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GREAT BEND DOMINICANS WELCOME DVUSA RETREATANTS

By Gemma Doll, OP

The Dominican Volunteers spent three days in Great Bend with the Dominican Sisters for their mid-year retreat. Their youth, zeal, and idealism charged the whole atmosphere of our motherhouse. The Volunteers shared meals and prayers with our sisters in retirement, allowing for a great exchange of energy and wisdom. One shouldn't be surprised, but I am still grateful for the naturalness and ease with which these Dominican Volunteers entered into the life of our sisters – testimony that intergenerational living does add richness to our Dominican life.

After the Dominican Volunteers left, the sisters had fond memories of specific conversations or the specific stories of a Volunteer which spawned a desire to have the Volunteers stay more long-term among us.

Young Dominican Volunteers' witness and testimony to the importance of prayer, simplicity of life, and service at personal sacrifice is very inspirational, even to retired sisters who also struggle to better integrate these values in their lives. Because the Dominican Volunteers were among us, this Lenten time of spiritual renewal might be even fuller with the memory of them living in our souls.



Above: Dominican Volunteers listen as Srs. Gemma Doll, OP and Lorena Bolte, OP share their ministry experience



Left: Dominican Volunteers and staff show off their "Dominican" hats and gloves, a gift from Kim Pitner, Great Bend Dominican associate for our cold weekend in Kansas. Back row: Donielle Dodde Xu (staff), Morgan Kallus, Megan Decker, Brian Desmarais, Spencer Daniel, Pam Ray. Front: Alyssa Yaklin, Brenda Weigand, Regina Botterill (staff), Jennifer Errante, Tony Butler. Lower front: Sophia Xu

Photo credits: Jolene Errante

"One shouldn't be surprised, but I am still grateful for the naturalness and ease with which these Dominican Volunteers entered into the life of our sisters – testimony that intergenerational living does add richness to our Dominican life."
-Sr. Gemma Doll, OP

RETREAT RECAP

By Donielle Dodde Xu

As the cold wind swept across the plains of central Kansas over the weekend of February 16-19, 2006, Dominican Volunteers were kept warm inside the motherhouse of the Great Bend Dominicans. There are many people who had significant roles in our experience who we wish to thank. Our thanks go out to Kim Pitner, Great Bend Associate, for her gifts and prayers, to Jolene Errante (JME Enterprises) for compiling a photo video of our experience, to Laurie at Heartland Farm for the spontaneous tour, to Jared Ainsworth-Bryson (Aquinas Institute) for his insight and direction, to Amy McFrederick for sharing Taize prayer, to Gemma and Lorena for sharing their experiences with us, and finally to Brenda Black, Renee Dreiling, OP, and the Sisters in Great Bend who provided such great hospitality. Thank you!

**“Be of service
wherever you
are.”**

-St. Catherine of
Siena

Adrian Dominicans

Akron Dominicans

Amityville Dominicans

Blauvelt Dominicans

Caldwell Dominicans

Columbus Dominicans

Dominican Sisters of Hope

Grand Rapids Dominicans

Great Bend Dominicans

Kenosha Dominicans

Province of St. Albert the
Great

Racine Dominicans

St. Catharine Kentucky
Dominicans

Sinsinawa Dominicans

Southern Dominican
Communities

Sparkill Dominicans

Springfield Dominicans

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COMMUNITY. LENT. CONVERSION.

By Anthony Butler, Visitation Scholarship Program, Chicago, IL

The Season of Lent is a time of renewal; it is a time of conversion. Lent is the springtime bringing new life and beauty after the winter. It is an opportunity for each of us to take a closer look at our lives and make decisions about what we can do differently. How can we more fully live the Gospel? Jesus teaches us that we do this through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. I would assert that each of these three pieces are also typical qualities of community living.

In community living there is no me-versus-them attitude. If we do not take a team approach, then the community will suffer and could fail. We remind ourselves of what we do and why we're doing it. We create a mission statement and challenge one another to fulfill that mission together. Specific and less formally written goals help us to make it all work.

We quickly come to find none of this can be accomplished without struggle; it is daily learning endeavor in which we ask for assistance. Prayer renews and strengthens us and we are fortified to continue our particular ministries. Prayer centers our community life and pushes forward to do more and return to the well to receive.

Community living comes with its own kind of fasting. If living in a house of thirteen is really going to work, we are all going to have to find some pieces of our former lives that we must give up for the greater good of this new home. When I moved into the House of Connections, I quickly realized that I could not do everything the same way that I'd always done. Community requires us to give something of ourselves in order that the community may properly function as one entity.

Giving alms is a major piece of community. In community, we find that we need to contribute much to this life. In our house this is evidenced by the fact that we each have chores that must be done. If we do not do our chore, the rest of the community suffers, especially if part of your chore is shopping or cleaning one of the bathrooms. This life requires the contribution of thoughts, ideas, opinions and feelings from each of its members in order to carefully examine and provide for the whole.

Because community calls us to more fully live the Gospel, as does Lent, it truly is a conversion experience. Conversion is to change something from one form to another. Beyond a shadow of a doubt I can say this community living has changed me for life, even though the essence of who Anthony Michael Butler is will ever remain. When I came to Connections, I discovered living in community was downright difficult. We enter the difficulties together and we navigate through them as one body, not as independent pieces but an interdependent whole. Together we pass through the wilting winter into a blossoming springtime; converted together, nevermore the same.



Tony Butler is pictured working with fifth grade students from Visitation School

WELCOME, NEW DIRECTOR, REGINA BOTTERILL!

In December 2005, Regina Botterill took on the position as Executive Director for DVUSA. Regina began her career as a volunteer through the Lutheran Volunteer Corps in 94-95. She stayed on for 10 years at Interfaith Worker Justice, her LVC placement, and helped to build it from a small, primarily volunteer organization to a national network, with more than 50 related local organizations. At IWJ, she started internship and volunteer programs, which engaged hundreds of young people in justice ministry. She brings to DVUSA a passion for growing organizations, an enthusiasm for post-graduate volunteer programs, and a deep appreciation for the Dominican community and the warm welcome she has received. Regina is a graduate of DePaul University and Loyola College in Maryland, and was confirmed in the Roman Catholic Church in 2001. Welcome again, Regina!



LENT: A SEASON OF FASTING, ALMSGIVING, AND PRAYER

By Pamela Ray, St. Dominic's Home, Blauvelt, NY

As a youngster growing up, I can remember deciding with my friends what to “give up” for Lent. Usually it was candy, deserts, a favorite television show, or fighting with our siblings—big sacrifices for most of my friends and me. As I got older, Lent wasn't about giving something up, but rather about doing different tasks to help others or improve myself. Being kinder, helping more around the house, going to reconciliation and Mass, and attending Stations of the Cross regularly all became deeds of Lent. Now, my perspective about Lent has changed again. No, it is not about giving up favorite things or self-improvement, but truly about giving more of myself and, more importantly, about letting go.



Pam Ray (center) with staff at St. Dominic School

I tried to explain this to a friend recently. She asked “What more can you give? You are already volunteering a year of your life.” I had to laugh because, even though I am volunteering my time and talents at St. Dominic's School, I am certainly receiving much more than I am giving. By volunteering to work with and teach these students, I am constantly reminded of how fortunate and blessed my life has been. Many of my students will never have the opportunities or experiences I have enjoyed because of their home situations and their disabilities. They face daily struggles I can't even imagine let alone try to alleviate. All I can do is be there to help them when they need me. They have taught me the value of a smile, a high five, an open ear and heart, and a hug.

I find my biggest challenge is “letting go” and “letting God” take over. In order to really serve my students, I have had to “let go” of my personal goals and accomplishments, and “let God” help me concentrate on their needs. Being mindful that I work in a therapeutic school, not a true academic institution, keeps me grounded and focused on the kids. I have had to “let go” of the idea that they will all want to learn and understand science. Rather, I need to “let God” help me to be satisfied and share in their delight when they find a treasure on our nature walks. I have “let go” of my professional identity as Dr. Ray the veterinarian, and embraced my roles as Dr. Pam the teacher, caretaker, friend and confidante. It is through the grace of God that I have become the student rather than the teacher most days as I learn about my students and their fragile lives.

This year of service should not be just about the ministry and job I love so much, but also about community living and my deepening relationship with God through prayer. “Letting go” of my preconceived idea of community as a family unit has enabled me to better understand my housemates and appreciate their varied roles in our community. “Letting God” guide me over the bumps and through the twists and turns of living with five other people has helped me recognize my own idiosyncrasies and areas where I can grow in community living. “Letting go” of my independence (financial, physical, emotional) to some extent, and becoming interdependent on others in community, has been a major step in my personal growth.

“Letting go” of some of my responsibilities to my family and “letting God” grant me the peace of mind that things will be okay back home has been another milestone for me. When one is used to handling crisis situations in a family, it is difficult to step aside and allow others to take over. I have to believe that God is giving others the strength and courage to help out and He is letting me see that I don't have to handle everything.

“Letting go” of the very egocentric idea that I am in control of my life has only come about because I have “let God” show me He is in control in spite of what I often think. There have not been any overt signs (that would be way too easy!), but through prayer I have started to see God's presence in all I do and in all that surrounds me. My prayer life has changed and continues to evolve as I strive to find God's presence and recognize His gifts in my life and my journey as a volunteer.

“Letting go” and “letting God” continue to lead me have become my personal goals this Lenten Season.



The community at St. Ann's in Blauvelt, NY with Marie Colbert, former DVUSA Director

service

Are you ready to make a difference in our world? We are seeking applications to fill volunteer placement sites around the United States right now. Your skill could be exactly what the world needs right now. Applications can be downloaded from www.dvusa.org.

ministry

DVUSA places volunteers in sites that make use of their varying skills and talents. If your non-profit agency could offer a dynamic and enriching environment for a DV to use his/her passion, we'd love to hear from you!

community

Does your Dominican community have the courage it takes to be inspired, challenged, and changed by hosting a Dominican volunteer for a year? If so, contact us at the DVUSA office to find out more about establishing a DV community in your city.



DOMINICAN VOLUNTEERS USA

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DOMINICAN VOLUNTEERS USA NEWSLETTER is published tri-annually for friends and fans of Dominican volunteering. It is printed in black and white for easier recycling. Please recycle this newsletter or pass it on to a friend.

Bound by Love



National Volunteer Week April 23-29, 2006

This Lent, pay tribute to a special volunteer in your life. We invite you to make a contribution in his/her honor, and we will send a tribute card to the volunteer in your name during National Volunteer Week. Your contribution ensures that volunteers will continue to have opportunities to be of service in the future, and the tribute is a way of saying thanks for the work that volunteers across the world are doing.

Please send a check made payable to DVUSA, along with this form to our office at 7200 W. Division, River Forest IL 60305. For more information, contact Regina at 708-524-5984. Honored volunteers will be listed in our next newsletter and on our website.

Dominican Volunteers USA is a not-for-profit organization in the State of Illinois and is designated by the IRS with 501(c)(3) status. All donations to Dominican Volunteers USA are tax-deductible.

Your Name:

Donation: \$35 \$50 \$100 other_____

Volunteer's Name and address*:

Where does he/she volunteer?

What is your relationship to the volunteer?

*Please note that Tribute requests received by DVUSA after April 20 will probably not reach volunteers by the 29th.