



Queen of Peace Monastery



Dear friends,

The community of Queen of Peace wishes you abundant blessings this summer, and especially for the feast of our patron, Saint Dominic!

Our Sister Mary Magdalen has just completed a sculpture of St. Dominic for Dominican nuns of Lufkin, Texas (*upper right*). She has carved Dominic as the barefoot preacher who walked thousands of miles toward others with his heart and mind lifted toward the Lord in prayer. Dominic the pilgrim.

As I write this article it is the third Sunday of Easter. Today, we are pilgrims with the disciples of Emmaus. The disciples were grappling with the darkness of violence, death, dashed dreams and the shocking absence of the one who had become a beloved friend. In the grip of past events and confused with regard to their future, they were unable to perceive who it was that was with them at that very moment. Finally, they perceive Jesus in the blessing, breaking and giving of the bread. Not only is He there, He is given.

Our own challenge is to discern His presence, day by day, in the midst of our activities and concerns. We know what it is like to be present physically but elsewhere in our thoughts. Dominic, our monastery's bunny (*lower right*), is teaching me to be truly present to him by gently nudging my ankle with his nose when he wants my full attention. We are invited to be lovingly present to the One who loves us and who is always present to us. As Brother Lawrence taught, we seek *to practice the presence of God*.

We are perpetual pilgrims on this journey from the '*I am here*' to '*here I am*.' This '*here I am*' implies being present to another (an Other). It echoes the '*here I am*' of little Samuel and that of Mary at the Annunciation.

How slow we are to understand that we are not alone on this journey. Jesus is with us, and says, '*Here I am, for you*'.

God bless,

Sr. Claire Marie and your sisters of Queen of Peace Monastery



October: Sr. Marie Bénédicte returns to us from France. Originally from the monastery of Saint Maximin la Sainte Baume, she stayed with our community a few years ago. She has now transferred to our Canadian monastery, adding to our middle generation of professed sisters. We rejoice to have her back among us, and she ably begins work in the candle shop, the guest department and the sacristy.

Soon, she also has an opportunity to experience local Canadian culture by travelling in a pickup truck with Sr. Marie Thomas to Westminster Abbey in Mission, B.C. There, our two sisters collect generous donations from our dear friends the Benedictine monks, including...a bunny. The monks had found a domestic lop eared rabbit wandering on their cow fields, in need of a good home. His black and white fur reminded them of the religious habit of our Dominican Order, so they named him Dominic and offered him to us! We were very glad to accept. Dominic settles in well, quickly masters monastic silence (one might say it's natural) and is shortly appointed therapeutic rabbit. Living in our infirmary,



this gentle member of our community provides some extra companionship for our sisters there. As a matter of fact, the "therapy" extends to all the sisters, as bunny Dominic doesn't mind a head scratch from the rest of us as well.

By the end of the month, there is snow on the mountains, and the refectory "shifts into winter" with squash and root vegetables from our garden appearing regularly at table. From October 27 to November 4, fr. Thierry-Marie Courau O.P. of the Province of France preaches our annual retreat on the theme "From Death into Life," a close spiritual exegesis of Genesis and Exodus. Before leaving, he kindly accepts to play the shakuhachi for us. It is a traditional Japanese flute whose learning demands a lot of patience and endurance, but the beauty and contemplative quality of the sound makes it worthwhile!

November: On November 12, Sr. Claire, Sr. Mary Regina, Sr. Mary Magdalen, Sr. Marie Etienne and Sr. Mary Joseph travel to the Dominican parish of St. Mary's in Vancouver for the ordination of fr. Gilles Simard O.P. A former meteorologist, fr. Gilles had made his pre-ordination retreat in our monastery's guest room. The occasion of the ordination also brings visits from our Provincial, fr. Yves Beriault; from the Provincial of the Western Dominican Province, fr. Christopher Fadok; and numerous other Dominican friars before and after the ordination, including Brothers Prakash Lohale, Jacques Marcotte, Bernard East and Dieudonné Bigirimana.

On the 20th, the Feast of Christ the King, postulant Mica Paez receives the Dominican habit and the religious name Sr. Marie Angelica of the Incarnation. The clothing ceremony in our Chapter hall is followed by the Sunday Eucharist and a festive meal. It is a day of great joy for all.

What does one do with a bumper crop of cabbage? Sauerkraut, of course! With advice and equipment from farmer Thomas Schneider and his wife Astrid, our sisters chop, grate, hew and macerate enough brassica to fill several crocks (*in progress, left*). Several weeks later, we enjoy the bounty. It is an opportunity for a good community *disputatio* on the question: "Is sauerkraut better eaten raw as a salad or baked with brown sugar and bacon?" The answer lies in a liturgical discernment: it depends on whether it is a ferial day or a feast!



Three monks of Westminster Abbey and the high school seminarians join us for a work-

Sr. Marie Angelica's Vestition



and-prayer weekend on the first Sunday of Advent (25 - 27). As usual, they chop firewood and dig a trench with unfailing energy. The novelty in the program this time is a hunt for the source of a leak in front of the garden. The failed water pipe responsible is eventually found two meters and several boulders down! Thanks to the work team, we can now access the garden dry-shod. Shortly after the seminarians and monks depart, we enjoy the first heavy snowfall of the year.

December: Pilchuk Creek freezes over, and river otter tracks appear on the ice. We do not see the otters this time, but we know their playful habits, and observe the marks of their movements in the snow as they catch salmon, wrestle each other, and go “sledding” down the riverbank.

On the 2nd, we attend a video presentation on the theme of hope by fr. Emmanuel Durand O.P. of Fribourg, Switzerland. The talk is organized by the Contemplatives of the Canadian Religious Conference, and available in both French and simultaneous English translation. We split into two groups on two different computers, each according to her native language, and compare the versions afterwards!

All this time, construction continues on the new workshop building. On December 10, the first residents take up occupancy in the cold room: squash and cabbage. Their shelter is still a bit makeshift, but permanent shelving is on the way, which will allow for all species of winter vegetables from our garden.

Just before Christmas, we receive an early present: Sr. Marie Cecile returns to us from the monastery of Notre Dame de Prouilhe in France. She will help out as infirmarian, and soon gets her first taste of real Canadian winter as the snow begins to fall and fall, and fall, and... As our community grows in number, we follow the injunction of Isaiah the Prophet, “*Enlarge the place of your tent*”, by setting out a larger coffee maker in our kitchenette. Christmas itself dawns in proper West Coast style: rain! Nothing can drench our spirits, however, and some caroling recreations and community walks keep our spirits high. Finally, the snow endures through the deluge and the newer sisters discover snowshoes.

January: Our annual St. Stephen’s day visit from the local Dominican friars is transferred to January 2nd. The traditional tourtière and Bûche de Noël are always deeply appreciated, but taste even better when we are more awake, the Midnight Vigil being at one week’s distance... and we thoroughly enjoy the festive company of fr. Pierre, fr. Gabriel and fr. Gilles. On January 7, the FIAT women’s discernment group of the Archdiocese of Vancouver visits for Mass and a snowshoe hike up Cloudburst Mountain to the lake. This is an opportunity not only to meet the young women, but to see again two of our Dominican sisters of St. Cecilia, Sr. Mary Sabina and Sr. Mary Bethany, and our fellow mendicant Sr. Angela Marie of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist.

February: On the Feast of the Presentation (2nd), Sr. Laetitia Maria of the Holy Spirit makes her first profession of vows for three years. Some of her close family is able to join us from Alberta, and they sing the recessional hymn. Afterwards, we joyfully share in a Dominican-themed cake, and the family teaches us a traditional African dance (possible even for those with two left feet).



Sr. Laetitia Maria's First Profession



Gisenya Family

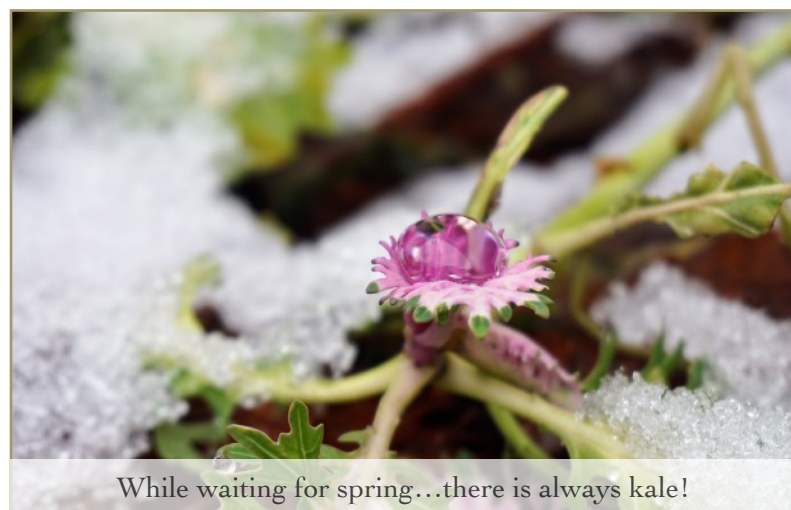




Sr. Imelda Marie in the cold room



Khuyen's entrance



While waiting for spring...there is always kale!

The large greenhouse room in the new workshop building needs painting, and the novitiate is called on duty for the job. After two days of work, both room and sisters have two coats of paint and are finished, at least for the time being.

Khuyen enters as a postulant on the memorial of Blessed Fra Angelico O.P. (Feb 18). Originally from Vietnam, she joins us most recently from Winnipeg, Manitoba. We thank God for the gift of Khuyen's presence among us, and wish her every joy in the Lord! We learn from her that it is the Vietnamese year of the cat, and that according to the traditional lunar calendar some of us are dogs, some others goats, or buffaloes, horses, tigers and even dragons. In any case, all creatures come from the hands of God, and He saw that it was very good!

Occasionally, crews from the local film industry ask if they can rent our southmost field for the scene of a production. With the field located a kilometre away from the monastery, these bookings do not disturb our silence. This month, we feel for the three actresses who apparently must fall into a frozen pond in the middle of our field (repeatedly). But, this bit of extra income allows us to trade in our smaller car for a gently-used electric vehicle. This is something we'd dreamed of for many years, particularly now that we generate our own electricity. As contemplatives, it is unlikely we'll ever see the film in question, but the bursar certainly enjoys *not* seeing the gas station bills anymore.

March: With the greenhouse painted, it is time for the next step of construction: a planter box which will allow for the growing of vegetables during the winter. Under the direction of our faithful Ron and neighbour Dan, a work party of sisters mix, pour and level concrete for the 6.30 m³ indoor planter. On March 19, the solemnity of St. Joseph, another work party fills the box with layers of wood chips, straw and compost (in the right order and proportion!) under the watchful guidance of farmer Thomas. No doubt Saint Joseph is helping from above. The very next morning, Sr. Imelda Marie is hard at work planting the box with more than 20 varieties of quick-growing salad greens and radishes. Sr Marie Thomas, now in charge of the kitchen, rejoices at the prospect of a year-round supply of lettuce, given the amount needed in our refectory! She eagerly awaits the first harvest.

On the same solemnity of St. Joseph, we are given a wonderful apparition: a local bobcat, who nonchalantly strolls past the refectory windows during the noon meal. He saunters out of view before anyone can get a camera, but his calm grace leaves a lasting impression. St. Joseph is the patron saint of Canada, so it seems fitting that he send us this special guest of the boreal forest in honour of his feast.

From the 20th to the 31st, we hold our second year of community study sharing. Instead of regular work in the afternoons on these days, sisters take turns presenting on their recent studies. From St. Joseph (him again!) to Meister Eckhart, from medieval philosophy to supernovae, via the symbolism of the Hebrew alphabet, we all enjoy learning from each other's different areas of interest.



Study week



Planter box in progress



Caring for the orchard



April: When we purchased the land to build our monastery, we also received some fruit trees and we planted some more. On Tuesday of Holy Week, they are ready to be pruned. Thomas gives our garden sisters a workshop on the art...because it is quite an art. We know now why, in the Scriptures, God himself is the One who prunes: you must really know what you are doing! Soon our apple, pear and plum trees are looking their very best in preparation for Easter.

Holy Week debuts with a downpour, and by Holy Thursday we think about building an ark. Noah's ark and the waters of the flood were considered prefigurations of baptism in the early Church, so this would perhaps have been fitting. Instead, we spend the afternoon of Holy Saturday setting up a processional tent at the chapel entrance in preparation for the Easter Vigil. Our zeal, combined with the age of the tent, results in a tear that is mended both by duct tape and some pretty good needlework (all this under pouring rain, of course). St Paul can be proud of us: he well knew the travails of the job, being a tent maker as well as an apostle. In the end, celebrant and Paschal Candle remain dry, and the Paschal fire ignites without a hitch! After a beautiful midnight liturgy, we also rejoice to welcome a number of guests and neighbours for Mass of the day. Each receives a blessed loaf of Easter bread for their family, home-baked by our sisters.

From April 16 - 22, we have the joy of seeing fr. Chrysostom Mijinke O.P. again as he joins us for a week of retreat. Originally from Langley, he entered the Western Dominican Province in the United States, and is currently stationed at the Newman Centre in Seattle. Nothing like a fraternal encounter to encourage each of us in our vocation.

We have a dream (more exactly, *some* of us have a dream): making our own cheese. That is not so easy, with the first difficulty being to find good milk directly from the cow. The solution would be to have our own cow, but we are not there yet! So, we tried with a *tomme* recipe from the French Alps and the most adequate milk available. Perhaps the cross-Atlantic trip was a bit too much for the recipe, as we did not achieve a perfect replica of the original. Cheese maturing is also a delicate process, and this one lacked humidity, which is a bit strange – to say the least – on the West Coast! Nevertheless, on April 30, a very honest home-made cheese appears at our refectory table, and disappears fast enough to encourage the cheesemakers to make more progress.



Our own cheese!

Carving St. Dominic

Our Sr. Mary Magdalen is a lifelong sculptor and carver, having begun learning in her early teens. She continued practicing throughout her years in the monastery, with major works including St. James, St. Jude, Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Joseph with the child Christ. In 2021, the Monastery of the Infant Jesus (Lufkin, Texas) asked her if she could carve an image of St. Dominic for their chapel. A student brother on retreat graciously offered to pose for a photograph, sister again sharpened her tools, and set to work.



How did you learn how to carve?

Sr. Mary Magdalen: My uncle was an Irish pastor at St. Joseph's parish in my hometown. He wanted an original sculpture of St. Joseph. He hunted around and found the artist to do it. This artist was a Hungarian refugee from the revolution. Through my uncle I was introduced to this wonderful sculptor who had taught at the University of Budapest. I was just so blessed to find such a

master. So, I began carving wood and learned those techniques. I was introduced to the tools and how to use them. He would say to me, "Now, Pat, you have a good problem"—and he would turn and walk away, leaving me with my problem!

Can you tell me about the process of carving St. Dominic?

That was fun. The first thing is to find the wood, so I asked our carpenter Ron and he took me over to the wood loft at St.

Ann's. We went up to the rafters there and we picked out a beautiful big plank of cedar. The other part of it is that ever since I was little, I hung around with my father who was always building things. God made me a tool lover, I just am. So part of the attraction of carving is having all these tools!

Why is carving a form of prayer for you?

I think it is because it requires such concentration that I blot out everything around me. Then, I find that it is such a gift. Why do I have this gift? I am overwhelmed with it. And I'm just, I'm just in bliss and with God. I know it is God who has given it to me. —>



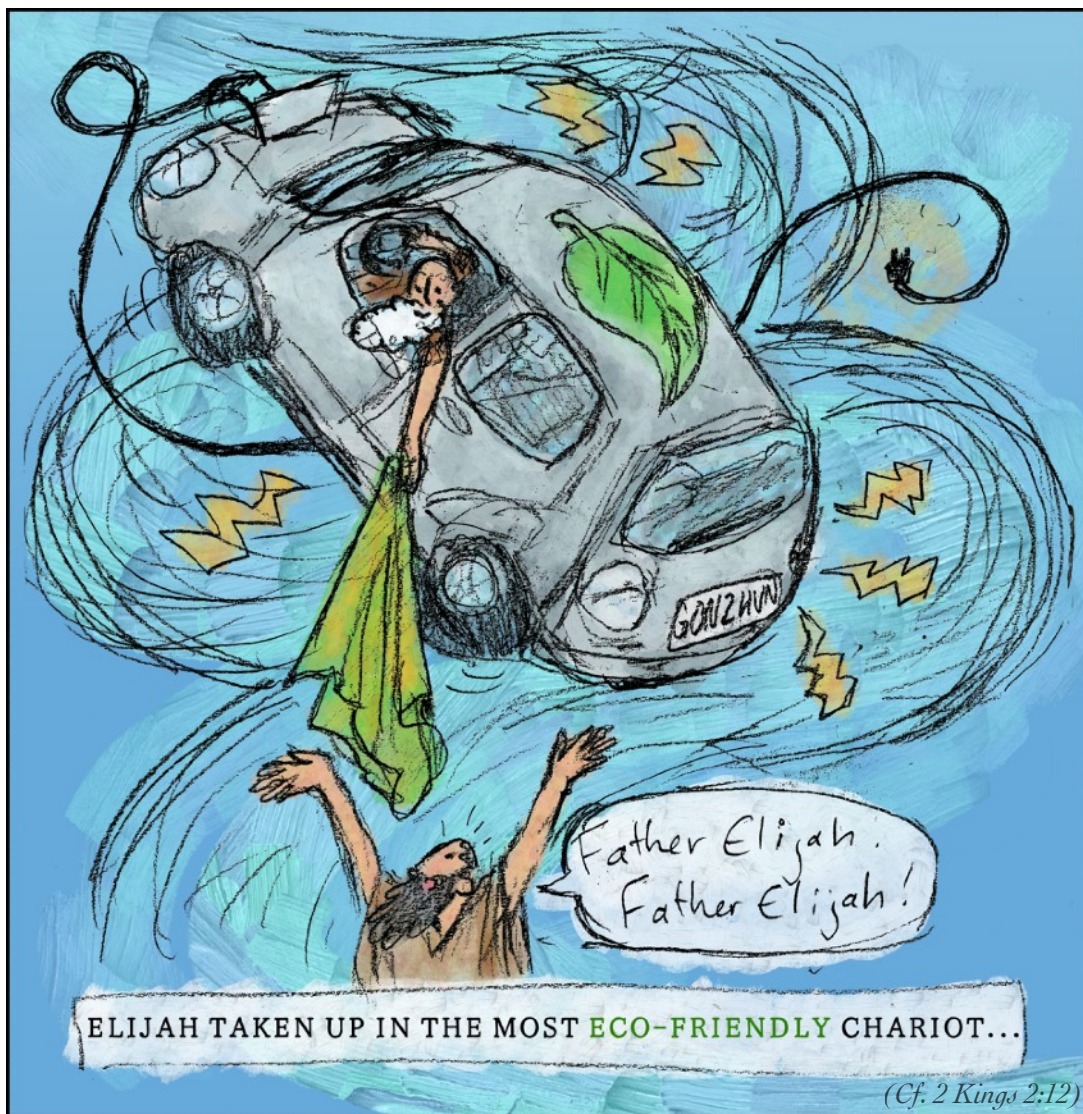
→ What does this gift of carving mean to you?

I want to pass it on. It would be so sad if it were to die with me. It seems like the gift belongs with the community. I am so happy that Sr. Laetitia Maria has asked to learn. She's doing a beautiful carving and is actually on her second piece now.

Now that you're done carving St. Dominic, what are you carving?

St. Dominic the second, for our community! That's what Sr. Claire kept saying, "Now you need to do one for us!" So, I am working with a marvellous plank of yellow cedar donated by our dear friend and neighbour Dan Wall. Thank-you!

At the end of May, Sr. Mary Margaret (the prioress of Lufkin) visited our community and picked up the carving of St. Dominic. Once installed in their monastery's chapel, he will be walking towards the tabernacle along with carvings of other Dominican saints done by various artists.



Donation Information



Canadian friends

If you wish to receive an income tax receipt,
please send your cheques to:

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American friends

If you wish to receive an income tax receipt,
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Please remember my intentions in your prayer: _____

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We assure you of our daily prayers for your family, friends and special intentions.