

DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

JUST *Words*



**Finding Christ in Hidden and
Unexpected Places**

It was during my time as a principal on the north side of Chicago that another sister and I volunteered at a homeless shelter in the Humbolt Park area. Welcoming and feeding folks that Friday evening was preceded by making sure we had sleeping places for all, with mostly mattresses on the floor. Some were talkative, ready to share their story and not wanting to bed down at the 10 p.m. hour. Others were quite reticent, often not trusting even an outstretched hand. After a night of watchfulness, we prepared breakfast so that all our guests were gone by 7 a.m.

Arriving back at the convent, ready for my own rest, I was very conscious of having my own bed in a small, clean, private room. Though the black and green tile was old and chipped in a few places, the floor seemed to shine like new.

And then I remembered the faces—worn, afraid, some unaware of the surroundings, bedraggled, smiling shyly, loudly telling a story, grateful for food and shelter, unsure of what they would meet on the street that day. I couldn't make it all right for each of them; I wouldn't even know what each wanted so as to be "all right." But I could be kind, affirm their worth, listen to them, and be gracious in my response.

That first experience at the shelter, one of many, awakened in me an expansiveness to the humanity and needs of others. For me, it was a

profound experience of my heart being freed to more deeply see Christ in others.

There is a saying expressed in various ways but the one I remember goes something like this: "Some things are better broken. Christ comes when the way is open."

For our hearts to be freed, they need to be broken open, to let ourselves personally experience others, especially those different from us. To let ourselves be stretched out of our comfort zones so that we might not judge others by our own reality. And in so doing, the relationships we build are mutual; we each bring worth and value to what we share.

When one's heart is touched in this way, the opening continues to other unexpected places.



Sister Marcelline Koch, OP, is the director of the Justice Office for the Dominican Sisters of Springfield.

Cynidi Callan, a JUST Words editorial board member, took the photo on the cover as well as photos on pages, 3 and 11.

Mission Statement:

Called by God
into right relationship
with all creation and graced by
Dominican life and mission,
we compassionately preach the
Gospel of Jesus Christ.

JUST Words

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Finding Christ In Unexpected Places

By Cynthia Callan

Three years ago, my husband and I began walking at the park before work. At that time, I did not realize the many graces which would be received each day. The graces received went beyond the natural landscape and changing seasons; it also included the faces of God in the people I met.

When passing someone, we shared greetings; eventually learning names of some we met. Now our park friends add joy to the start of our day as we share laughter, smiles, and small talk along the way.

One of the regulars at the park is Linda. At first, we just offered a wave and a hello. One weekend morning, though, we stopped for conversation. Linda

lives out of her car most days and nights throughout the year. Her circumstances began as a choice, responding to a call from God, she said. Even when I can only chat for a few minutes, I look forward to seeing her and getting to know her—her joys, her imperfections, her struggles, and her hopes. She feeds the birds and squirrels, and shares the message of Jesus to those she meets who wish to listen.

It would've been easy enough to wave and keep walking, yet if we had, an opportunity to meet Christ in someone else would have been missed. My life has been enriched by knowing Linda.



Cynthia is a member of the *JUST Words* editorial board, a Dominican Associate, and an accomplished amateur photographer who lives in Springfield, Ill. She made this photo of Linda feeding the birds and shared it, and Linda's story, with Linda's permission.

Bethany House of Hospitality

Glimpses of God found at a home providing support services for young women seeking asylum.

By Sister Kathlyn Mulcahy, OP

“Free our hearts to recognize and attend to Christ in hidden and unexpected places.”

—Dominican Prayer for the Life of the World

The Holy Family Knocking at Our Door

“Do you have a room available?” The call may come from a social worker, child advocate, pastor, or even the police. Someone has arrived on a bus or maybe she is aging out of an Office of Refugee Resettlement center (ORR) for unaccompanied child immigrants, and needs a place to stay. But it is more than just a roof over their heads; they need a safe place where they can recover from traumatic experiences in their country of origin and along the journey, an opportunity to rebuild trust and hope, a new beginning in their adopted country. They come often with no more than the clothes they are wearing—but carrying in their hearts a dream for a better, brighter future. Those who are parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles, or even teachers, will know what it is to hold dreams for a better future for the next generation. That is the treasured hope of so many of the women at Bethany House. They have risked everything to make that dream a possibility.



Bethany House residents enjoy a hammock and a picnic in the park.

The Kindness of Strangers

After a long and treacherous journey from South America, the family of three women (two sisters and a friend) and a 6-year-old finally crossed the border. “There is no room for you to stay here,” they were told. Then, given a scrap of paper with the address of a church in Chicago, they were put on a bus. They arrived at the bus station in Chicago and found a kind taxi driver who took them to the

address on the paper. He risked not getting paid because he understood they were in need. Someone at the Presbyterian church paid the taxi driver, but no one knew these women were coming. They sent out a message to Chicago Religious Leadership Network, an ecumenical group of churches and other organizations, in which I participate. (Do you catch a glimpse of God in the kindness of

the taxi driver and whoever paid him? In the trust of the women venturing into the unknown to provide new hope to a younger sibling and daughter? In the pastor who dropped what she was doing to find a place for this family?)

A week later, another woman and her 20-month-old daughter arrived at the same church. This time, at least someone called ahead to alert

the pastor that they were on a bus. Bethany House had a room ready when they arrived.

A woman and her daughter were sent from Texas by bus to a shelter in Florida. The shelter was full when they arrived, so they were put on another bus to Chicago—and told to find someone to help them there. They found police officers—very kind police officers—at the Chicago bus station and asked for help. The officers bought them lunch and a change of clothes (they had been on buses for nearly a week), and someone at the station remembered reading about Bethany House and called to see if we had room.

The most recent arrival to Bethany House came to the U.S. as an unaccompanied child. When she “aged out” of the ORR shelter on her 18th birthday, a child advocate from the Young Center for Immigrant Children’s Rights called to see if we could take her.



A tutoring session at Bethany House.

International Cooperation and Collaboration

We hear much in the news about wars and international tension. The international and intercultural collaboration at Bethany House could teach our political leaders a lesson. All the women are encouraged to study, mostly GED (high school equivalency) and ESL (English as a Second Language). When the women recently went

to sign up for these classes at Truman College, they coordinated their schedules so that someone would be free to take care of the children while others study. The conversation was something like: “If you take Monday and Wednesday in-person classes, I can watch your child. I’ll do Tuesday and Thursday classes and you can

watch my child.” Another cooks for the group while taking evening classes. There is a wonderful spirit of community and cooperation—a glimpse of the Spirit at work?

Cooperation and mutual support extend beyond scheduling. Our only English-speaking resident arrived from Sierra Leone when she was 8-months pregnant. The rest of the group decided to give her a baby shower. The language difference didn’t matter as they laughed and decorated and baked a cake, and then danced and laughed their way through creatively-adapted multi-lingual baby shower games. It was a shining example of the support and care they offer one another in the daily activities of life.

Have you caught a glimpse of God lately?

Sister Kathlyn is the executive director of Bethany House.



A birthday is a wonderful reason to celebrate and collaborate.

Seeing the Work of the Spirit: East St. Louis and Peru

By Sister Rose Miriam Schulte, OP

In our *Prayer for the Life of the World*, we daily ask that our hearts might be freed “to recognize and attend to Christ in hidden and unexpected places.” Some of these hidden places are lodged in our congregational past. Not unlike any

organic process, a congregation’s earlier plantings of heirloom seeds can burst forth in today’s fruits and tomorrow’s hopes. Such plantings appear serendipitous. Reflection lays bare the work of the Spirit.

Many know us, Springfield Dominicans, as advocates of social justice within our more traditional ministries of education, healthcare, and pastoral works. In more recent years an articulated focus on dismantling systemic racism and



Identified as June 4, 1952. Graduating class, presumably. Top row L to R: John Cavitt, Frederick Rogers, Kenneth Hall, Edward Hendricks, Robert Cobb, Walter Gregory, Ronald Hogan, Donald Curtis, Billy Joe Futrell, Charles Hurd, Crancis Cavitt. Middle Row L to R: Rosie Pattain, Madie Jackson, Mary Reed, Willie Lee Marks. Lily Colom, Annie Lee Flowers, Bobbie Thomas, Katie Scruggs, Izola Wallace. Bottom Row L to R: Sister M. Estelle Collins, Sister M. Roberta McGowan, Father Taylor, Father (Charles A.) Nebel, Sister M. Gloria Hanley, Sister Aloysius (Mary Ann Droste)

valuing diversity of race, ethnicity, age, education, gender, religion, etc., guides ministerial decisions. Reflect with me on two corporate decisions of past decades which are taproots for our current Dominican life and mission.

Teaching in East St. Louis

The first of these occurred in 1937 when the devoted Sisters of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, founded by St. Katherine Drexel in service to children of color, determined it

necessary to leave St. Augustine School in East St. Louis, Ill. Our congregation had served nearby St. Mary Parish School since 1893, and were asked by the St. Augustine pastor, Father Harrington, to take on St. Augustine School as well.

St. Mary's was the first Catholic elementary school in East St. Louis of the then-diocese of Alton. Our first sisters were welcomed by an industrial community of white immigrants who boasted a new brick church, school, and convent. In stark contrast, our first sisters at St. Augustine noted glaring differences in the facilities and available resources.

St. Augustine School was a former tavern. Educational materials and school supplies were outdated and in short supply. We cannot know the depths of the communal discernment nor personal transformative graces which accompanied our sisters to St. Augustine. That seeds of blessing and discernment were present is clear from the pastor's report to the diocese on Dec. 31, 1940.

Father Harrington wrote: "The Dominican Sisters of Springfield began in September their fourth year in charge of our school.... I had certain misgivings regarding their adaptability and their attitude towards colored work; it was a new departure and new venture for the Community whose Sisters had never before taught in a colored school. I realized that a certain amount of risk was involved. I am particularly pleased to record that the results have been splendid. The Community has generously given us of their very best. The Sisters are most devoted to the children, in fact they

consider it a special honor to be appointed to St. Augustine's...."

The sisters continued to recognize and embrace the needs and potential of their Black students. When St. Mary's closed in 1949 due to the lack of white students in the changing neighborhood, Father Harrington and the Dominican Sisters opened St. Mary High School for African American



St. Augustine elementary school students, circa 1940s.

students in the building. When in 1953 the diocese saw fit to close the high school in an effort to be non-participative in segregation, St. Mary's returned to serving the elementary school children, now primarily children of color, until 1964. At that time the parish property was sold to the state and razed for the construction of a bridge and Interstate 70.

The tender seedlings of antiracism carried in the hearts of our sisters from East St. Louis germinated ever so slowly and flower in on-going efforts of dismantling systemic

racism as we strive to become an antiracist religious congregation. Our partners of color in the various faith coalitions including our own Springfield Dominican Anti-Racism Team (SDART) continue to call us to accountability as they support, encourage, and collaborate in the effort.

Mission to South America

The second movement upon

which I would like to reflect is the creation of a formation program in Peru. In 1961, Pope John XXIII called for religious congregations to send members to South America. In 1965 we sent four sisters to Peru. Twelve other North American Dominicans served in various Peruvian ministries in the years to follow. What began as relationships of service became, over time,

relationships of collaboration, mutuality, and friendship. So it was that our sisters began to dream of walking with young Peruvian women struggling to make sense of their contemporary experience. By the 1980s a longing to have the Dominican way of life take root and flourish prompted serious prayer, study, dialog, and discernment across two continents. Our general chapter of 1983 confirmed the creation of a Dominican house of formation and supported our participation in the Peruvian Common Novitiate in Lima. March 6, 1987, found us

welcoming the first four Peruvian candidates into the program. Great rejoicing occurred when on March 18, 1990, these four young women professed their vows as Springfield Dominicans.

In the intervening years, 14 other Peruvian women discerned their individual life-calling within the program. Some discerned a call to Dominican consecrated life and made profession. Currently seven vowed Peruvian sisters are Dominican Sisters and two young women are in initial formation in Peru. One of our Peruvian sisters now serves on the general council of the congregation. There are no longer any North American Springfield Dominican Sisters in Peru. Modern technology supports the travel and communication which now continues the sisterhood.

The seeds planted by Dominican women of North and South America in the rocky ground of the Andes, the fertile valley of Huancayo, the bustling city of Lima, and the barren desert of Canto Grande continue to sprout. Shared in common life and mission, those same seeds have been nurtured in South Dakota, Illinois, Missouri, and Mississippi. Transparency and vulnerability have allowed for women of two distinct cultures to embrace the ongoing challenge of proclaiming shared values with diverse cultural expressions. The learnings have



Sister Maria Luisa Naupari Gutiérrez, center, with two women beginning their journey toward profession in the Order of Preachers. Both are from Jarpa. Nicohol Samaniego Molina, left, is from Chacapampa and Maribel Ines Uribe Baquerizo, right, is from Anexo Misquipata-Barrio Centro Unión.

influenced us as preachers of the Word. What was first perceived as a matter of blending cultures has become rather a deep appreciation of diversity—less an exercise of conforming than a sacred journey

toward unity and mutuality.

Sister Rose Miriam is the vicaress general of the Dominican Sisters of Springfield.

IN MEMORIAM

Please pray for the repose of the soul of this sister who has died in the peace of Christ.

Sister M. Raymunda Troeckler, OP, August 12, 2022

Viendo la obra del Espíritu: Este de San Luis y Perú

Hermana Rose Miriam Schulte, OP

En nuestra *Oración por la Vida del Mundo*, pedimos diariamente que nuestros corazones se liberen “para reconocer y atender a Cristo en lugares ocultos e inesperados”. Algunos de estos lugares ocultos moran en nuestro pasado congregacional. Al igual que cualquier proceso orgánico, la siembra inicial de las semillas originarias de una congregación pueden brotar en los frutos de hoy y en las esperanzas del mañana. Tales siembras parecen imprevisibles. La reflexión pone al descubierto la obra del Espíritu.

Muchas personas conocen a las Dominicas de Springfield, como defensoras de la justicia social dentro de nuestros ministerios más tradicionales de educación, salud y obras pastorales. En años más recientes, nuestro énfasis articulado para dismantelar el racismo sistémico y valorar la diversidad de raza, etnia, edad, educación, género, religión, etc., guía nuestras decisiones ministeriales. Reflexionen conmigo sobre dos decisiones congregacionales de décadas pasadas que son fundamentales para nuestra vida y misión dominicana actual.

Enseñar en el Este de St. Louis

La primera misión empezó en 1937 cuando las fervorosas Hermanas de la Congregación del Santísimo

Sacramento, fundada por St. Katherine Drexel al servicio de los niños de color, determinaron que era necesario dejar la Escuela San Agustín en el Este de St. Louis, Illinois. La congregación había servido en la cercana escuela parroquial Santa María desde 1893, y el párroco de San Agustín, el padre Harrington, les pidió que también se hicieran cargo de la escuela San Agustín.



Clase de graduación no identificada del colegio Santa Mariá, Este de St. Louis, Illinois.

Santa Mariá fue la primera escuela primaria católica en el este de St. Louis de la entonces diócesis de Alton. Nuestras primeras hermanas fueron recibidas por una comunidad industrial de inmigrantes blancos que presumían de su nueva iglesia, escuela y convento de ladrillo. En marcado contraste, nuestras primeras hermanas en San Agustín notaron diferencias evidentes en las instalaciones y los recursos disponibles.

La escuela San Agustín funcionaba en lo que fue una taberna. Los materiales educativos y útiles

escolares estaban desactualizados y escaseaban. No es posible saber la profundidad del discernimiento comunitario ni las gracias personales transformadoras que acompañaron a nuestras hermanas hasta San Agustín. Las semillas de bendición y discernimiento se desprenden del informe del párroco a la diócesis el 31 de diciembre de 1940.

El Padre Harrington escribió: “Las Hermanas Dominicas de Springfield comenzaron su cuarto año de servicio en nuestra escuela en setiembre... Y tenía ciertas dudas sobre su adaptabilidad y su actitud hacia el trabajo con gente de color; fue un nuevo punto de partida y una nueva aventura para una comunidad cuyas hermanas nunca habían enseñado antes en una escuela de color. Me di cuenta de que esto implicaba un cierto nivel de riesgo. Me complace particularmente darme cuenta de que los

resultados han sido espléndidos. La comunidad ha dado generosamente lo mejor de sí. Las hermanas son muy dedicadas a los niños, de hecho consideran un honor especial ser nombradas en San Agustín...”

Las hermanas continuaron reconociendo y abrazando las necesidades y el potencial de sus estudiantes negros. Cuando la escuela Santa María cerró en 1949 debido a la falta de estudiantes blancos en el vecindario cambiante, el Padre Harrington y las Hermanas Dominicas abrieron el colegio Santa María para estudiantes

afroamericanos en el mismo edificio. Cuando en 1953 la diócesis decidió cerrar la escuela secundaria debido a que no quiso participar en la segregación, Santa María volvió a abrir sus puertas a niños de escuela primaria, ahora mayormente niños de color, hasta 1964. En ese momento, la propiedad parroquial fue vendida al estado y demolida para la construcción de un puente y la carretera Interestatal 70.

Las tiernas semillas de antirracismo llevadas en los corazones de nuestras hermanas del Este de St. Louis germinaron muy lentamente y florecieron en los esfuerzos continuos de dismantelar el racismo sistémico a medida que buscamos convertirnos en una congregación religiosa antirracista. Nuestros compañeros de color en las diversas coaliciones religiosas, incluido nuestro propio Equipo de Antirracismo de las Dominicas de Springfield (SDART), continúan llamándonos a rendir cuentas mientras apoyan, alientan y colaboran en el esfuerzo.

Misión en Sudamérica

El segundo movimiento sobre el que me gustaría reflexionar es la creación de un programa de formación en el Perú. Nuestro liderazgo congregacional respondió al llamado del Papa Juan XXIII hecho en 1961 para enviar hermanas Sudamérica. En 1965 cuatro hermanas fueron enviadas. Otras doce dominicas norteamericanas sirvieron en varios ministerios peruanos en los años siguientes. Lo que comenzó como relaciones de servicio se convirtió, con el tiempo, en relaciones de colaboración, reciprocidad y amistad. Así fue que nuestras hermanas comenzaron a soñar su camino con mujeres jóvenes peruanas luchando por encontrar sentido

a su experiencia contemporánea. En la década de 1980, el anhelo de que el estilo de vida dominicano echara raíces y floreciera incitó a la oración, el estudio, el diálogo y el discernimiento serios en los dos continentes. Nuestro capítulo general de 1983 confirmó la creación de una casa de formación dominicana y apoyó nuestra participación en el Noviciado Común Peruano en Lima. El 6 de marzo de 1987 recibimos en el programa de formación a las primeras cuatro candidatas peruanas. Gran regocijo ocurrió cuando el 18 de marzo de 1990, estas cuatro jóvenes profesaron sus votos como Dominicas de Springfield.

En los años siguientes, otras 14 jóvenes peruanas discernieron su vocación de vida individual dentro del programa. Algunas discernieron una llamada a la vida consagrada dominicana e hicieron profesión. Actualmente, siete hermanas peruanas profesas son hermanas dominicas y dos mujeres jóvenes están en formación inicial en Perú. Una de nuestras hermanas peruanas ahora sirve en el consejo general de la congregación. Ya no hay hermanas dominicas norteamericanas de Springfield en Perú. La tecnología moderna apoya los viajes y la comunicación que ahora continúa la sororidad.

Las semillas sembradas por mujeres dominicas de América del Norte y del Sur en el pedregoso suelo de los Andes, el fértil valle de Huancayo, la bulliciosa ciudad de Lima y el árido desierto de Canto Grande siguen brotando. Conectadas por la vida y misión comunes, esas mismas semillas se han nutrido en Dakota del Sur, Illinois, Missouri y Mississippi. La transparencia y la vulnerabilidad han permitido que mujeres de dos culturas distintas asuman el desafío constante de proclamar valores compartidos en



Nicol Hol Samaniego Molina, a la derecha, y Maribel Inés Uribe Baquerizo, a la izquierda, jóvenes de Jarpa durante su visita a Lima. Ellas están discerniendo su llamado a la vida religiosa en la Orden de Predicadores.

diversas expresiones culturales. Los aprendizajes nos han influenciado como predicadoras de la Palabra. Lo que primero se percibió como una cuestión de mezclar culturas se ha convertido más bien en una apreciación profunda de la diversidad, no tanto un ejercicio de conformidad sino un camino sagrado hacia la unidad y mutualidad

Hermana Rose Miriam es vicaria general de las Hermanas Dominicas de Springfield.

Education Adventure

Sister Kathleen Gallagher, having served elementary school children in various capacities for 49 years, embarked this fall on “a relatively new adventure in education” as she put it: teacher assistant at St. Raphael School, Naperville, Ill. “Of my 49 years serving children at the elementary level, 38 have been in the Rockford diocese, and that includes four schools in the city of Aurora,” she said. She hasn’t strayed far from the epicenter of her teaching career, since Naperville, in Will County, abuts Aurora, the largest city in Kane County. She has taught and/or been an administrator of St. Peter, St. Therese, Holy Angels, and Pope St. John Paul II Academy in Aurora.

“It is gratifying and satisfying to look back on all those years, serving all those people,” Sister Kathleen said.



Sister Kathleen Gallagher at St. Raphael School, Naperville, Ill.



Sister Rose Marie Riley, left, and Sister Sharon Zayac, receive the Gold Level certificate awarded to Jubilee Farm by Sustainable Springfield.

Award for Jubilee Farm

For their leadership in integrating sustainable practices at Jubilee Farm, the Dominican Sisters were honored with a Gold Level certificate from Sustainable Springfield. This grassroots organization promotes and inspires sustainable solutions by local governments, the business community, and Springfield area citizens.

Sister Rose Marie Riley, director of Jubilee Farm, and **Sister Sharon Zayac**, a pioneer founder, received the award during an event at Maldaner’s Restaurant in Springfield on Wednesday, September 7. “It was heartwarming to see the number of local organizations honored for their efforts toward sustainability,” Sister Rose Marie said.

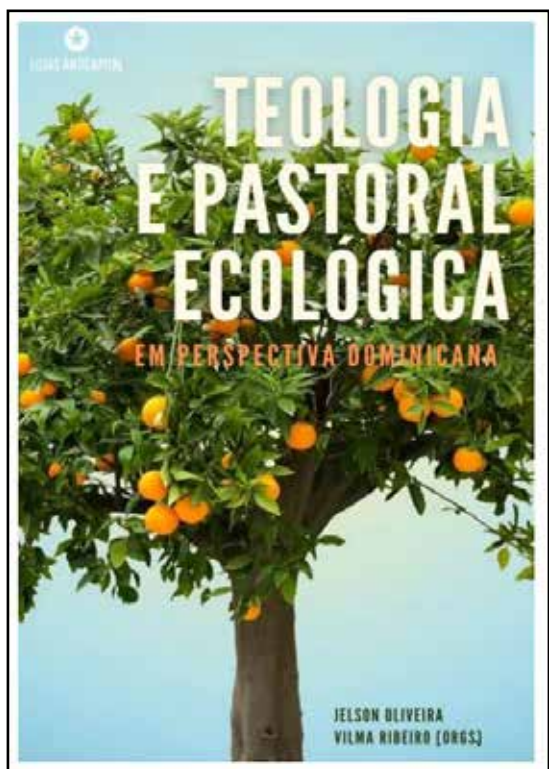
A Farewell

By the time this edition of *JUST Words* is off the press, it is anticipated that the Nuns of the Monastery of Mary the Queen will have vacated Siena Hall, their residence for the past eight years, and moved to their new monastery in Girard, Ill. In an interview Sister Ann Marie Pierre gave to *Catholic Times*, she spoke of the ties between our two branches of the Order of Preachers. “That bond that we created there with them, they have become such an integral part of our lives.”

It’s true, there will be a great hole in daily life once the nuns leave Sacred Heart Convent, but the ties that bind are not easily severed. The relationship will live on in ways yet to be realized.



The courtyard at the Dominican Monastery of Mary the Queen, Girard, Ill.



Cover art for the book includes an image of a miraculous orange tree St. Dominic is said to have planted in the courtyard at Santa Sabina, Rome.

Published in Portuguese

Though many thousands of words have been published under Sister Beth Murphy’s byline after decades of communications ministry, last spring she experienced a first. Her essay, “Making a Graft: Dominican Sisters and Hope for Earth,” was translated into Portuguese and published in *Teologia E Pastoral Ecológica: Em Perspectiva Dominicana*. The volume, published in Brazil and edited by Jelson Oliveira and Vilma Ribeiro, was the initiative of the Dominican Commission for Justice and Peace in Brazil. A collaborative effort of the Brazilian Dominican family, the book includes essays by Dominican friars, sisters, and laity who are theologians, pastoral workers, lawyers and educators. Sister Beth’s essay is a review of the many ways Dominican women are contributing to the global conversation on climate change. “The book is a labor of love on the part of the Dominicans in Brazil,” Sister Beth said. “It is dedicated to the memory of Dominican Father João Xerri, a Maltese friar who spent most of his life in Brazil, sharing his fierce and effective passion for the justice mission of the Order. He died of COVID the very day I submitted my essay to Jelson.”

Empathy: A Bridge to Unity?

By Dave Sanders

Our nation and world are divided, deeply split on issues that include the environment, race, immigration, crime, gender, women's rights and abortion, guns, COVID, and even faith. Volumes have been written about our divisions and spread through social media. As people of faith, the intensity of these divisions trouble us for many reasons, but mostly because Jesus wants us to live in harmony and love. We imagine unity for the greater good and ask ourselves, "Is unity possible?"

The concept of empathy may be helpful. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines empathy as the ability to identify with or understand another's situation or feelings. Yet, in these divided times, it should come as no surprise we are even divided about how to apply empathy. On the one hand, there are those who focus their empathy solely on the plight of the individual who, for example, might be hurt by the inflationary effects of some initiatives. On the other, big-picture advocates say directing our empathy too narrowly on the adverse situation of a single person or family could stall some important and urgent needs, like climate change, that benefit millions.

This begs the question: can we find unity through empathy? It is not exaggeration to say that our divisions are unbridgeable. Thankfully our faith tells us otherwise. We know "Nothing [is] impossible for God" (Luke 1:37). The word empathy was coined early last century so it is not found in the Bible, but the concept lives in scripture. We are told "All of you, be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate, humble" (1Peter 3:8). Of course, Jesus tells us "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

Employing empathy as a unifier, we are called to rise above the complexity of our divisions and differences long enough for honest reflection. Otherwise, our deeply held positions may overpower any hope for unity. Empathy is relational. It puts us on a level with all who are struggling with the many sufferings and challenges of day-to-day human existence, like paying bills, staying healthy, providing for basic family needs, or otherwise just surviving the day. Human suffering knows no boundary or side; neither should empathy. For those of us blessed to have time and talent to pursue our ideals, the reality of those in more challenging circumstances should give us pause. In fact, we should pause and self-examine our ability to be empathetic to all.

The uncomfortable truth is our divisions are deep-rooted and touch our emotions and passions, making honest self-reflection difficult. The questions we might ask ourselves are hard: Do we have the capacity, as people of faith, to have empathy for those whom we dislike or those with whom we disagree? Can we be more broadly empathetic, in the interest of unity and healing to everyone's betterment?

The Springfield Dominican Sisters' *Prayer for the Life of the World* asks God to "Free our hearts to recognize and attend to Christ

in hidden and unexpected places." Jesus asks us to be empathetic to bring our divided nation and world closer—to find Christ hidden within those with whom we differ. Because of our Christian hope we can trust that somewhere in our division lies a bridge to unity. Empathy may be that bridge. It allows us to move beyond just words to compassionate response. Which brings us to the ultimate question: do we care enough about unity to try?

Dave is a Dominican Associate, member of the JUST Words editorial board, and a volunteer pastoral visitor at St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Chatham, Ill.

Photo: Annie Spratt on Unsplash



TOOLS FOR RESILIENCE

By Alexis Williams, LCSW

As a licensed clinical social worker, I provide treatment services to people experiencing difficult life situations. Some reasons for seeking psychotherapy services include dealing with effects from childhood physical or sexual abuse or domestic violence or coping with cancer, chronic pain, or other serious health conditions. One may be struggling with symptoms of depression or anxiety, experiencing the painful loss of a loved one through death or divorce, or struggling as a caregiver to an aging parent showing signs of dementia. Despite such issues, I have witnessed client resilience.

Resilience can be defined as the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands (American Psychological Association).

What are some tools that enable resilience? In my practice, I have seen the following:

Having a positive therapeutic or corrective emotional experience where one has a safe space to feel heard, to release emotions, to not feel judged, to have one's feelings validated and accepted.

Negative messages can become so engrained that an automatic response is to feel bad, unloved, or undeserving of happiness. Learning to interrupt the cycle of negativity, and to widen the lens of one's view of oneself and others, can be a key component of change. Part of the journey of healing is to feel empowered instead of powerless as one learns to manage pain, trauma or tragedy.

Having a spiritual connection whether through active involvement in a church or one's private expressions of faith and belief in God or higher power.

Through inquiries about a person's spiritual life, I repeatedly find that faith provides sustaining power. Along with this, quiet time to practice stillness through prayer or meditation



A triumphant Special Olympian revels in his hard-won victory.

practices, deep breathing or connecting with nature can be recharging.

Having supportive relationships, social interaction and enjoyable activities.

Emotional struggles are compounded by isolation and disconnect from others.

Utilizing mindfulness to embrace the present moment instead of the what-ifs of the past or worries about the future.

Making self-care a priority by improving eating habits, obtaining better quality sleep, exercise including yoga, taking time for stillness and learning to set limits and boundaries.

Finding creative outlets through writing, drawing, painting, music, or dance.

Progress in working through difficult experiences and emotions does not happen in a straight line—there are forward and backward shifts. Therefore, patience, and showing oneself grace is key.

“I can be changed by what happens to me, but I refuse to be reduced by it.”

Maya Angelou, author, poet

Alexis is a Springfield Dominican Associate, member of the JUST Words editorial board and a licensed clinical social worker.

PARTNERS IN MISSION

Teresa and Leahy Bennet

Peering through the Lens of the Ordinary

Where do you find God in hidden and unexpected places? For many of us it means peering through the lenses of the ordinary to recognize the blessings hidden there.

For Teresa and Leahy Bennet, the ordinary is a farm tucked away in Pleasant Plains, Ill., home for five generations of Leahy's family. Living amidst nature and producing food provides the Bennets with a continual awareness of God's abundance. Teresa sees those blessings, including the anticipated blessing of an eleventh grandchild, through the lens of the ordinary. She has also prayed to God to lead her where she could be more participative in God's mission.

After Mass one Sunday her friend Graham Thompson talked to Teresa about becoming a Dominican Associate. It made sense for her. Her four children attended Our Saviour School and Routt High School with the Dominicans. This was an experience of letting God lead through the ordinary. Because Teresa was open to participating in God's mission of compassion and love in a new way, she said yes.

After she became an associate in 2011, Teresa was drawn to the social justice efforts of the Dominican



Teresa and Leahy Bennet

Sisters. She strives to see where God's compassion is needed beyond her little hamlet and tries to discern how she can make a difference. In her parish, Teresa helped with Hands Across America and Teen Life. And she fosters faith among parishioners and friends by leading Cursillo Retreats.

Teresa loves the Dominicans and the continuous attentiveness to the unfolding of "Holy Mystery" and the work of God. Wanting to support the sisters' efforts, Teresa and Leahy have chosen to participate in the monthly donor program, Bearers of the Flame. "It's a way to avoid writing a check every

month," she says, and acknowledges she also appreciates the ability to easily adjust the monthly amount.

This year, as we celebrate 150 years of a legacy of service for the Life of the World, would you consider becoming a monthly donor?

Whatever amount fits your monthly priorities will help make possible the Dominican Sisters continued legacy of service to others. Simply visit <https://springfielddop.org/>, click the donate button, select the amount, and click Reoccurring Donation.

Please consider joining Teresa and Leahy, and the Dominican Sisters in fulfilling God's mission of love and compassion. Thank you!



Sister Kathleen Anne is the director of mission advancement for the Dominican Sisters.

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Dominican Sources

“Human lives, as well as sacramental celebrations and the preached word, can serve as ‘humble landmarks’ of ‘God’s abiding presence in a wounded world.’

Sister Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP
Naming Grace, p. 191.

DATEBOOK

Events not public unless otherwise noted.

October	10	Indigenous Peoples’ Day/Columbus Day
	19	Monthly prayer of remembrance: Peru**
	31	All Hallows Eve
November	1	All Saints Day
	2	All Souls Day
	6	Associate Formation: Four Pillars of Dominican Life
	6-13	National Vocation Awareness Week/Meet Our Sisters Tour
	11	Veteran’s Day
	19	Monthly prayer of remembrance: Families, Associates, Boards, Benefactors
December	24	Thanksgiving Day
	27	First Sunday of Advent
	4	Associate Formation: Mission and Ministry
	8	Feast of the Immaculate Conception
	12	Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
	19	Monthly prayer of remembrance: Migrants and Indigenous Americans
	25	Christmas Day

*Learn about the associate program at springfieldop.org/associates

** Find the prayers at springfieldop.org/150years