

# THE ROSARY PILGRIM



MONASTERY OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF THE MONASTERY OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY

## *Behold! I make all things new!* REVELATION 21, 5

Dear Family & Friends,

There is something indefinable about spring at the Monastery! First, we really do have the season of Spring! (One of our Sisters from New England found this such a welcome surprise as she was used to the season of Mud!) Spring comes early in this part of New Jersey and by mid-February one can clearly see the clusters of buds on the trees. Crocuses, tulips, daffodils and hyacinths start peeking through the remaining snow. The choir during early morning meditation after Lauds is bathed in the soft light of dawn. It is a time of expectation and wonder!

“Behold, I make all things new!” Our Lord promises us in the closing chapters of the book of Revelation. During Spring one can’t help but be reminded of how we were made new again when the waters of Baptism were poured over our heads. Each day as new life becomes more and more manifest in our gardens we are reminded of the promise of eternal beatitude sharing in the life of the Triune God. If every year God surprises us with the beauty of new life in His creation of the trees and flowers, how much more beautiful will life be with Him!



*Sr. Denise Marie of the Holy Spirit, OP, with Bishop Manuel Cruz, and Sr. Joanne Bednar, SCC, on September 17, 2010, the day of her election as prioress for three years.*

This is why monastery gardens are so important. They are to be a reflection of the First Garden where God made a home for the one creation He made in His image and likeness. The monastery garden with the Cross planted in it also reminds us of the new and eternal Garden of Heaven.

Spring came early for the monastery this year as we experienced a series of new events! We elected a new prioress, Sister Denise Marie of the Holy Spirit, OP, in September. In October, Sister Maria Teresa of the Sacred Heart, OP made First Profession. On the feast of the Annunciation our two postulants began their novitiate and received the holy habit and a new name.

Our beloved Sister Virginia Mary of Jesus, OP entered in the new and Eternal Life of glory on March 17, 2011. You can read more about her and about the other events of our monastery in the following pages.



# Sister Virginia Mary of Jesus, O.P. 1934–2011



**VIRGINIA MAY RACEWICZ** was born on May 14, 1934 in the city of Providence, RI, a fact she would proudly tell many visitors in the parlor, especially our Dominican Friars who have a college in that city. She was the youngest of four children, three girls and one boy born to her Polish-Lithuanian parents, William and Sophie Racewicz. A few weeks later, on June 1st, the waters of Baptism were poured on her head, inaugurating a life consecrated to God.

After graduating from high school she attended Hartford Airline School and then moved to New York where

she worked in reservations for United Airlines. The first stirring of a religious vocation began in 1954 but she put it off. When asked about her vocation she would tell us that while she loved her work, travel, etc. she used to ask herself, "Is this all there is to life?" A "desire for prayer, concern for the conversion of sinners, praying for missionaries and a love for the Rosary" led her to enter our monastery on April 6, 1964. She found the life in the monastery a difficult adjustment and left four months later.

However, our Lord wanted her for Himself and so a year later she asked to return to the monastery. She entered again on August 4, 1965 but as an extern sister. She received the Dominican habit on August 6, 1966 and the name Sister Virginia Mary of Jesus. Two years later, on August 17, 1968, she made her temporary profession.

Sister Virginia Mary lived the life of an extern sister for seven years but her heart was in the cloister; and so on May 31, 1975, she made her Solemn Profession as a Nun of the Order of Preachers.

Sister Virginia Mary inherited her artistic abilities from her father and became an expert in calligraphy, especially the Fifth Century Uncial Alphabet. She calligraphed many Christmas cards, holy cards and especially Enrollment Certificates. Her artistic nature informed just about everything she did in her service to the community as Sub-prioress, in the kitchen or laundry, and in her cleaning charges.

For many years, although not an extern sister, she was the "face" of the community, acting as the contact Sister with our Rosary Shrine Volunteer Guild, serving as guest mistress to families and friends and priest guests and as "housekeeper" to the chaplain. Her warm welcome, ready humor and truly engaging concern for those she met was remembered by all. She loved her work of answering the community mail, answering requests for prayers with a personal note to encourage the writer. As she got weaker and weaker she would express the hope that she would be able to continue, but by last September it was obvious that even this was too much for her.

Sister Virginia Mary often expressed her love for every aspect of her vocation as a Nun of the Order of Preachers: "I love being a Dominican!" She had a special love for our Dominican Brethren and was spiritual mother for more than one! Their personal holiness and preaching mission were always a special focus of her prayers.

Sunday mornings, free time and often late at night after Compline would find her before the Blessed Sacrament. She loved the Liturgy, and her breviaries bear witness to her eye for detail. After her nine-year term as Liturgy Directress she passed on a notebook scribbled with numerous notes for each liturgical feast. As Sacristan she filled a notebook with similar notes for the Sister who would come after her.

She loved to read and would have more than one book going at a time. It wasn't unusual for her as she was dusting the Choir or the community room, to notice a book that caught her attention. She would proceed to pick it up and be lost, forgetting what she was supposed to be doing!

She loved God's creation, especially the stars in the heavens, and notes would be posted alerting us to extraordinary phenomena. That day she would be so anxious for the proper weather conditions! At evening recreation she would take some of us out for astronomy walks, teaching us the names and placements of the constellations.

Meditation time in the early morning and late afternoon would find her walking with her scriptures or a book in hand, but rarely turning the pages as her eye caught sight of a colorful leaf or flower. Immediately these would be placed in her book. It's not unusual to take a book out of the library and find it full of dried leaves or flowers!

In her later years Sr. Virginia Mary suffered from neck pain and her head became permanently bent down. About a year ago she began losing weight and spoke of pain in her back. Tests came back negative but she continued to decline. We all could see her slowly becoming weaker, and more and more she kept to her cell.

Despite her pain and weakness she never lost her gracious manner, her matter-of-fact view of life and her quick sense of humor. The novitiate sisters were assigned to eat supper with her, a task that took over an hour as she regaled each sister with stories. It wasn't unusual for her to tell a story to one sister the first night and then be asked to tell it again, in a way only she could, to each succeeding sister!

The longed-for Bridegroom summoned Sister Virginia Mary to Himself on the afternoon of March 17, 2011, the feast of Saint Patrick. A week earlier a Sister suggested that maybe March 17th would be the day God would call her! Sister Virginia Mary, proud to be Polish-Lithuanian, said, "Oh, no!" In her last days she was so anxious to go Home to God that we're sure she didn't mind! The funeral Mass was on Saturday, March 19, 2011, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, patron of a happy death. Sister Virginia Mary was laid to rest in our monastery cemetery.

# Echoing Mary's "Fiat"! FIRST PROFESSION & CLOTHING CEREMONIES



On October 23, 2010, Sister Maria Teresa of the Sacred Heart, OP made her First Profession as a Nun of the Order of Preachers. *Above Left:* Prostrate before the Prioress and Community Sister Maria Teresa asks the mercy of God from the Community. *Left:* Sister Denise Marie and Sister Mary Catharine veil the newly professed nun. *Above:* A radiant Sister Maria Teresa poses with her family at the reception following her First Profession.



On March 25, 2011, Solemnity of the Annunciation, Sisters Veronica Gessner and Veronique Eloizard began their novitiate and were clothed in the long-desired habit of Saint Dominic.

*Left:* The new novices. *Right, top:* The Sisters currently in the novitiate. *Right, bottom:* "Is that yours or mine?" Sorting out postulant clothing after the Vestition Ceremony.



Sister Mary Jacinta of the Most Holy Rosary  
Sister Mary Veronica of the Cross



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## Home Improvements!



### NEW SOUND SYSTEM

*Sisters Mary Magdalene, Maria Teresa and Joseph Maria enjoy learning how the new sound system for the chapel works. It took several months to calibrate the various microphones and speakers but our guests are pleased and report that they can hear everything! God bless you for making this necessary improvement a reality!*



*Our new monastery entrance sign gives clear directions to all visitors!*