

News from Fanjeaux

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France

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PENTECOST

2015

Dominican Jubilee in Toulouse—why are we celebrating already in 2015 ?

Although the Jubilee of the Order of Preachers is not yet officially launched, here in the South West of France in the Province of Toulouse celebrations are already well underway and the month of May has a particularly heavy schedule of events—and rightly so! It is not just that the friars here are impatient to start the festivities before everybody else, there are indeed sound historical reasons.

This year the feast of the translation of St Dominic's relics coincides with Pentecost week-end, in the very month that marks the 800th anniversary of the beginnings of the first community of Preachers in Toulouse. It is important to remember that before the Order of Preachers was instituted for the universal Church by Pope Honorius III, there was a diocesan institute of preachers set up at the initiative of Foulque, Bishop of Toulouse with Dominic at its head. The official mission of these new preachers was "to eradicate heresy, eliminate vice, teach the rule of faith and inculcate sound morals." This happened in May 1215, thus the current celebrations are most timely.

In fact Dominic had been becoming progressively more integrated into the diocesan Church of Toulouse since his presumed return from Spain in 1211, although his immediate priority at this point was to help the still embryonic monastic community at Prouilhe, for it was not until 1211-1212 that proper buildings were erected for the sisters, allowing all the nuns to be housed together in one place. In 1214 Dominic held the living of Fanjeaux, and so in that sense he was the parish priest. At the end of this same year, there is evidence of Dominic in Toulouse as *praedicationis minister*. Around this same period, he was elected Bishop of Couserans, but declined to take up the post.

In January 1215, however, events took a different turn. Dominic received the gift of some property in Toulouse, which made the setting up of a community of preachers a distinct possibility. The donor was Pierre Seilhan, well known to us through the still surviving Maison Pierre Seilhan in the place du Parlement at Toulouse. The transfer of property was finalised on April 25th 1215, when the Seilhan inheritance was settled and property shared between the two brothers. In May Bishop Foulque formalised the arrangement, making Dominic's community a permanent diocesan institution.



Possibly the first dormitory of Dominican Preachers - House of Pierre Seilhan, Toulouse

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A Unique Chance to See Dominican Art Treasures



For those lucky enough to be able to get to Toulouse in the three weeks from the 5th to the 30th May (far too short!) during which this exhibition is on at the Catholic University of Toulouse, this is a unique opportunity to see some treasures of Dominican iconography not normally accessible to the general public. The artefacts that make up this show have been gathered together from many Dominican convents throughout France.



This 18th century reliquary will be familiar to those who have visited the House of St Dominic in Fanjeaux.

Institut Catholique de Toulouse,
31 rue de la Fonderie,
Toulouse
Open from Tuesday to Saturday, 3 pm to 6pm

Rescuing *Dominicana* on e-Bay and elsewhere

There has always been a brisk trade in second-hand books and that these can now be purchased with such ease on line must surely be seen as a great advance, for which we praise the technology that makes it possible.. But the range of goods currently available on web-sites such as e-Bay, Delcampe etc. is truly amazing. The fact that this includes relics of Dominican saints, I for one find quite disturbing. And yet they are regularly on offer— are they genuine ? And how, one wonders, did they get there? Most often one would imagine from convents that have been closed, and the contents sold lock, stock, barrel and relics to the highest bidder.

But should there not be some means of preventing such sensitive items from being traded in such an undignified way, some provision for them to be returned to the Order ready for redistribution to new foundations? The prioress of a new community told me recently that when their altar was consecrated at the completion of their newly built chapel, regrettably they had no relics of Dominican saints for it. Someone had said to her “You can get them on e-bay,” but they were too expensive ; surely it should not come to this.

On a lighter note, for collectors of *Dominicana*, there can be some interesting finds. The S.H.O.P Association has recently acquired a 1711 Dominican breviary for Holy Week that clearly belonged to the Couvent Saint-Jacques in Paris before the French Revolution; a bronze bust of Fr Lacordaire for only 50 €! Also for 12 € a set of four watercolours of convent life at Fichermont, Belgium, by Sr Sourire, the once famous “Singing Nun,” who in fact trained at the Brussels Academy of fine arts before becoming a Dominican. Such items may have more sentimental value than anything else, but at least one feels one is giving them a good home.



A bust of Fr Henri Dominique Lacordaire by the French sculptor Jean-Marie Bonnassieux 1820-1892, bought at a bargain price on eBay



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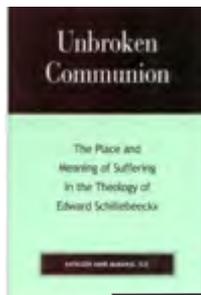
It is easy! Send us a note of your name and address (by e-mail or by post) and send 20€ (by post - cash or cheque - or by bank transfer). You will then receive our newsletter regularly and be informed of publications and events. You can also make use of the facilities—accommodation and library — at Fanjeaux.

All donations are most gratefully received — they go towards acquiring new books for the library devoted to the history of Dominican women.

The Association of Sister Historians of the Order of Preachers is defined in its statutes as: “a resource for documentation, communication and formation at the service of Dominican women, religious and lay, through the study of their histories.” *Statutes*

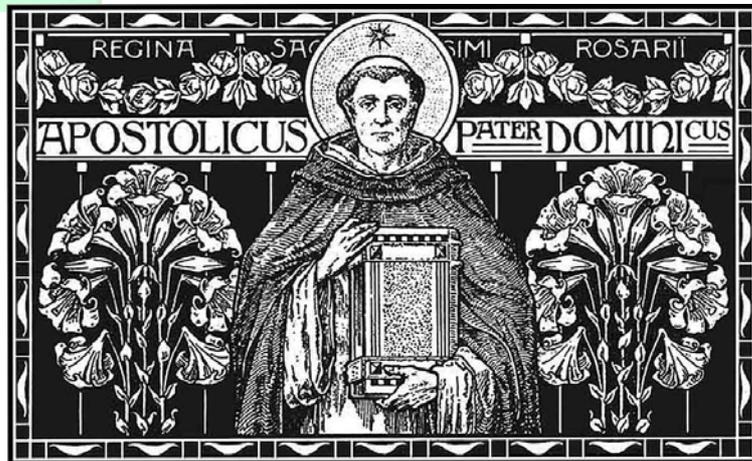
VISITORS TO FANJEAUX

This month the S.H.O.P. Association is honoured to host Sr Kathleen McManus op for a time of personal pilgrimage and reflection. Sr Kathleen of the Sisters of St Dominic, Blauvelt, New York teaches systematic theology at the University of Portland, Oregon, USA. At the beginning of May, just before coming to Fanjeaux she spoke at a conference in Toronto on *Vatican II and the Promise of Renewal* attended by the Master of the Order. She is the author of a study of the Dominican theologian Edward Schillebeeckx. After her time with us, Sr Kathleen will be a member of staff for the “College group” from the USA that visits Fanjeaux every year at this season.



Unbroken Communion: The Place and Meaning of Suffering in the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx
Kathleen McManus, OP

Paperback: 208 pages, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2003 ISBN: 074251403X



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