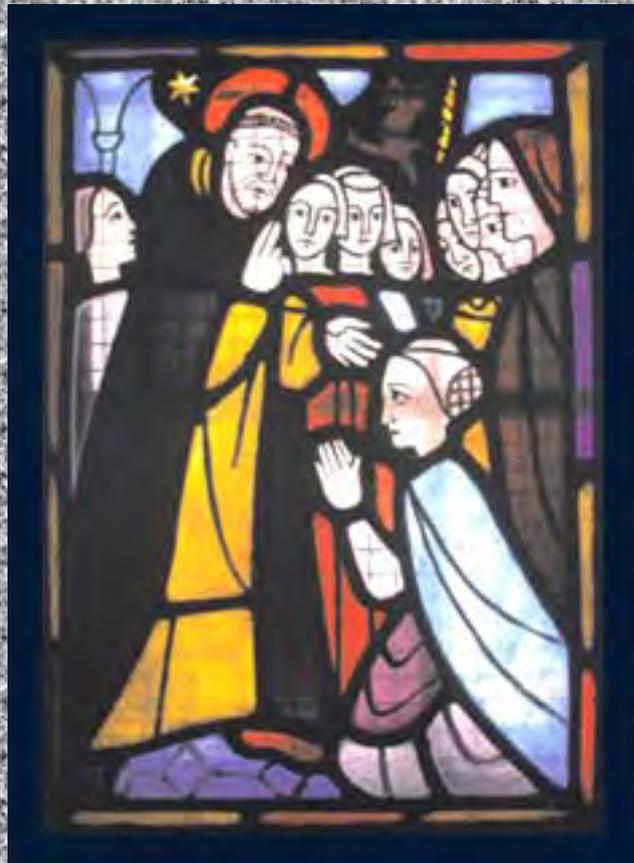


DOMINICAN MONASTERIES

**A Historical Directory of
Communities of Dominican Nuns
World-Wide**



Part 1 AFRICA

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AFRICA

In 2014 there are nine Dominican monasteries on the African mainland, plus one on the Island of La Réunion, a French colony in the Indian Ocean, which by a quirk of Dominican geography is classified with Africa . In chronological order of foundation they are:

- 1958—Saint-Denis, Ile de la Réunion (France)**
- 1965—Bambui, Cameroon**
- 1965—Toumi, Cameroon**
- 1965—Nairobi, Kenya**
- 1972—Benguela, Angola**
- 1973—Douala, Cameroon**
- 1974—Rweza, Burundi**
- 1985—Senekal, South Africa, transferred to Zambia 2013**
- 2008—Kuito-Bié, Angola**
- 2013 – Soclogbo, Benin**

The first attempts at foundations of monasteries of Dominican nuns were tentatively made in the mid-twentieth century. Not surprisingly, these largely followed the pattern of colonisation in the sense that foundations were made from monasteries with cultural and linguistic affinities with the colonial powers. Thus French nuns headed for the Ivory Coast, while English speaking North Americans headed for Kenya a former British colony.

The very first foundresses were from French monasteries. These pioneering efforts were not immediately successful and some early foundations had to be abandoned. For example, Mureke (Burundi) begun in 1954 by nuns from Chinon was closed in 1964. In 1959 nuns from Paray-le-Monial began a foundation at Libreville (Gabon) which was subsequently closed and some of the nuns moved to Cameroon.(Douala) thus forming the nucleus of this new foundation. In the early 1960's nuns from Lourdes spent some time in the Ivory Coast, but the foundation never reached canonical erection. In 1981 nuns from Beaufort in their turn made a foundation in the Ivory Coast at Daloa, this closed in the 1990's, when the all of the sisters - French and African - moved to France.

Cameroon, where there are several linguistic entities boasts three Dominican monasteries , one French speaking, one English speaking, founded from the Netherlands and one belonging to the Spanish Olmedo Madre de Dios union of monasteries.

Suppressed monasteries in Africa:

- Mureke, Burundi**
- Libreville, Gabon**
- Daloa, Ivory Coast**

ANGOLA

Mosteiro Mãe de Deus

Caixa Postal 820,

Benguela

☎ + 244 723 2102

Founded from Olmedo, Spain in 1972

The foundation at Benguela, situated on the Atlantic coast in the south of Angola was made from the Monastery of Olmedo, near Valladolid. A group of Spanish nuns set out in March 1972; this was to be the last foundation personally supervised by Madre Teresa Maria Ortega, prioress of Olmedo at the time. She died the following year.

The monastery recruited Angolan sisters who rapidly became a majority. The community survived the thirty years of civil war in Angola as an oasis of peace. In July 1992 they were blessed by a visit by Pope John Paul II. Unusually in Angola the nuns preceded the Dominican friars who have been present there only since 1982. The Provincial Vicariate of Angola belongs to the Province of Portugal and it was canonically erected in July 1993.

In 1996 Mgr Jose Nombi invited the nuns to make a foundation in his diocese, thus Benguela became the first Dominican monastery on the African continent to make a foundation (see following page).



ANGOLA

Mosteiro Mae de Deus

CX Postal 26

Kuito Bié

☎ + 244 923 660 593

Founded from Benguela in 2008

This monastery has the distinction of being the first to be founded by another African rather than from nuns coming from Europe or North America. Founded from Benguela, Bié is situated in the Central Plateau of Angola seven kilometres from Kuito, the capital city of the province. As early as 1996 the Bishop of Bié asked the nuns of Benguela to make this foundation, but it was delayed by the war in Angola. It is the tenth member of the Union Fraternal Madre de Dios group of monasteries, centred on the monastery at Olmedo, Valladolid, Spain. It is also the first monastery of any Order in this diocese of Bié.

Ten foundresses arrived from Benguela in 2004, 7 Angolan sisters, two Spanish and one Portuguese. The nuns lived in a small rented house while the new monastery was built 4 kilometres outside the town. The sisters – by now 18 – were able to move in on 5th June 2008, and this second Dominican monastery in Angola was canonically erected two days later on June 7th. About one thousand people participated in a mass concelebrated by three bishops and about 45 priests from Bié and from Benguela. After lunch vespers were sung in the chapel of the new monastery and the canonical enclosure was inaugurated. The Dominican Family in Angola, friars, sisters and laity, took part together with civil authorities, friends and faithful. The new community wants to witness to the possibility of living with “one heart and one soul”. They hope to communicate this spirit to the Christian community of Bié which needs to heal the wounds from the long civil war. The nuns in Bié would like to “lead a life which is of spiritual benefit to themselves, a source of edification to men, a joy to the angels, and a pleasure to God” as Jordan of Saxony said of the first nuns in Prouilhe (Libellus, n° 27) (from a report in IDI).



The festivities for the inauguration of the monastery

BENIN
Soclogbo,
Diocese of Dassa-Zoumé
Founded from Rweza Burundi in 2013

This foundation is being made by the Monastery of Our Lady of Peace in Rweza, Burundi. The sisters want to start a new monastery in Soclogbo, in the Diocese of Dassa-Zoumé, Benin Republic, in the Dominican Vice-Province of St. Augustine of West Africa. The team of the four founding sisters led by Sister Languida of the Good Shepherd Hakizimana, former prioress of Rweza, arrived in Benin on May 20, 2013. After spending a week with the brothers in Cotonou, the pioneers of the new foundation of Soklogbo joined their host diocese where they were welcomed.

The sisters currently live in a house loaned to them by a diocesan priest. The first phase of this mission is getting to know the environment, acclimatisation, exploring economic opportunities for the new monastery etc. The canonical procedure is also in progress, and the Master of the Order encourages collaboration with other Dominican monasteries in Africa.

The diocese of Dassa-Zoumé has made available to the Order of Preachers a large piece of land of some fifty hectares for the express purpose of building a monastery, which would hopefully be part of some larger preaching project. This site is some twenty kilometers distant from the city centre of Dassa-Zoumé.

Much planning remains to be done, notably access to a water supply; as yet the sisters have only a well with no pump or storage facility.



The landscape around Soclogbo

BURUNDI

Monastère Notre-Dame de la Paix

B.P. 2 Ngozi,

Rweza

Founded from Taulignan, France in 1974

After the closure of the monastery at Mureke, Burundi, three African sisters transferred to Taulignan (France) in 1968. Encouraged by the Master of the Order, plans were made to return to Burundi and make a new foundation as soon as possible. The vote was made in 1973, and a two French sisters left for Burundi in January 1974, heading for the diocese of Ngozi which at this stage had no contemplative community. The location selected is extremely beautiful with mountain views and lush vegetation. Because of the altitude, the climate is relatively temperate.

Before the end of 1974 the two pioneers were joined by an African sister from those at Taulignan, and by two others shortly thereafter. The chapel of the new monastery was completed in 1976, and the first postulant arrived in September of the same year. The civil war in Burundi in the 1980's brought great trials to the community: the Church was persecuted, and the white sisters expelled from the country in 1985. At this time the prioress was a Canadian sister. But the African sisters responded to the challenge, and the monastery at Rweza became canonically autonomous in January 1988.

Despite the many difficulties faced by the sisters: lack of electricity, lack of economic activities, insecurity, need for formation, the monastery is doing well. The sisters serve the mission of the Order with courage, joy and unwavering faith.

With the departure of four sisters for the foundation of Benin in 2013, the monastery of Rweza currently consists of 13 sisters. Vocations come from all over the country.





CAMEROON

St Dominic's Monastery

BAMBUI

P.O. Box 56

Bamenda

☎ + 237 77949572

Founded from Mariadal, Netherlands in 1965

St Dominic's monastery in the English speaking area of Cameroon, was founded in 1965 by five sisters from the Mariadal monastery in Holland. At first they settled in the area called Bafmeng, but the roads were bad and there was no electricity. The Dutch sisters fell ill, and so it became clear that there was no future in this location. After much searching, they obtained some land in Bambui where they were able to build a new monastery and planned their move. But this was not so easy! The local people at their previous location had become so fond of the nuns that they even blocked the road to try to stop them moving. Eventually the sisters had to leave by night! This was in 1978. The new monastery was located close to a seminary, which was a source of support to the sisters. One Dutch sister remains, the rest of the community are African.



CAMEROON

Monastère Mère de Dieu

Toumi

BP 28 - Bamendjou

☎ + 237 77 70 0944

Founded from Olmedo, Spain 1965

Given the size of the country, the monastery at Toumi is not too distant from the ne at Bambui, although the state of the roads does not favour communication. The Monastère Mère de Dieu is home to a mixed community of Spanish and African nuns, as well as some from other countries where the Olmedo Union of monasteries has made foundations. This is a fairly remote location in wooded uplands, a village already in existence in the 16th century and with a strong tribal tradition.



CAMEROON

Monastère du Rosaire et de Saint-Dominique

B.P. 5491 Douala-Akwa

☎ + 237 3337 0119

Transferred from Libreville 1973

In the early 1970's, certain difficulties at the Dominican monastery at Libreville, Gabon caused the sisters who were natives of Cameroun (a majority of the community) to seek out the possibility of continuing their Dominican life in their own country. The community at Libreville had in fact been of mixed nationalities with only two Gabonese. In 1973 two sisters set out for Douala where they were welcomed by the bishop Mgr Simon Tonye, who offered them the use of an old house in the centre of town. Although they were very poor and had to beg from door to door, other sisters rapidly joined them and they began to look for a permanent home where they would find conditions of silence favourable to monastic life. They wished to remain close to Douala however, in order to receive spiritual support from the Dominican friars. They eventually found some vacant land on the road from Douala to Edéa on the left bank of the Wouri river. They were able to acquire three hectares at the edge of the forest. They had a single storey building erected and were able to move in on 31st December 1975, with Sr Marie Rose as prioress, one of the Carmeroon sisters who had entered at Libreville. There was no electricity here until 1977.

The sisters planted their land with peanuts as well as banana, papaya and pineapple trees. They began book-binding and baking altar breads. Although Douala has expanded rapidly and the monastery now finds itself in a densely populated part of town, the sisters are still able to an appreciable degree of calm. They have a guesthouse with twenty-five beds and a meeting room to hold thrity-five. A Dominican lay fraternity meets there regularly.

The nuns of Douala wrote recently that they appreciate the slow but steadily increasing collaboration between Dominican monasteries on the African continent. As proof of which they enjoyed help from a sister of Bambui for three years, and in 2010 elected a sister from the monastery of Rweza, Burundi as their prioress.



KENYA
Corpus Christi Monastery
P.O. Box 24636-00502
Karen
Nairobi
☎ + 254 20 2348322
Founded from North Guilford, USA in 1965

In the early 1960's, the community at North Guilford USA, being blessed with abundant vocations, began to consider the possibility of a foundation. In July 1963 they received a visit from Bishop Otunga of Nairobi. Seeing more than fifty nuns gathered before him, he ventured to ask for volunteers for a Kenyan foundation. In April 1965, twelve sisters including a co-foundress set out from Our Lady of Grace monastery. They started modestly in part of the diocesan seminary buildings while a monastery was built, and it was two years before the sisters had a home of their own. And indeed the Nairobi nuns have been unlucky with their buildings. In the early 2000's they had to undertake extensive rebuilding of their monastery, as the original one on the Karen site, although not old, fell into disrepair through construction defects.

By the late 1980's there were sufficient numbers of professed Kenyan sisters for the American foundresses to start returning home so that Corpus Christi could become a completely African community. The monastery has flourished and has been able to lend sisters to reinforce other African monasteries notably at Senekal, South Africa. Two sisters have served terms on the International Commission of Dominican nuns.

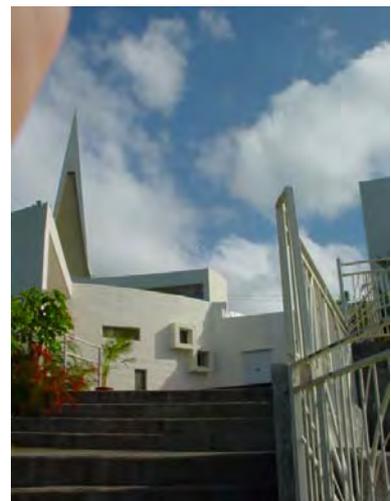
The sisters earn their living by making candles for liturgical use; they are widely distributed throughout East Africa.



ILE DE LA REUNION, INDIAN OCEAN
Monastère de Marie-Immaculée, Reine du Rosaire,
Colline du Rosaire
88, Allée Ave Maria
97400 Saint-Denis
☎ 02 62 21 44 30
Founded from Dax, France 1958

In the geography of the Dominican Order, this island which is a political outpost of France is considered part of Africa, but culturally this cannot be considered an African monastery. In fact La Réunion had no indigenous population, having been uninhabited when the first French colonizers arrived in 1646. Black labour was subsequently imported to work the many sugar plantations. But like other Indian Ocean islands the population is ethnically mixed: Creole, European, Indian and Chinese.

Two young women from the island who felt the call to Dominican monastic life left for France in 1951 and entered the monastery at Dax, France in February 1952. The following year they were joined by two more of their compatriots. In 1956 the prioress of Dax visited La Réunion at the invitation of the bishop Mgr Langavant with a view to assessing the possibilities for a foundation, although at this stage there was no property available. In October 1958 the foundresses left Dax and on arrival in La Réunion were at first accommodated by Dominican sisters of the Gramond congregation; then they were offered hospitality by the Châteauvieux family at Saint-François which was the designated location for the monastery. Saint-François prove to be not the ideal choice however and subsequently a piece of land overlooking the capital Saint-Denis with beautiful ocean views was acquired. The sisters were to remain in temporary accommodation for some time. Work was begun on the hill top site in October 1959, and the sisters were able to move in in December 1961. They could now envisage accepting postulants which had been impossible in their cramped temporary lodgings. On 17th February 1962 the monastery was canonically erected and two postulants admitted.



ZAMBIA
P.O BOX 80427
KABWE
☎: +260974582346
Formerly Monastery of St Dominic,
Senekal, South Africa
Founded from Spain in 1985

Senekal is situated amidst the panoramic splendour of the Eastern Free State, on the main route between Bloemfontein and Durban: a challenging location for a Dominican monastery as Senekal is a bastion of the Dutch Reformed Church. The town has an enviable climate, is an agricultural community and rich in history. Founded by the Federation of St Dominic, Province of Spain, at the request of Mgr Hubert Bucher, bishop of the diocese of Bethlehem, there were many trials in the early period, including the accidental death of the first vicress. By 1999, there were three Spanish nuns, and three African sisters. More sisters arrived from Spain to help the small community but language remained a difficulty. Eventually in 2005, responsibility for the monastery—not yet canonically erected—was taken over by the Dominican monastery at Karen, Nairobi, and an “all African” community constituted from volunteer nuns from various monasteries throughout the continent. The Spanish nuns were able to return home in 2005.

On the 19th of August 2013, the nuns of the Monastery of St Dominic left Senekal in South Africa for Zambia. The relocation of this monastery is due to several reasons and the decision has been long thought and matured. The monastery of Senekal has been in existence for over 28 years and in recent years, the sisters have not had any vocations. So the sisters have been going through a moment of discernment for the future of their community in Senekal. For the last two years they have battled with the idea of relocating the monastery to a more conducive atmosphere. Having visited various places in South Africa, they realized that any relocation anywhere within South Africa would only be temporary because none were promising. However, after visiting some dioceses in Zambia, they felt the Lords call to pitch their tent in the Diocese of Kabwe created in 2011. This is in the central province of Zambia – a mining area like Senekal in South Africa. There are already apostolic Dominican sisters present in the diocese. On the 19th of July 2013, having received the long awaited letter from the Congregation for the Consecrated Life granting them the necessary permission to move to Zambia, the seven nuns finally left Senekal on August 19th.



The Cloister at Senekal



The Dominican nuns leave for Zambia