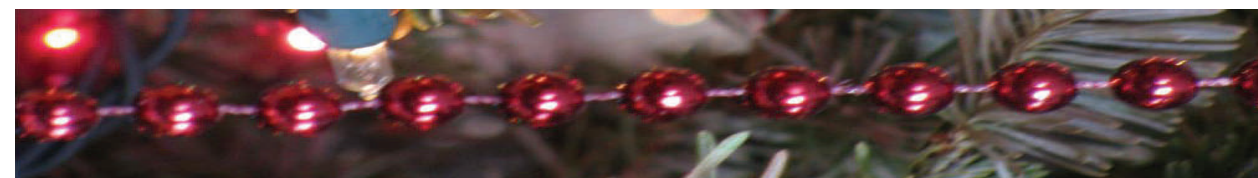




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THE ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Last year we learned that the tree often used at Christmastide comes from a unique tradition dating back to the fourteenth century miracle plays. The event celebrated Adam and Eve's Day on December 24th. A tree representing the Tree of Life was hung with apples, and played an important role. The plays depicted the dramatic events concerning the fruit tree in the Garden of Eden.



In place of the winter-bare branches of a real apple tree, a substitute was made of an evergreen decorated with apples. Since this tree was the only prop on the stage during the play, the image left a lasting impression associating the evergreen with Christmas long after the medieval plays ceased.

Let us know if you would prefer to receive our newsletter by email.



ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA DESCRIBED HER "SWEET CHRIST" AS THE BRIDGE, WHOSE INCARNATION CONNECTS ALL TO HIMSELF. AS OUR CHOSEN PATRONESS AND MODEL, SHE MUST SMILE AT OUR LOCATION: FOOT OF THE DELAWARE MEMORIAL BRIDGE.

This Christmas Season we will take each intention you send us and bring it to our Liturgical Prayer to be read aloud. In this way we will light a living candle of remembrance and hope for you and yours during this Holy Season.

APPROVAL FROM ROME

CONGREGAZIONE
PER GLI ISTITUTI DI VITA CONSACRATA
E LE SOCIETÀ DI VITA APOSTOLICA

Prot. n. 20190/2010

MOST HOLY FATHER

The Prioress of the Monastery of "Mary the Queen", of the Dominican Nuns at Elmira, diocese of Rochester, United States of America, having obtained the consent of the Chapter, requests of Your Holiness the permission to found a new Monastery of the same Order, in New Castle, diocese of Wilmington, with the following solemnly professed Sisters: Mary Grace Thul, Mary Columba Brienza and Emmanuela Handlos.

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, having seen the favourable vote of the Master of the Order of Preacher and of the Bishop of Wilmington, grants the petition as requested. Moreover, this same Congregation grants the faculty to admit candidates for the novitiate and for religious profession, although the future Monastery remains dependent on that of Elmira, particularly regarding admissions, until its canonical erection. Once all the conditions required by the Code of Canon Law and by the Constitutions have been satisfied, regarding the number of Nuns (at least eight Religious, not counting the novices, the postulants and the extern sisters, of whom at least five with solemn vows), the monastic building, the material, spiritual and formative supports, etc, then the Bishop of Wilmington may ask this Congregation for the canonical erection of the new Monastery, according to can. 609, § 2 and the Constitutions.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Vatican City, July 19, 2010.

Franc Card. Rodé

Franc Card. Rodé, CM
Prefect

Sr. Enrica Rosanna
Sr. Enrica Rosanna, FMA
Undersecretary

In July, Rome put one more stone in the bedrock of this foundation in Delaware by granting us full approval as a foundation of the Elmira Monastery.

We never forget that our foundation began with a dream. Listening to the recent Masters of the Order, we decided to take up their challenge to see "what we can do together to think how we might live today the fullness of Dominican life, in response to the grace of the vocation which we have received." (Fr. Carlos A. Azpiroz Costa, OP.)

It took time to concretize our dream, as we worked through a process of discernment regarding our monastic way of life. Like pilgrims, we venture forth knowing grace comes through following Dominic in seizing our "Dominican Moment."

LET US SING A NEW SONG TO THE LORD!

Our thanks to our sisters in the Farmington Hills and West Springfield communities for sharing their Office music with us – and to Sr. Emmanuella for compiling elements of both traditions in our own four new music booklets, one for each of the major cycles of the Church year.



When we say the Divine Office we are the Church at prayer, praising God unceasingly and interceding for the world and all its peoples. To celebrate the Liturgy is our primary calling, the very heart of our monastic life and the pulsating rhythm that orders our day. That we can celebrate in song makes our joy all the more profound. As St Augustine says, 'To sing is to pray twice.'

PRAYER IS NOT SOMETHING THAT WE CAN ORIGINATE, PRECISELY BECAUSE IT IS ALREADY GOING ON. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PRAYING WITHIN US; THERE IS A PRAYER IN THE HEART OF EVERY MAN.
EXCERPT FROM PRAYER BY SIMON TUGWELL, OP

Update on our kitchen stove

Many thanks to each of you who gave to our new stovetop fund. As this goes to press, we are preparing to soon have a new gas stovetop in place in time for our Christmas baking. As usual, it involved a lot more than we anticipated. But God has truly blessed us with wonderful friends who looked at the situation and stepped in to assist us. A new gas line will be brought into the house for hooking up our first gas stovetop.

As we await that day with longing, we continue our adventures in the kitchen. We have learned that our stove top has quite the personality. For one sister, turning one burner results in all four firing up. For another, her dinner creations remained stone cold as even the one burner refused to heat for her.

When we cook on our new top, you can be sure we will be saying, "God bless us one and all, especially those who made this possible."

Sign up to receive updates at our blog:
www.caterinabenincasadominicans.blogspot.com

VOLUNTEERS HELP BENINCASA GALLERY AND GIFT SHOP



With our volunteers, left/right: Paula Cipriano, Sr. Mary Columba, Karla Andrade, Mary Ann D'Amato, Sr. Mary Grace, Josephine Kolasinski, and Sr. Emmanuella standing around our Advent Tree. Not pictured are Lorraine Layfield and Joe Oltromonto.

Thanks to our volunteers, both old and new, we have reformed our gift shop to better mirror our monastic life of prayer and contemplation. The workers have spent many hours helping us stage the shop, pricing new items such as books and CD's, and keeping track of our inventory. Sr. Mary Grace's artwork is predominately displayed at the shop, and the local media has helped us get the word out.



CHECK OUT SR. MARY GRACE'S ART, AT WWW.SISTERMARYGRACE.ARTSPAN.COM