



Queen of Peace Monastery



Visit from the Master of our Order, fr. Gerard Timoner III OP (centre)

Dear friends,

During this holy season of Advent, we ponder the mystery of the Word who became flesh and made his dwelling among us. This Word was *“with God in the beginning”*, and *“through him all things were made”* (Jn 1).

In preparation for the General Chapter which took place in Mexico this summer, the Master of our Order, fr. Gerard Timoner III, wrote: *“as preachers of God’s holy word, we know the power of words. Words are powerful when they are efficacious, when what is said or written, happens, when ‘words become flesh.’”* Since our last newsletter, our community has heard many words full of promise, hope and life such as: the humble words of truth spoken by Pope Francis during his pilgrimage of reconciliation in Canada; words of self-gift as many of our sisters deepened their “yes” to God in this path of Dominican monastic life; and, words of encounter and conviviality as we welcomed again friends whom two years of pandemic had distanced from us. Words are what we most often use to encourage, to seek pardon, and to enter more deeply into relationships with others.

Yet, in His Incarnation and birth, the Word of God became wordless, like any other human infant. Jesus, the supreme communication of God’s love for each one of us, was born unable to communicate clearly. Like any new parents, Mary and Joseph had to learn to listen, to understand, and to anticipate what he needed. *“Mary,”* it is written, *“kept all these things and pondered them in her heart”* (Lk 2:19). This first formation in attentiveness and listening would shape her life to the point where, many years later, Jesus would praise his mother by saying, *“Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”* (Lk 11:28). As we approach Christmas and the year to come, may we become together listeners to God’s Word of love hidden in our midst, both in what is spoken and in what is left unsaid; and, may this listening be a blessing to our communities, families and the world.

A blessed Advent to you,

Your sisters at Queen of Peace Monastery



April: On Easter Monday, we have the visit of our vicar fr. Guy Rivard OP. He is accompanied by fr. Gilles Simard OP, who will be ordained in Vancouver this November. A former meteorologist, fr. Gilles gives us an interesting introduction at recreation to this field of scientific work (Note: his weather forecast for the next day was accurate!).

At the end of the month, Sr. Marie Thomas and our postulant Mica take the ferry to Vancouver Island. The small monastery of the Poor Clares in Duncan is sadly going to close, and the nuns there kindly offered us the pick of their library. Our sisters fill the car with books, and come back enriched and moved by this experience of friendship in the Lord. St. Clare and St. Francis share with St. Dominic the same spirit of evangelical simplicity and joy, and this was deeply felt by our young sisters.

May: The spring rain falls faithfully, day after day...the fairy slipper flowers show themselves by the creek, and dogwood trees bloom on the hill beside the novitiate. We start planting in the garden, and our friend and garden-mentor Thomas Schneider, with the help of his wife Astrid, sets up a beautiful greenhouse for us. Perhaps now we will succeed in growing the eggplants that have failed for seven years? A good omen is offered by Sr. Imelda Marie, who arrives in the kitchen one day triumphantly holding the first asparagus of her crop. Noah's dove coming back to the Ark with the olive branch did not create a greater enthusiasm!

After a thorough preparation by Ron, John, Patrick and Dan (the marvelous crew who will work all summer on the project), the concrete floor is poured down on the workshop site on the 19th. We have now a first "horizontal view" of the dimensions.

Some days later, Sister Claire's birthday is the ideal opportunity to reveal a beautiful gift from the the Poor Clares of Duncan: a large panel on which is mounted a copy of the Rule of St. Clare. The hard part had been to keep it hidden from the prioress until this day, but the novitiate

hallway had proved a secure hiding place. The panel is now hanging officially in the prioress's office.

On the feast of the Ascension of the Lord, Sr. Marie Thomas "ascends" as well: it is time for her, as a temporary professed sister, to leave the novitiate and integrate into the group of the solemnly professed sisters. Her new stage of life begins...in a great silence, as it is our custom to be on retreat from Ascension to Pentecost. But we have no doubt that the Holy Spirit will free our tongues when He comes!

At the end of the month, the walls of the workshops are fully framed and then lifted into place by a crane. Suddenly, the project takes on some verticality and starts resembling a little house. Then, a forest of electrical wires gradually sprouts between the beams. Only our electrician, Arjun, knows where they come from and where they are going!

June: We regularly spot wildlife around the monastery: elk with their calves, deer with their fawns, a yearling bear and a bobcat who seems to think he is the owner of this place.

A surprise at the beginning of the month: we have visits from several priests of the Diocese of Victoria. What are they doing here? They are on retreat at the Copper Ridge Center in Britannia Beach, and the retreat master is no other than our own Archbishop of Vancouver, Michael Miller CSB. Through our visitors, we are able to send a surprise birthday gift to our friend Bishop Gary Gordon of Victoria. Our God loves friendship and delicately provides occasions to show it!

Among a variety of visits from families, Sr. Marie Thomas's mother wins the prize of artistry: Anna-Maria Lawrie is learning the ancient art of puppet-making. Thanks to the internet, she is studying online with an instructor from Iceland. Numerous civilizations have been creating their own forms and techniques of puppets for millenia, and we were thrilled to meet with her last realizations—including the venerable "Tante" (pictured *below*).





This year, the feast of St. John the Baptist humbly withdraws before our Lord, and is celebrated a day early. On the 24th, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart, postulant Mariel receives the Dominican habit and the name Sr. Mary Joseph of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Members of her family and close friends come from Whistler, along with her parish priest Fr. Andrew L'Heureux. After the celebration, we join them in our conference room to meet new faces and rejoice together.

Around the 26th, the temperature rises to 35° C and more. We try a new system of fans in the chapel in order to sing the Office without melting completely. To cool the roofs and forest surrounding the monastery, we also turn on the wildfire sprinkler system each night after Compline.

On the 27th, we are happy to see again fr. Prakash Lohale OP of the Dominican convent in Toronto, accompanied by fr. Gilles. To celebrate, we share a picnic and the latest news from our respective communities.

July: Canada Day! We feast our beautiful country with a picnic (we are now well-trained for this exercise). On the same day, our soap-making team launches a special "summer collection" whose fragrances recall our monastery's gardens and woods in midsummer.

On the 2nd, we are happy to welcome the Legatus Family group for Mass and Vespers. We admire the faith commitment of these men and women who carry high responsibilities in the business world.

Another brotherly visit cheers our hearts: fr. Joseph Selinger OP, a recently ordained member of the US Western Province, celebrates a Mass of thanksgiving with

us. Originally from Port Coquitlam B.C., he met our (then-future) Sr. Marie Etienne while studying in Ottawa. Now, both are working the Lord's field in the same Dominican Order (see *centre & centre-right in the photo below*).

At mid-month, the roof trusses are installed on the new workshop building. The structure takes on its full height and we discover the slope of the roof, which is now waiting for its cover.

Two days later, our Archbishop Michael Miller visits us. We exchange monastery news versus Archdiocesan news. In this time of crisis for the Church and for the world, we hold him fast in prayer. Each evening, our community continues to recite a special prayer for an end to the war in Ukraine.

Then, we benefit from a chant workshop with Alexis Kutarna, a young scholar and mother who specializes in sacred music. Laureate of a Ratzinger Foundation Award for 2021-2022, she leads us with competence and grace through the Gregorian pieces of our repertory.





Assisting with the roof...



... installing windows...

From the 24th to the 29th, Pope Francis comes to Canada on a penitential pilgrimage as part of the reconciliation process between the Catholic Church and Indigenous peoples in Canada. We can follow some of the celebrations on the Internet, and are impressed by the dignity of the First Nations chiefs and peoples, the strength of their sacred song, and the noble humility of Pope Francis.

Sr. Marie Thomas leaves for two months in France on the 26th. Destination? The first monastery of the Dominican Order, Notre Dame de Prouilhe, where she will discover the places where our Father Dominic lived, prayed, walked and preached. In “exchange” we prepare to welcome Sr. Marie Cecile of Prouilhe until early October.

August: As a week of preparations for the solemn feast of our father St. Dominic on August 8, we have been processing in the cloister each evening before Compline while singing a litany in his honour. On the seventh day, a chipmunk devoutly joins the procession beside the sisters. Perhaps he is a future blessed, but Sr. Mary Columba stops him before he enters our chapel!

We celebrate our St. Dominic’s feast with the Dominican laity of Vancouver. After the Mass, we share a potluck while presenting the new members on both sides. Of course, we mutually answer THE question: “What did you do during Covid?” Those first days in 2020 seem so long ago! Present at the Mass for the feast, a visitor named Alan accepts our invitation to the festive

meal. Afterwards, he volunteers to join the construction team for the workshop building, and his competence as a carpenter is most welcome!

On the feast of St. Clare, patron of our prioress, the young sisters are called to an unusual service between Lauds and Mass: the roof of the workshops needs to be put in place! Along with our crew of volunteers, they form a chain to slide the long metal sheets up to the top of the trusses. In only two hours of time, the volunteers secure them into place, and we can admire the results right after lunch.

However, St. Clare does not stop there. The same day, she brings us our vicar fr. Guy Rivard OP accompanied by a young Dominican brother from the Province of Australia-New Zealand: fr. William Loh OP. We are blessed to be part of an international Order! Both are recently returned from the General Chapter of our Order, held in Mexico. Though the high altitude made the breathing a bit hard for some friars, it was a beautiful experience of Dominican government, with the presence and full commitment of many young friars. A sure sign of hope for our Order.

The surprises continue on the solemnity of the Assumption, as the Virgin Mary brings us...a new kiln for our pottery! This wonderful gift of our friends Eileen and Michael Walsh will transform the work experience of our potters: reliability, security, energy saving. It is a dream come true, and we have no words to express our gratitude.

On the 19th, it is a joy to see again fr. Yves Beriault OP, the newly elected Prior Provincial of Canada. He was formerly vicar of our monastery, and is pleased to discover all the new faces in our community. By a happy coincidence, Sr. Marie Cecile arrives from France on the same day. She very naturally takes her place amongst us, and Sr. Isabelle is comforted to hear another French accent in the house! Two days later, we meet the newly arrived fr. Joseph D’Souza OP from the Province of India. He comes to be part of the community and ministry of our Dominican friars in Vancouver.



... inspecting progress at the beginning of October.



September: Our monastery's vicar, fr. Guy Rivard OP, is appointed prior of the Dominican friars in Ottawa. Even if Ontario is "a bit" further away than downtown Vancouver, we do hope to see him again (in fact, we can count on it)!

On the 8th, feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, our Sr. Imelda Marie makes her first profession of vows for three years. Some close family members and three priests (frs. Guy and Pierre OP, and Fr. Andrew) are present. After the celebration, we joyfully share with them a cake decorated by Sr. Marie Etienne with an artistic "Jubilate Deo" in chocolate on top.

Each contemplative monastery in the world must be part of a federation or an association, for the purpose of mutual support and assistance. On the 10th, Sr. Claire and Sr. Isabelle leave for Pennsylvania to attend the General Assembly of our North American Association of Dominican Monasteries. Our Association numbers nine monasteries: six in America, one in Trinidad, and two in Canada located at opposite ends of the country (one francophone in Quebec, and our community in B.C).

At the end of September, fr. Thierry-Marie Courau OP arrives from France. He will stay for just over a month, and we are looking forward to him preaching our annual retreat at the end of October. Our chaplain, fr. Pierre Leblond OP,

guides him up, down and around the local hiking trails. A few days later, Sr. Marie Thomas arrives home, full of stories, good cheese and fresh bread—literally! Before departing Paris, she had visited a cheese shop and a boulangerie to procure a few surprises for the community. "If I can't bring the monastery to France, I can try to bring France to the monastery!" went her reasoning.

October: After making sure she is adequately equipped with maple syrup, we bid "adieu" to Sr. Marie Cecile, who returns to France. Harvesting the vegetable garden continues, and Sr. Imelda Marie slaughters the fatted pumpkin donated by Thomas for Thanksgiving dinner.

On the 19th, we have the great joy of welcoming the Master of the Order of Preachers, fr. Gerard Francisco Timoner III, along with his assistants fr. Alain Arnould and fr. Juan Manuel Hernández. They stay with us for two nights. It is a time of fraternal encounter and joy as we pray together, eat together, and share reasons for gratitude and hope. The afternoon of the second day, we give our brothers a tour of the monastery's grounds, including the pottery workshop, hydroelectricity project and fields. "Is that tree really 800 years old?" "Yes!" is our reply. Refreshed by the mountain air, our brothers set off to meet the Dominican Family across Canada, in both official languages.



Sr. Marie Thomas in France

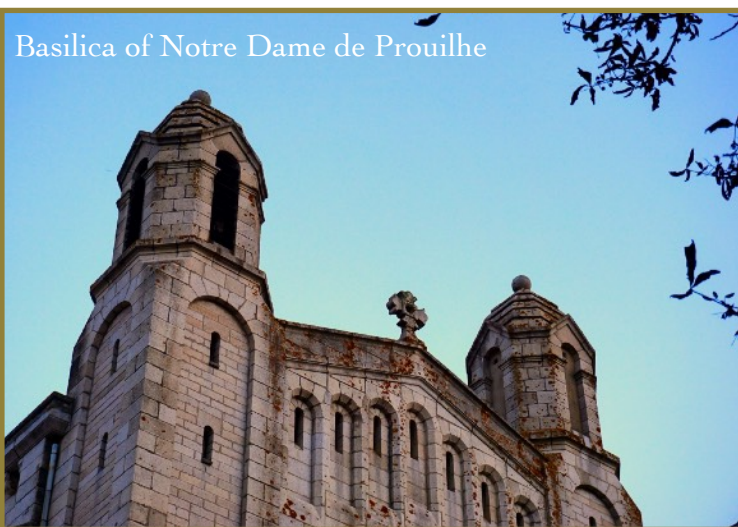
This summer, I had the immense joy of visiting the Monastery of Notre Dame de Prouilhe as part of an exchange between our communities. The two months were rich in experiences as I lived the monastery's daily life of prayer, work and study. Through the generosity of the Prouilhe sisters, I also had adventures in the larger region of southwest France. Reflecting on this time, three themes stand out for me: context, discovery and communion.

DISCOVERY

In Canada, our mountains have bears at the top. In France, the Pyrenees have cows enjoying summer pasture. This was just one of the many differences that helped turn the time into a constant adventure. Patiently guided by the Prouilhe sisters, I learned how to make fresh fig jam, conjugate the future tense in French (sort of), and feared no strange cheese. I also discovered the hospitality, conviviality and frankness that characterize the South of France. I never discovered the secret of understanding an Occitan accent, but it was a good challenge to try!

COMMUNION

The greatest discoveries of all, however, were ties of communion. From singing the liturgical music of fr. Andre Gouzes OP in its original French with the Prouilhe sisters, to meeting the brothers of the provinces of Toulouse and France, it was easy to feel at home in the joy of Dominican life despite the differences of language and culture. This perception was expanded in Lourdes, where pilgrims from the entire world gather to pray as one. This experience of the universal Church is one I will carry with me back to Canada and our little monastery in the mountains. Although remote, we are very far from isolated as we carry the world in our prayer.



Basilica of Notre Dame de Prouilhe

CONTEXT

The Monastery of Prouilhe is the historic cradle of the Dominican Order. The current monastery is just a short walk from sites where St. Dominic is known to have preached. Guided by fr. Francois-Dominique Forquin OP, I and other pilgrims spent three days walking the paths to Fanjeaux, Montreal and Laurac. The countryside has changed in the past 800 years, but the geology of the Tarn and Pyrene mountains in the distance remains much the same. This landscape helped to make present for me a history that I had learned in formation classes, but struggled to connect with. What I knew with my head, I now learned with my feet, in a way that made St Dominic present and alive today.



Cross of Sicaire, near Fanjeaux

A Reflection on Pope Francis's Visit to Canada

The community of Queen of Peace prayed intensely for our Indigenous sisters and brothers during the Apostolic Visit of Pope Francis to Canada. The Holy Father's compassion, respect and deep humility testified to the pure Gospel of Jesus. His words, if pondered and received, will lead humanity along the path of healing and reconciliation; a process which has just begun and extends far beyond the borders of Canada. May it be a sign of hope for Indigenous peoples around the world.

We are deeply grateful to live on the ancestral territory of the Squamish Nation (Sk̓wxwú7mesh Úxwumixw). When we arrived, we were honoured to have Gene Harry, a Salish spiritual leader, bless the land and gently teach us about Squamish: the land of cedar, salmon and Indigenous people.

Then, in 2019, we were delighted when a group of Squamish elders accepted our invitation to a festive meal. Our guests were quiet at first but, as the meal progressed, joy emerged. By the time we got to the pie and ice cream, laughter was to be heard all the way to the chapel. What had begun as a meal turned into a time of sharing when some of the elders spontaneously entrusted us with the painful stories of how they were taken away to residential schools run by religious. Only then did we measure the courage and the kindness that they had extended to us in accepting our invitation. A novice in our community described her experience of the presence of these Squamish elders as Eucharistic.

During the Apostolic Visit we were moved to witness the strength, courage and kindness extended to the Holy Father when Wilton Littlechild 'Walking Wolf' gifted Pope Francis with a sacred headdress. It is the highest of honours, a sign of respect given only to a knowledge keeper and those who illustrate a deep relationship to the earth. When a person receives the headdress they are expected to carry out the responsibility that goes with it. The Holy Father now has another name, 'Great White Eagle', which is significant because our Indigenous brothers and sisters say that the eagle feather carries prayer to the Creator. The name and the headdress are signs of love, respect and recognition of the engagement made to walk together on a path of truth and healing. + Sr. Claire, OP



Donation Information

Canadian friends

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

**Queen of Peace Monastery
Box 1745**

**Garibaldi Highlands, B.C.
V0N 1T0 CANADA**

Cheque Memo: **Queen of Peace Monastery**

American friends

We regret that we are currently unable to offer tax receipts for American donations. We continue to be deeply grateful for your gifts and bequests.

.....
Please remember my intentions in your prayer: _____

Name: _____ Street: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____ Country: _____

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