

not return to the Father without moving hearts towards salvation. ... From the beginning, for the nun, it is a matter of a covenant of love, a radical consecration of love...to the very end it is a covenant of love, in eternity it is only love!

This ecclesial mission is lived out in following St Dominic, who attracted women to the Order by a particular grace-filled fragrance, as St Catherine of Siena put it. This grace is that love of Truth which finds expression in the Word made flesh, and hence the importance of the scriptures in Dominican life. This Word is assiduously heard and studied, prayed and contemplated, releasing another fragrance, that of compassion for all those who thirst for happiness and pass by its source without even recognising it. And so our mission requires us to be “signs”. In this also we are commissioned by the Church, for if women who do not speak out in the conventional manner in front of a congregation can yet be called “preacheresses”, it is indeed their calling and choice of a way of life that has something to say, to communicate: a life straining towards God through the hope and desire

for eternal happiness in Him, and the mysterious fecundity of a life offered with Christ for the transfiguration of humanity. The centrality in the life of Dominican nuns of the Word of God in the Scriptures is a key concept here. The *sacra pagina* is the focus par excellence of our study, our celebration in the liturgy, our meditation and our contemplation. And, as we read in the prophet Isaiah, the Word does not return to the Father before having engendered salvation in the heart, it is in this that the efficacy of the nuns as preachers consists.”



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Friends of FATIMA

N.º 102

Dear Friends of Fatima,

At this Christmas time we come to share with you our experience during the course of 2021 – the second year of pandemic. Families, communities, the global society have all felt the effects of Covid-19 in so many ways. And for some, this is not yet over. Conscious of each one of you we pray daily for all your needs.

In late January, some of our Sisters tested positive for the virus. This increased until nearly the entire community was affected. Very sadly, one of our Sisters passed away with the infection and like so many families, we were not allowed to accompany Sister to the hospital or to visit. With the death of our dear Sister Maria Domingos, we learned the harsh reality of this infection and the pain of not being near our dying Sister. This experience was very difficult but it didn't take long to realize the opportunity it brought.

Each Sister, those who were ill and those who were not, humbly submitted and offered

everything in the spirit of loving reparation, as Our Lady had taught the Little Shepherds of Fatima. In this way all suffering realizes its eternal value for the salvation of souls.

Then May 13th arrived, when 7,500 pilgrims were welcomed back to Fatima. By October tens, of thousands of pilgrims nearly filled the Shrine square to honor Our Lady on the 13th. And so we conclude this year with hope renewed, yet conscious of the fragility of our world and determined to remain faithful to God with the help and protection of Our Lady of Fatima.



We invite

all of our friends and families to unite with us in a solemn Christmas novena of Masses and prayers from **December 16 – 24th**. This novena will be offered for your intentions in thanksgiving for your generous support of our Community, especially throughout this past year. We understand that all are suffering and we thank you with all our hearts for your great kindness both spiritual and material.

*May this Christmas and the New Year 2022
be blessed with peace and good health for all!
Lovingly in the Child JESUS, Our Lady and St. Joseph,
Mother Prioress, OP and Sisters*

Cardinal Tolentino Presides in Fatima May 12-13, 2021



Preaching on May 12 and 13, feast of Our Lady of Fatima, Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, archivist and librarian of the Holy Roman Church,

and member of the Dominican Priestly Fraternity, said that a global financial recovery requires an accompanying spiritual revival.

“At this present crossroads of history, we cannot allow the revival of hope to coincide solely with the concern for the material expression of life. There is, no doubt, an urgent need to supply food, and this demanding task, which is essentially one of economic renewal, must

unite and mobilize our societies. But our societies also need a spiritual restart. We do not live without bread, but we cannot live only on bread. The deepest

moments of crisis have always been overcome by infusing a new soul, proposing paths of interior transformation and spiritual renewal of our common life. This was the message of Fatima, in that distant year 1917, as the world was

“It’s not enough that we return to exactly what we were before: it’s necessary that we become better. A reinvigorated soul is needed. It’s necessary that we un-confine our heart.”

plunged into the first chemical war in history and one of the deadliest.”

“What did the Virgin ask of humanity, through the little shepherds? Prayer, penance, and conversion, that is, concrete means of interior reconstruction.” The cardinal said that post-pandemic reconstruction would require a profound sense of fraternity. “The world, exhausted by this pandemic that is still going on, and which requires each one of us to be vigilant and responsible, is not only hungry and thirsty for normality: it needs new visions, other certainties, it needs us to take the risk to have dreams... The disturbance of the pandemic has uprooted us and helped us to identify the essential with more clarity.

Today, we wish to ask, O Lady of Fatima... that you may listen in the silence of this night to the fatigue and the strengths,

the solitude and the tears, the tiredness and to the needs of all. May you keep watch over the great and wounded human family. And mobilize all for the

urgent challenge of consoling, of caring and of rebuilding.”

“Especially to the young people, and to the young Portuguese who are preparing to welcome the World Youth Day in

The Secret Fruit of *Contemplation*

In October, the Dominican Institute on Preaching, through a webinar, sponsored a series of conferences on the theme Preaching in the Time of Pandemic. Sr. Barbara Estelle of our community, addressed the topic of *The Preaching of the Nuns: The Secret Fruit of Contemplation*. This talk can be viewed on the following you tube site: <https://youtu.be/ulZ2LXld40s>. We include here some of Sister’s thoughts expressed in the video conference.

“I would like to take as epigraph for this talk a quotation from former Master of the Order Fr. Bruno Cadoré. In the letter he addressed to all Dominicans in January 2012, Fr Bruno used the term “evangelisation” to express the primary reason for the existence of the Order, for preaching is only the means to the end, the means used to bring about evangelisation....the purpose of preaching is evangelisation, and the purpose of evangelisation is the salvation of souls. This is the quintessence of the Dominican vocation and of all Dominican life...”

So we can’t speak of the “preaching of the nuns” in conventional terms and we shouldn’t even try. Why? Because there is first and foremost the relation of nuns to the Mystical Body of Christ ...the mystical



dimension of our way of life which cannot be put into words. *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Verbi Sponsa* speak eloquently of this as well as other sources...

As the nuns don’t preach in the conventional sense, how do they live out this dimension of the mission of the Order in the context of contemplative life? First of all, simply because they have received the mission of prayer in the heart of the Church. The prayer of praise and intercession in total gift to the Lord, such is their vocation and hence their mission. In the communion of saints, the Word of God which we welcome and desire to put into practice does

Walking together...



In 2023, the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will take place in Rome. While recent Synods have

examined themes such as the new evangelization, the family, young people, and the Amazon, the present Synod focuses on the topic of synodality itself. For this Synod the preparation will extend over two years beginning October 2021.

What does synodality mean? Essentially it is a walking together...a listening together to the Holy Spirit and one another...a discerning together...a participating together in the mission of the Church, which is evangelization. Every member of the Church is called to share on this way of synodality.

For this Synod focused on synodality itself, the Church has called upon those who live the contemplative, monastic life to show the way, so to speak, as they live the mystery and the practical reality of synodality everyday. For this reason Cardinal Mario Grech, the Secretary

General of the Synod addressed a letter to all monasteries ahead of the opening of this synodal process. Here in Fatima, our Sr. Maria of the Eucharist was asked to share her thoughts on this theme in a short video made in our parlour by our Diocesan representative for the Synod, Leopoldina Reis Simões. Among other thoughts Sr. Maria shared the following:

“Our life is always a life of silence because only in silence there is listening, and the first thing that we ought to listen to is the voice of God in us, His presence in us. When we understand the presence of God, of His love for us, we are ready to open ourselves to love for others, to enter in communion with others, to give them not our love, but the love of God which lives in us.”



The objective of this Synodal Process... is a journey of growing authentically towards the communion and mission that God calls the Church to live out in the third millennium.

<https://www.synod.va/en/news/synodality-fruit-of-prayer.html>

2023, I want to say from Fatima: instead of being afraid, have dreams. Discover that God is the ally of your most beautiful dreams. Dare to dream of a better world. Feel that the future depends on the quality and consistency of your dreams.” He continued: “And finally, I turn to you, dear pilgrims. And I want to tell you that I feel not only close to all of you, but truly consider myself one of you. (The Cardinal had joined a walking pilgrim group and arrived in Fatima on foot.) The message of Fatima, seen from the outside, seems formatted and austere. And many, only seeing the surface of the shrine, see only the dramatic expression of so many tears, petitions, and promises. But the pilgrims to Fatima experience that it is much more than that. What we experience is that we come here restless, empty, divided, irreconcilable or thirsty, that we come here precipitously like the Prodigal Son, and that Mary fulfills in us — with what mercy, with what unforgettable sweetness — the command of love that she received from Jesus:

‘Woman, here is your son,’ ‘here are your children.’

Looking to the Cross we could think that Jesus was brutally confined. And He was. But the true deconfinement is that which love works in us.” Love sets our hearts free - even in ‘confinement’!

“We pilgrims always come to Fatima empty-handed. But from Fatima, we carry a dream, awakened within us. Fatima teaches us how to illuminate a world which is in darkness. Be it the small world of our heart, be it the heart of the vast world. Thank you, My Lady, for making this place a lever of our humanity. A laboratory without doors or walls, always open to hope! In you, we praise the Lord who redeems us from every weakness...”

We wish to entrust to you, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, the historic and interior way that we are passing through and to ask that this pain serve for something, that all this suffering makes us better: more spiritual, more human and more fraternal.”

Fatima and History: **October 13, 1951**

70 years ago the closing of the Holy Year took place here in Fatima led by the Papal Legate, Cardinal Federico Tedeschini. Present also was our Foundress, Mother Mary Louis Bertrand, OP, who had come to initiate the process of a new foundation of the Perpetual Rosary Nuns. During the ceremonies, the Cardinal revealed Pope Pius XII’s vision of the miracle of the sun, which he saw in the Vatican gardens before and after his proclamation of the Dogma of Mary’s Assumption into Heaven on November 1, 1950.

Three years later, on 16 June 1954, the Cardinal would be present again in Fatima, this time for the solemn opening of our Perpetual Rosary Monastery Pius XII.

Prayer for the Synod

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name. With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it. We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions. Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right. All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

Sr. Maria Domingos, OP

26 February 1936 - 15 February 2021



In this year, when we commemorate the 8th centenary of the death of our holy Father St. Dominic, our beloved Sr. Maria Domingos died on 15th February. Her death in the Santo André Hospital in Leiria, resulted from pneumonia caused by the Covid -19 virus.

Sister was born in Viseu (Portugal) 26th February 1936 and after completing her studies as a primary school teacher, entered our Fatima monastery in 1957, where she professed her Solemn Vows on 8 September 1962.

In 1966 Sister spent some time in the Monastery of Prouilhe, France the very first monastery founded by St Dominic. Eventually, Sister transferred to the Monastery in Campanhã, Porto. Shortly after the Second Vatican Council it was decided to found a Monastery that would implement the *aggiornamento* called for by the Council. Sr. Maria Domingos with several other Sisters undertook the new foundation, the Mosteiro de Santa Maria in

Lumiar, Lisbon. With the help of the Dominican Fathers, lay Dominicans and many devoted friends, a Centre of theological conferences, preaching and liturgical celebration was established and open to all. God had given our Sister many gifts. She was always ready to welcome people, listen to them and help them - whether Christians or not. Indeed she imitated St. Dominic, who, showing love to all, was loved by all in return. Her deep spirituality radiated simplicity and joy. However, as the years went by and no new vocations appeared the lovely Monastery in Lumiar was formally closed. The three remaining Sisters transferred to our Perpetual Rosary Monastery in Fatima, where they were lovingly welcomed by the entire community. So it was that Sr. Maria Domingos returned to the monastery which she had entered 60 years earlier and where now, two years later, the Lord came to call her to Himself. Her death brought great sadness but we have too the lasting grace of memory.

May she rest in peace!

“We are all preoccupied with the lack of faith. But are we occupied with sharing the Love of God...”
Pope Francis to European Bishops Sept. 2021

the same sins?” Listen, is God ever offended? Is he offended if you go to him and ask for forgiveness? No! Never. God suffers when we think that he can’t forgive us, because that is like us telling him: “Your love is not strong enough!” Saying to God, “Your love is not strong enough” is not good! Instead, God rejoices in forgiving us, time and time again. Whenever he picks us up, he believes in us as if it were the first time. He never grows discouraged. We are the ones who get discouraged, not he. He does not label us as sinners: he sees us as children to be loved. He does not see us as lost causes, but as beloved and hurting children; and then he feels all the more compassion and tenderness. So never forget, whenever we go to confession, there is a party in heaven. May it be so on earth!”

Closing of the Year of St. Joseph

One year ago we welcomed St. Joseph’s Year with great joy and expectation. On December 8 the Holy Father will close this special year dedicated to St. Joseph. The chaste Spouse of the Virgin Mary and Foster Father of the Son of God has accompanied us all through this second year of pandemic. In his silent and humble way he is there with us always. As Pope Francis said: “Joseph knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the centre of things. He did not think of himself, but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus.” May this example of St. Joseph inspire us on our way.

Thank You St. Joseph!

The Remedy and Joy of Confession

On 14 September 2021 in Košice, Slovakia, Pope Francis met with the young people. Among other things he spoke to them of the Sacrament of Confession

“... when we feel downcast – because at certain moments in life everyone is a little downcast, we all know what this feels like – when we do feel downcast, what are we to do? There is one infallible remedy that can put us back on our feet. Petra, it is what you said: go to Confession. Did you hear Petra’s words? **The remedy of Confession.**

You asked me how young people can overcome obstacles on the path to God’s mercy. Here too it is a matter of how we see things, of looking to what really matters. If I were to ask all of you what you think about when you go to Confession – don’t answer out loud – I am quite sure your answer will be “our sins”. But let me ask you, and please answer me, are sins really the centre of Confession? Does God want you to approach him thinking just about yourself and your sins; or about him? What does God want? That you approach him thinking about him or about your sins? What does he want? What is central, our sins or the Father who forgives

everything? It is the Father. We do not go to confession to be punished and humiliated, but as children who run towards the Father’s loving arms. And the Father lifts us up in every situation, he forgives all our sins. Listen well to this: God always forgives! Understood? God always forgives!

I will give you a little piece of advice: after each Confession, sit still for a few moments in order to remember the forgiveness you received. Hold on to that

“Don’t let shame imprison you, because God is never ashamed of you.”

peace in your heart, that inner freedom you are feeling; not your sins, which no longer exist, but the forgiveness that God has granted you, the caress of God the Father. Just hold on to that; don’t let it fade. The next time you go to confession, think: I am going to receive again the embrace that did me so much good. I am not going to stand before a judge, but before Jesus, who loves us and heals us. Now I would like to give some advice to priests: priests should feel that they take the place of God the Father who always forgives, embraces and welcomes. In Confession, let us give God first place. Once he is in charge, everything becomes beautiful and Confession becomes the *sacrament of joy*. Yes, joy; not fear and judgment but joy. It is also important for

St. Dominic: Preacher of the ‘mercy of truth’

During this 8th centenary year of remembrance of the death of our holy Father St. Dominic, Pope Francis addressed a special letter to the Master of the Order Fr. Gerard Timoner III. In his letter he spoke of the virtues and the vision of St. Dominic. Here we quote in part from this letter.

“Dominic responded to the urgent need of his time not only for a renewed and vibrant preaching of the Gospel, but, equally important, for a convincing witness to its summons to holiness in the living communion of the Church... In our own age, characterized by epochal changes and new challenges to the Church’s evangelizing mission, Dominic can thus serve as an inspiration to all the baptized, who are called, as missionary disciples, to reach every “periphery” of our world with the light of the Gospel and the merciful love of Christ... Dominic’s great call was to preach the Gospel of God’s merciful love in all its saving truth and redemptive power. As a student in Palencia, he came to appreciate the inseparability of faith and charity, truth and love,



Statue of St. Dominic in the Parish Church of Fanjeaux

integrity and compassion. As Blessed Jordan of Saxony tells us, touched by the great numbers who were suffering and dying during a severe famine, Dominic sold his precious books and, with exemplary kindness, established a center for almsgiving where the poor could be fed (*Libellus*, 10)...May the Order of Preachers, now as then, be in the forefront of a renewed proclamation of the Gospel, one that can speak to the hearts of the men and women of our time and

awaken in them a thirst for the coming of Christ’s kingdom of holiness, justice and peace!"

Indeed St. Dominic realized the need for convincing witnesses in communion with the Church and he responded to this summons to holiness; he understood that all are called by Baptism to be missionaries of Christ; he appreciated the inseparability between faith and charity, truth and love, integrity and compassion. He preached the ‘mercy of truth’ and offered to all the ‘consolation of truth’, speaking to the heart and to the dignity of every person.

Let the children come to Me and do not stop them...

Christmas is all about the Child – the Divine Child - JESUS. He is the ‘reason for the season’, as some put it. In this issue of our *Friends of Fatima* we wish to remember the little children, mindful of their needs and their sufferings through this pandemic and beyond.



child to Himself and setting the child in front of them Jesus replied: ‘I tell you solemnly, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. And so the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’” (Mt 18: 1- 4ff).

The truth is that we are all ‘children of God’. He is our Father. “Think of the love that the Father has lavished upon us, by letting us be called God’s children; and that is what we are” (1 Jn 3:1, Rom 8 :16-17). What joy is ours in our identity as ‘children of God’!

In the Gospels we find two incidents specifically with the disciples and little children in the presence of Jesus. “People brought little children to him, to lay his hands on them and say a prayer. The disciples turned them away, but Jesus said: ‘Let the little children alone, and do not stop them coming to me; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs’. (Mt 19: 13-15 Mk 10: 13-16, Lk 18: 15-17.) And in another place the disciples ask Jesus: “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven? Calling a little

Jesus placing the child before them, wished them all to see that the greatest in the Kingdom of God is the smallest – that is, the most simple, child-like, pure and innocent. What obstacles might there be to hinder the little children coming to meet Jesus? There are many, for instance: when Catholic parents neglect or refuse Baptism for their child; when a very busy lifestyle of activities leaves little space for quiet time with family and for prayer; overuse and dependence on social media. In the ‘noise’ of social media the voice of gentle Jesus cannot be heard. Then there are those who suffer from domestic/societal violence, abuse or bullying; human trafficking; war and famine; and at times it happens that the innocent world of the little child is broken by grown-up concerns. All

of these can create serious obstacles for the child to ‘come to Jesus’ and yet it is precisely Jesus, whom every child needs.

Many years ago, the Servant of God Sr. Lucia, wrote a letter to the children of



of the whole world. She spoke of her cousins, who are now St. Francisco and St. Jacinta. In part she wrote: “Because the two little shepherds were humble, pure and chaste, God looked lovingly upon them, choosing them to be witnesses of His Message. Dear children, seek to imitate the little shepherds in these virtues: be humble, be pure, be chaste. Do not forget that among the Commandments of God’s Law, there is one which bids us observe chastity, and do not permit anyone to approach you who would cause you to fail in this commandment, for this is a sin which degrades the human person, confusing his intellect, darkening his spirit and perverting his will. Keep before your eyes the two little shepherds who would not consent to play with others who were not correct in their words or actions: “We are not playing with them because our Mother does not

want us to learn to say or do these nasty things which are sins and offend God.” In this way keep away from bad company so that you may not be led along the wrong path and may not soil the purity of your heart. Keep before your mind what Jesus said: “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.” (Mt 5:9) Sr. Lucia concluded her letter thus: “Imitate the little Shepherds who were humble, chaste and pure. They prayed their Rosary every day – pray like them. When you are in school imitate Jesus Christ, listening to your teachers’ words and asking them questions. At home with your parents, imitate Jesus Christ, by being obedient, working and praying that God may help you and Our Lady protect you.”



“Let the children come to Me and do not stop them...”

As we go forward through this great trial of pandemic, let us pray for the children and young people, invoking Our Lady and the Saints of Fatima for all of them. May St. Francisco and St. Jacinta help those who are suffering, obtain healing for the wounded and protect them on their way to JESUS!