

News from Fanjeaux

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S.H.O.P.
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N° 5

AUTUMN
2009

The S.H.O.P. Association has a new home in Fanjeaux!



Thanks to the generosity of a benefactor, a 3-storey house has been put at the disposal of the Sister Historians Association to use as its headquarters. It is located on the corner of the rue du Four and the rue du Bourguet Nau—right opposite the 14th century Dominican convent—in these narrow medieval streets, one can almost touch the house opposite through an open window—so it is true to say that we are really “in touch with history” here!

These new premises provide much more room, especially for the library and office, which occupy the whole of the ground floor. There are also four bedrooms and three bathrooms on the upper floors. On the top floor there is even room for an

oratory which gives a new focus to the house, even if there are a number of other places to pray in Fanjeaux. A small garden and a terrace on the top floor also add an extra dimension. All of this has meant a lot of work during the summer, with the move scheduled for mid-August. Although the house was basically sound, much repainting and refurbishment was necessary, especially for the library.

It was very gratifying that several local residents volunteered to help with the move.



The re-located S.H.O.P. Association library at Fanjeaux

< *The oratory*

>
The new S.H.O.P. house at Fanjeaux—the house is on the



STUDY THE HISTORY OF DOMINICAN WOMEN

FOLLOW THE S.H.O.P. DISTANCE LEARNING COURSE IN 2010

DOMINICAN WOMEN PAINTERS IN RENAISSANCE ITALY

Have you ever heard of Plautilla Nelli o.p.? Most people probably haven't, but she was a really rather remarkable Dominican woman—a painter in Renaissance Florence. Her works have recently been the object of a major restoration campaign, notably her *Lamentation* housed at the Museo di San Marco, in Florence.

She was born in 1524, and at the age of fourteen entered the convent of Santa Caterina da Siena, where she later became prioress for a number of years. As Jonathon Nelson, author of a recent book on her says: “Plautilla Nelli is the first woman artist in Florence who is more to us than just a name, one of the first European women we can identify with large scale religious works. Most remarkably, perhaps, this Dominican nun became the primary ‘image maker’ of the Order of Preachers in Florence, a role previously played by Fra Bartolommeo. Through her art she ‘preached’ her artistic and moral message to all those who could see her many works that were praised by... Giorgio Vasari” amongst others.

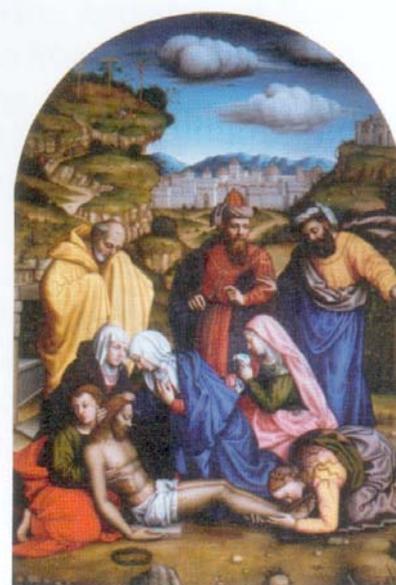
As she entered religious life at such a young age, she must have acquired the skills necessary for her artistic career as a Dominican sister. There would of course have been no question of her studying in the workshop of a major (male) artist, which was the normal method of artistic training. This makes her achievement all the more remarkable. It is believed she learnt to mix pigments to obtain colours during her work in the convent pharmacy!

Plautilla Nelli was unusual in her excellence, but far from being an isolated case as Professor Ann Robert's book *Dominican Women and Renaissance Art* clearly shows. This study concentrates on the convent of San Domenico in Pisa and shows the extent to which Dominican sisters of this period were connoisseurs and patrons of art, as well as embellishing their convent with their own efforts. .

The books referred to are:

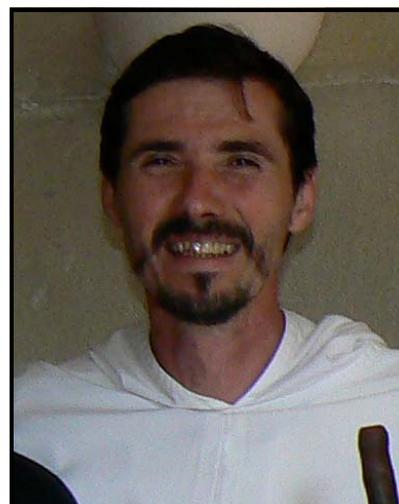
Jonathon K. NELSON, *Plautilla Nelli (1524-1588). The Painter-Prioress of Renaissance Florence*, Syracuse University Press, 2008

Ann ROBERTS, *Dominican Women and Renaissance Art*, Ashgate, 2008



The Lamentation by Sr Plautilla

Along with so many others, the S.H.O.P. Association mourns the passing and honours the memory of our eminent brother historian, Elie-Pascal Epinoux o.p. — he will be much missed in Fanjeaux. It is to be hoped that his recent work on St Dominic will be published in due course.



Fr Elie-Pascal in 2006

Gearing up for the launch of a distance learning history course in January 2010

With not much more than a month to go, the S.H.O.P. headquarters is a hive of activity with the preparation of the first Course Units of the distance learning history course, due for launch in early January 2010. This is quite an ambitious project for a small association, but the response has been very encouraging so far, with enrolments already received from many parts of the world : as far as away as Chile, Vietnam and Vancouver. Future students represent all branches of the Order—including one friar who has enrolled:

Hopefully in due course there will be a wide range of study modules available in a variety of languages, but for the moment a modest beginning is being made with two modules that will be available for study in either English or Spanish. Flexibility is the keyword so that students will be able to work at their own pace, according to their various commitments, so there are no set dates, no cut-offs, etc. The course will function in largely the same way as those offered by the British Open University, for which Sr Barbara Beaumont worked for ten years before becoming a Dominican. That is to say, students will receive course units at regular intervals and these will contain the study materials necessary to follow the course.

The emphasis is on the place of Dominican women in the history of the Order without being feminist history as such. It is just that this aspect has been less available for study in the past.

The fees are being kept as modest as possible and compare very favourably with other forms of distance learning : 50 € per module if written assignments are submitted, 30€ if it is followed purely for private study. Community discount rates are also offered.

Students can enrol at any time—*there is still time to sign up!*

THE SYLLABUS FOR THE FIRST MODULES OF THE S.H.O.P. HISTORY COURSE

MODULE I – *The Beginnings of the Dominican Order*

Unit 1

- i) An introduction to the study of history
- ii) The preaching campaign against the Cathar heresy in Languedoc—1206-7
- iii) The foundation of Prouilhe by Diego and Dominic

Unit 2

- i) The development of Prouilhe as a centre for nuns and preachers
- ii) The military campaign in Languedoc
- iii) Dominic at Fanjeaux

Unit 3

- i) The foundation of the Order of Preachers 1215-1218

MODULE II – *Dominican Nuns in the early years of the Order*

Unit 1

The history of the constitutions of Dominican nuns in the 13th century

Unit 2

The spread of Dominican monasteries throughout Europe

Unit 3

The *cura monialium* question



**SISTER HISTORIANS OF THE
ORDER OF PREACHERS**

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**Become a member of
the S.H.O.P.
Association!**

**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."

Do you speak Spanish?

The S.H.O.P. project needs translators for occasional help with preparing materials for the distance learning history course. At present the need is particularly for Spanish speakers to translate English or French into Spanish. This work can be remunerated at respectable rates. If you can help, please send us an e-mail as soon as possible.



**SUMMER VISTORS TO
FANJEAUX**

This year, those who profited from the accommodation at the S.H.O.P. house included the world-famous geographer, Professor Anne Buttimer from Dublin, and her sister Mary, who is a Dominican with the Congregation of St Thomas Aquinas at Tacoma, USA.

Professor Buttimer, who has spent much of her life teaching in Scandinavia, has published a booklet on the Dominican *studium* at Lund, Sweden in the Middle Ages. During her stay in Fanjeaux, she spent many hours in the S.H.O.P. library following up this research interest.

In August two lay Dominicans from Moscow made a return visit to Fanjeaux as part of a longer pilgrimage in the steps of St Dominic. One of them, Tony will be returning in December to give some secretarial help with preparations for the history course.

Tony, a lay Dominican from Moscow—a faithful pilgrim to Fanjeaux

**N.B. NEW S.H.O.P.
WEBSITE
ADDRESS**

Unfortunately our old website had to be abandoned, because it was being repeatedly hacked by someone in Turkey, who kept changing the access codes, which made it completely impossible to update or service the site.

The new site, created for S.H.O.P. by Fr Scott Steinkerchner, webmaster of the Dominican Order uses a different operating system, so hopefully it will be less vulnerable. For the moment it is still under construction but already exists at :

<http://shop.op.org>



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