Gardeners and Volunteers

ABOVE: Ss. Barbara and Jeanette selling our Dominican Holy Honey;
TOP RIGHT: Motherhouse meadow, Garden volunteer Wayne Wright, Averroes High School garden volunteers Radi Silmi and Rida Hammdan, Ss. Jeanette and Barbara and solar-topped main parking.

COVER PHOTO JOHN DOLAN
Care of Creation

Mission San Jose

Care of Creation is a decision and way of life that can be experienced at the Motherhouse. Guests attending arts, music, school or young adult retreats or non-profit seminars describe the sense of peace that permeates the campus. Pope Francis challenges humanity to hallow the gift of God’s creation as central to our planet’s survival and our Christian baptismal call. “Nurturing and cherishing creation is a command God gives not only at the beginning of history, but to each of us. It is part of his plan; it means causing the world to grow responsibly, transforming it so that it may be a garden, a habitable place for everyone.”

The Dominican Sisters Motherhouse, purchased in 1891 by Mother Pia Backes for $30,000 from San Francisco Archbishop Riordan, remains a productive, habitable garden. Pioneering Sisters were cash poor but determined to achieve Mother Pia’s goal, “The grape crop will probably pay the interest and the olive crop, the capital.” Today the 26-acre campus demonstrates the impact of sustainable choices on the soil, plants, birds, animals and people who live, work or gather here. The Sisters’ Care of Creation initiatives steward this resource, recognizing that we do not own but rather occupy the land, nourishing it and receiving nourishment from the sacred grounds entrusted to us.

The Sisters cultivate the largest remaining Mission-era olive grove, with typical harvests yielding one to three thousand bottles of extra virgin Dominican Sisters Olive Oil a year. Solar topped parking areas produce 391,657 kilowatt hours annually, providing 65% of the power used in the new St. Joseph Residence and Dominican Center. In place of a large, chemically fertilized lawn, a beautiful meadow was designed and planted with native California grasses and drought tolerant bulbs and flowers, capturing storm runoff and returning rain water to underground aquifers.

The Garden of Blessings provides fresh fruit and vegetables, supplementing daily Dining Room meals with organic produce pollinated by Motherhouse bees. In the 1930s S. Balbina Schallwig tended hives that yielded 80 gallons of honey and replaced butter on the Sisters’ breakfast tables. Today, S. Barbara Hagel manages eight Motherhouse hives with her local, raw Holy Honey sold at 2018 Holiday Boutique. How appropriate that busy bees and productive queens offer a metaphor for a congregation of women dedicated to the Queen of the Holy Rosary!

This reservoir of quiet beauty feeds the soul and gladdens the hearts of Sisters and visitors alike. Walk the grounds and encounter God’s creation in the trees, plants, birds, butterflies and bees. Tended with love and serving the Sisters’ mission, the Motherhouse offers a great blessing. Together let us treasure and care for this garden, so it can serve busy and restless Bay Area communities and families, who live in a sea of noise and confusion, yet seek a horizon of beauty and peace. ☑
This issue of our magazine highlights the beauty and bounty of our Motherhouse home. Each day as I walk these sacred grounds, I am grateful for the faith and vision, determination and generosity of our Sisters and loyal benefactors. May God bless all who have supported our life and ministry here in Mission San Jose! These lands remain in our hands because you have helped us build, care for and cultivate God’s creation, as we seek to limit our carbon footprint on the natural world. The Motherhouse that welcomed us as young women and formed us for religious life also shelters infirm Sisters and provides a home for active retired Sisters living in the new St. Joseph Residence. Our Chapel, Dominican Center and other campus buildings have become a center of ministry, serving individuals attending retreats, recitals, workshops and arts events. Truly our Motherhouse is an oasis of beauty and peace, serving groups and organizations seeking truth in today’s world.

Looking ahead I ask for your prayers as we enter a year-long future planning process. Endorsed by our Sisters during our 2018 US Chapter, a team of professionals will guide a review of congregation and mission assets, affirming our goal to remain faithful to our call as missionary disciples and Dominican Sisters into the 21st century.

Together, we are building bridges of Love – which remind us that we are all the Beloved of God! A young woman, left this note in my guitar case, after a concert, “Sister Rebecca, thank you for sharing your beautiful energy of God. When I hear you my heart opens and I can see the God who hides inside me!” That is so true. We do not “bring God” to anyone. We simply are daily reminders to each other of the presence of God that dwells eternal within us with immense, compassionate love! We all have a magnificent way “to be and do” God in the world! Tell me, what is yours?

Read the full article online here: https://www.msjdominicans.org/2019-preaching-truth-love

WE HONOR THESE DOMINICAN JUBILARIANS — 70 Years: S. Mary Antonia Leber, S. Veronica Lonergan; 60 Years: S. Mary Liam Brock, S. Brigid Bray, S. Jeanne Harris, S. Cecilia Soberon; 50 Years: S. Mary Catherine Antczak, S. Frances Mary Pierson, Hna Josefina Rodrigues Silva, Hna. Luz del Carmen Dominguez Percino; 40 Years: Hna. Blanca Estela Reyes Romero.

IN MEMORIAM — S. Mara Anne Palomares, S. Claudine Hammer, S. John Martin Fixa, S. Margaret Anne Burke and S. Jennifer Ogorek.
DOMINICAN DIALOGUE

Dominican Dialogue with Sister Barbara Hagel and Jeanette DeYoung

How has your beekeeping connected you with care of creation?
Our concern for care of creation made us aware of the plight of bees in our current environment. We were horrified to learn bee colonies have drastically declined since 1945. Bees pollinate a third of our food crop with honey a sweet side treat! Could we do our small part to help change the plight of bees?

Our first beehive fell into our laps with the offer of a colony from Denise Ryan. We are participating in an ancient tradition, which helps sustain our planet. We are also continuing our long tradition as Mission San Jose beekeepers.

Delving into the world of bees is mesmerizing! Their complexity is amazing—they are sculptors, acrobats, dancers, nurses. They are fiercely loyal and have a wonderful sense of community and democracy (the group selects their leader!). Bees are a fascinating example of God’s creativity.

As Jacqueline Freeman puts it in her book, Song of Increase, “Honey bees are interdependent, relying upon each other to create the working hive that allows and encourages them to flourish.” Bees have a sense of connection and ONENESS we need to learn as a world community. One for all and ALL FOR ONE.

What advice would you give to those considering beekeeping?
Start learning, have a mentor, join a bee club, and enjoy the journey!

S. PIA JOBST
S. Pia loved the land and Bavarian folk traditions. She entered the convent in Altenhohenau in 1961 and managed kitchen budgets, menus and meals for generations of Sisters and students. When her beloved priory closed in 2013, “It took me 1 ½ years to say, I’ll go to America.” Now she gardens, bakes, visits St. Martins’ Sisters and tends Motherhouse chickens. “Get to know God,” she advises. “It’s not automatic, yet when one dwells on it, one learns in prayer. It’s like having a friend.”
On March 16, 2019, St. Catherine’s Academy, the oldest school in Orange County, CA, celebrated 130 years of educating youth.

Guests attended a special anniversary Mass, luncheon, band performance and drill competition. A ceremonial cake cutting closed the event as recent and elder alums mingled with St. Catherine’s cadets, sharing memories and traditions.

Founded by the Dominican Sisters in 1889, President S. Johnellen Turner, OP is passionate about the school’s positive impact, “We are happy to educate young boys with strong Catholic values, a rigorous education and a rich military tradition that shapes boys into fine young men of their generation.”

The military program evolved from an early emphasis on physical education and was approved by Los Angeles Bishop Cantwell in 1925. Today’s curriculum also allows cadets to explore the arts, music, robotics and sports while forming friendships in a close-knit community of brothers.

Residential and day students wear uniforms, receive promotions in rank and support one another in a learning environment that values faith, academics, leadership and service. Each year, the school’s Mother Pia Scholarship program supports 10-15 low-income youth, providing a safe place to learn and grow beyond the influence of gangs targeting at risk youth.

For more information see: https://www.msjdominicans.org/2019-st-catherines
Our Garden Volunteers

Many faithful volunteers work alongside our Sisters to cultivate productive and spiritual spaces on our Motherhouse grounds. Loren Gross says, "I help the Sisters but it helps and rejuvenates me too. The Sisters and the garden have a calming effect on people." Bob Barone cheerfully says, "We can’t keep up with Sister Florence! I would encourage every visitor that enjoys this area to come pull a weed."

Would you like to get involved? Fill out our contact form online here: https://www.msjdominicans.org/2019-garden-volunteers

Pictured from top left: Loren Gross, Bob Barone, Adrienne Stephens, Wayne Wright, S. Florence Cumbelich, Cynthia Dos Remedios.
S. Mary Susanna Vasquez visits Mexico Province

Each school community gives witness to the richness of the Mexican culture, to a commitment of excellence and to the furthering of the Dominican charism. Leadership, professionalism, collegiality, desire to advance are values evident in each of the five schools.

Left: S. Mary Susanna with Sisters at Priorato de Santo Domingo in San Miguel de Allende Gto.