you and your families.

Gratefully,

Sr. Michaela Connolly, OP

Sr. Michaela Connolly, OP
Prioress

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Director of Development

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Congregation

New Leadership Team Elected



We congratulate the newly elected Leadership Team who will lead the congregation through the next five years. Pictured above are Sr. Terry Rickard, Councilor; Sr. Didi Madden, Councilor; Sr. Mary Theresa Flood, Prioress; and Sr. Ellenrita Purcaro, Councilor.

SR. MONICA PAUL FRASER HONORED



Sr. Monica Paul Fraser was honored by Incarnation Catholic School for her 34 years of service and commitment to Catholic education. The ICS Through The Years Gala, where Sr. Monica Paul was honored, was held in March in Sarasota, FL.

Congratulations Sr. Monica Paul!

t i o n a l H a p p e n i n g s



SR. SHIRLEY JEFFCOTT HONORED

We congratulate Sr. Shirley Jeffcott who was honored by St. Pius School, Providence, RI with their Veritas Award. This award, in recognition of Sr. Shirley's many years of service to the school, was presented to her on May 21st at the parish's 10am Mass. A reception followed the Mass.

Congratulations Sr. Shirley!



SR. JEAN GRAFFWEG HONORED

We congratulate Sr. Jean Graffweg who was awarded the Veritas Medal at Dominican University's 69th Commencement on May 17th in recognition of her 42 years of ministry at House on the Hill.

IN MEMORIAM



SISTER MARY A. DOWER, O.P., also known as Sister Molly, formerly Sister Cyril, a member of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York, for the past 78 years, died on February 8, 2023 in St. Martin De Porres Community at the Motherhouse in Blauvelt, N.Y. She was 97 years of age.



SISTER DIANE MARIE FORREST, O.P., a member of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York for the past 50 years died on March 4, 2023 at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City. She was 71 years of age.

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Thank Sisters



In January, during winter break, three Dominican University students and one University administrator journeyed



to El Salvador, volunteering to work with children at two summer camps. The trip was made possible partly through the support of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, who sponsored the winter break mission trip.

Upon their return, administrator Dana McStowe, and students Tania DaSilva, Daniel Pinilla, and Brian Rabi, thanked the Sisters with a special presentation at the Motherhouse, which included stories, highlights, and photos from the trip.

MEETING SR. HELEN PREJEAN

Srs. Dorothy, Venentia, and Jenn had the opportunity to join other Dominicans for a luncheon with Sr. Helen Prejean. Yale University, located in New Haven, CT, was one of the many stops on Sr. Helen Prejean's current speaking tour. It was an enjoyable and uplifting experience which included insights into Sr. Helen's ministry to the people awaiting execution on death row.



SR. DOROTHY MAXWELL'S *Card Project*

In March, Sr. Dorothy Maxwell visited Holy Child School in Rye to foster the relationship between high school students there and Bedford Hills Correctional Facility women. For two years, the social justice group has been making Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Valentine's Day Cards and sending them with envelopes to Sister Dorothy, who fills the many requests for these cards for the Correctional Facility. "The girls love making the cards, and the women love sending them to loved ones. We know how long it



takes to find just the right card when we go into a store. The students are mindful of this as they make cards appropriate for all ages, occasions, and relationships."

Sr. Dorothy also added, "It was a great lift of spirit to meet face to face with students and faculty to collaborate on this special project that brings so much joy to these women."

CRAFTS, CROCHET & QUILLING

Creativity and talent are flourishing in the Motherhouse. This past winter, Sisters enjoyed arts and crafts and quilling with Sr. Gertrude and crochet lessons led by Development Assistant Kristin DeGuzman. The groups meet regularly to refine their crafts, relax, and enjoy time with each other.



THE CELTIC TEA RETURNS

On Sunday, March 12th, the Huston Room at the Motherhouse was in full St. Patrick's Day swing for the annual Celtic Tea. After two years of virtual Celtic Tea events due to the pandemic, the Sisters were thrilled to welcome guests back to the traditional and spirited in-person St. Patrick's Day celebration.



Highlights of the afternoon included a sing-along with Irish folk singer Tim Cronin, tea, finger sandwiches, homemade Irish soda bread, sweet treats, preaching by Sr. Kathleen McManus on the history of the Celtic Cross, Irish gift basket raffles, a 50/50 raffle, and entertainment by local Irish musicians, Kieran Flanagan and Bridget O'Donnell.

Thank you to all who attended!

Deceased Sisters and Associates Liturgy



On Sunday, May 7th, Sisters, Associates, family, and friends celebrated a memorial Mass to remember Sisters and Associates who have gone on to their eternal rest. A light reception for Sisters, Associates, and guests followed the Mass in the Huston Room. Sisters and Associates were delighted to welcome guests back to the convent for this special Liturgy, held every two years but postponed due to the pandemic.



GUATEMALAN MISSION TRIP

by Sr. Jenn Schaaf, OP

Sixteen hours after leaving from New Haven, we arrived in Guatemala City, having departed from JFK with stops in El Salvador and Honduras. Six students, a colleague and I met up with two representatives from the Maryknoll Mission Education Office, who would be our guides throughout the country. Throughout the trip, Maryknoll affiliates, which are similar to Dominican Associates, provided context about the



At Mayan ruins with a group from Yale, learning about the history of colonization.

country, introduced us to their ministries, and told their stories of both terror and hope. Like much of Latin America, Guatemala has a complicated history of colonialism, violence, and poverty. The United States is entwined in that history, as are European countries, Canada, and other Latin American countries.

Visiting Iximche, we saw the ruins of Mayan civilization, as well as some Mayan men and women who continue to practice their heritage. We also had dinner with a Mayan Spiritual Guide, poet and professor, who is rooted in his Catholic and Mayan heritage. He was a wonderful example of how culture and faith are lived out.

In Xela (Quetzaltenango), we heard from child laborers. They are in school for a few hours a day in the afternoons, a break between their jobs cleaning houses, working in the markets, or trades. Surprisingly, they are advocating for the right to work, but in jobs that are safe and pay fair wages. School is providing them with the opportunity to eventually run their own business and to be active in civil society as children and young adults.



At Caminando Por La Paz in Guatemala City, Zone 18, a ministry run by Maryknoll affiliates.

Santiago Atitlan is a tourist town, with many shops featuring handcrafts and restaurants catering to visitors. Behind the bright facade, there is a dark history. Indigenous people stood up to the military/guerrillas



At the site in Santiago Atitlan where Fr. Stanley Rother was martyred.

and many were killed. One of our guides spoke of being a child running away from the violence, hoping to see his family still alive after gunshots were released all over town. Santiago Atitlan was also the home to Blessed Fr. Stanley Rother, a priest from Oklahoma City. Fr. Stanley translated the New Testament into the local indigenous language. After witnessing murders of his parishioners, he stood up for the indigenous people and it cost him his life. We visited the living room where Fr. Stanley was killed and saw his legacy in a thriving Catholic elementary school and parish. His witness and memory is palpable.



At CEIPA schools where they provide education for working children and education about how to advocate for justice in their communities.

We concluded our visit with a day in Antigua, the site of the largest Holy Week processions in Guatemala. Although not there for Holy Week, we saw the "carpets" made of fruit, vegetables, grains, and dyed sawdust in the Churches. Unlike Lent in much of the world, in Guatemala, there is a sense of living Lent fully - celebrating that space where death and life come together.



Lent Procession in Guatemala City to a Dominican parish.

Hearts Afire Gala

What began as a chilly, rainy April morning gave way to a beautiful Spring day for the Annual Hearts Afire Gala. The Gala was held on Sunday, April 23rd, at The View on the Hudson in Piermont, NY.



A wonderful gathering of friends and family joined the Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt to celebrate honorees William H. Connolly & Company Insurance & Risk Management, Patricia Finan, and Phyllis Yonta. Gala attendees enjoyed the spectacular view of the Hudson River, a delightful luncheon, a silent auction, raffles, a wine pull, and time spent with family and friends.

The Hearts Afire Gala honors individuals with the Mother Mary Ann Sammon Award for Compassion and Service. The recipients' lives and the work they do demonstrate a spirit of service and deep caring for others.

William H. Connolly & Co.

Insurance and Risk Management was founded by Bill Connolly in 1950 in Newark, N.J. The company grew steadily over the years, and became known throughout the region for their integrity and exceptional service to their many clients. For more than 20 years, William H. Connolly & Company has served the insurance needs of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt with integrity, care, and special concern for the community.

Patricia Finan was born and raised in the Bronx and attended St. Anselm Elementary School, where she was educated by the Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt. Her sister, Sr. Margaret Finan, OP, entered the community in 1951. Pat has been a generous benefactor and loyal volunteer through the years at the Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt annual Autumn Festival and faithfully sold Festival Grand Prize Raffle chances at many parishes in Westchester and Rockland Counties. For more than 15 years, Pat served on the Board of St. Dominic's Home, now Saint Dominic's Family Services.

Phyllis Yonta is an Associate of the Dominican Sisters of Blauvelt. She is a graduate of Dominican College (now Dominican University New York), Seton Hall, and Rutgers University, earning a bachelor's and master's degree in psychology. Currently, she serves as the CEO of



Women Aware Inc., the state-recognized provider of domestic violence services in Middlesex County, NJ. Never wanting to leave her alma mater, Phyllis began her career as an adjunct professor at Dominican College. Most recently, she wrote an allegory called *Miraculous Catastrophe* with Sr. Margaret Mary Gleeson, OP, Ph.D. Sr. Miriam Catherine Nevins, OP, provided the copy editing. The Sisters of St. Dominic remain her forever spiritual home.

Proceeds from the Gala support the Sisters in active ministry and provide retired Sisters with dignified, safe, and nurturing care.

We are very thankful to all who attended and supported the Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt through sponsorships, journal ads, and donations. Through your goodness and commitment, the Sisters are able to continue serving God's people, bringing compassion and mercy to those who need them most.

2023



Annual Hearts Afire Gala

HONORING
THE 2023 MOTHER MARY ANN SAMMON AWARD RECIPIENTS

WILLIAM H. CONNOLLY & CO.
INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

PATRICIA FINAN

PHYLLIS YONTA

SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 2023 AT 12:00 NOON
VIEW ON THE HUDSON, PIERMONT, NY
A FUNDRAISER BENEFITING THE SISTERS OF SAINT DOMINIC OF BLAUVELT, NY



2023 Hearts Afire Gala Sponsors

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About Us...

The Sisters of Saint Dominic of Blauvelt, New York, are a community of vowed women religious and Associates committed to bringing hope and mercy to all in need through programs and advocacy.

Today, professed Sisters and Associates are involved in education in colleges, elementary schools, and special education programs.

Other ministries include:

- Healthcare
- Social service programs
- Adoption services for older children
- Programs for migrant children
- A shelter for homeless women and their children
- Housing services for persons with HIV/AIDS
- Programs for the mentally ill and chemically addicted

We are active in social justice activities, retreat work, pastoral care for the homebound, and hospice, prison, and prayer ministry.

Learn more by visiting
www.opblauvelt.org

Connect with our Sisters and Associates on Social Media



Search for @opblauvelt or
Sisters of Saint Dominic of Blauvelt, NY

ATTENTION ALL FOOTBALL FANS!
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NEW YORK GIANTS
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home games in
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All proceeds to benefit Sisters of Saint Dominic of Blauvelt.

Winner will be announced Friday, August 18, 2023.

Tickets can be purchased online at
www.tinyurl.com/2023giantsraffle
or by contacting Kerrin Kissel at
(845) 359-5767 or kkissel@opblauvelt.org

Paper ticketing for all New York Giants games has been replaced by electronic ticketing. The season ticket raffle winner will receive instructions on how to access the tickets through the official New York Giants app.