

DOMINICAN COLLABORATION FOR THE MISSION

Fruitvale is the name of one of the oldest neighborhoods in Oakland, CA where two of the oldest Religious Orders who have been “friends” for centuries live and minister to an ever changing population. On one side of 34th Avenue in the Fruitvale, Franciscan Friars minister through St. Elizabeth Parish Church, the Provincial Offices, and Formation. Just across the street the Mission San Jose Dominicans form community, pray, minister, and study and the Western Province Dominicans live and minister nearby. The sisters living at Saint Elizabeth’s Convent are full-time students, teachers, administrators, and serve in pastoral care, parish work, information technology, finance, development, outreach to the poor and justice promotion.



Sister Liam Brock, O.P., the prioress of Saint Elizabeth’s convent and principal of the high school, a native of the Fruitvale, just celebrated her 50th anniversary of profession as a Dominican Sister. Sister Ann Ronin and three volunteer teachers offer a class in English as a Second Language free to parishioners. Sister Stella Marie Good Pasture works with the Dominican Justice Promoters and the Haiti Action Committee.

Sister Glenn Anne McPhee, O.P., formerly Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of San Francisco, now holds the position of Chancellor in Oakland. St. Elizabeth’s also offers hospitality to guests who come for service or study in the area. Mrs. Ellen Spencer, a lay Dominican who is principal of two neighboring Catholic elementary schools shares evening prayer and meals at the convent on evenings when the one hour drive home is just not “appealing”. As Sister Rose Marie observed enthusiastically, “Dominican Collaboration continues into the late hours of the night!”

Sister Rose Marie Hennessy, O.P., formerly Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Oakland and Congregational Prioress, now serves as principal of the elementary school. A Dominican brother who lives at Mercy Center comes to the school on his walker once a week to minister in the library. Sara Brabec, a member of Dominican Volunteers USA, learned about the program through the Center for Service and Justice at Creighton University where she majored in theology. Sara came to work in the parish and live in community with the sisters where her fluency in Spanish is a great gift. During the school year she helped to prepare second graders for first communion and tutored students with special needs. This past summer she worked at the elementary school and at Immaculate Conception Academy in San Francisco. Sara is now studying Theology at the Jesuit School in Berkeley.





Mary Perez came to St. Elizabeth's from Memphis where she graduated with a Master's in Teaching through the Lance Program at Christian Brothers University. She taught in the elementary school full time and attended many events and functions with the sisters throughout the year including an immersion experience in Chiapas where the sisters work for peace and justice with the indigenous. Mary was looking for way to be of service and be a scholar at the same time. She completed the discernment process and was accepted as a candidate with the Dominican Sisters on August 29th Mary now lives at the Dominican Sisters Motherhouse in Fremont.

Sister Dulce Sarae Aguilar Rodriguez was a volunteer in the elementary school teaching advanced Spanish reading and writing to native speakers of Spanish and English reading to fast readers in the 2nd grade. On August 8th, Sister Dulce made First Profession, along with Sister Mary Han Nguyen who transferred to our congregation from Houston. Both are continuing in advanced studies. Sister Mary Yun, a second year novice, and Mary Perez are studying at Santa Clara University.



The three novices and Mary Perez enjoyed meeting Julieta Puente, another candidate who will enter the congregation in Mexico. The immersion experience in Chiapas and Mexico City will be offered again this year.

Father Kieran Healy, OP from Saint Albert's Priory, says Mass at St. Elizabeth's once a week. He says the sisters keep him in touch with what's happening in the city. "They know everything going on. They're very well connected because of the variety of ministries. There are no shrinking violets in that group! They're tough. They deal with the real stuff.

