

Day 6 May 17

Dominican Sisters International (DSI) Ninth General Assembly, 12-17 May, 2019

## DSI DAY 6: Quilting: A Day of Hope

Anne Lythgoe, OP

ROME –May 17, 2019 – The first session of Day 6 of the DSI 2019 General Assembly, was a presentation by Helen Alford, OP, *Retooling Today in the Dominican Tradition for Authentic Engagement in the Mission*.

Sr. Helen is the Vice Rector at the Angelicum, Rome. Helen reviewed the current trends in world demographics in terms of numbers of believers, Christian, Muslim and Unaffiliated. Sustaining the faith of existing believers and dialogue with Muslims is becoming more important to us as the Order of Preachers. How can we do it?

Three ways of engagement in mission: 1) **taking a prophetic stance**, that is, to call the world back to God and invite renewed relationship with God, addressing the issues of justice and peace. 2) **institutional/explicit engagement**, that is, to create institutions that aim at being a microcosm of the kingdom of God, living it in the world today. She noted that we are learning how to hand over institutions in a way that lay leadership can carry forward Catholic and Dominican ethos. She offered examples of social enterprises such [Barefoot College.org](http://Barefoot College.org) in India and digital content on a new “Catholic Netflix”. 3) **implicit engagement**, based on the principles of goodwill and the natural tendency for human good. This includes the capacity to engage in dialogue with Muslims, in working in ecology, in peace-making, and being a spiritual presence in a world that is aging with us.

(Resource: *Preaching Justice 2*, a collection of essays written by Dominican women)

Sr. Jacinta Nwaohiri, OP offered a **Spotlight on Nigeria** and shared the mission of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena there. Their work is in education, grassroots evangelization, economic enterprise for the poor, among many other efforts. The country suffers from violent Islamic terrorism, and Sr. Jacinta talked about the Chibok girls, those kidnapped by Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen, a militia group who murder and destroy villages. Hunger, political corruption and graft keep people poor and displaced. She said, “Nigeria is crying.” The congregation has a strong commitment to girl child education and many girls are attracted to the courage of the sisters. There is a growing number of young women coming to the community because of their witness.

Sr. Romana Azangane, OP, of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena, offered a **Spotlight on Democratic Republic of Congo**. She expressed her thanks the Order for our prayers during the Month of Peace. Congo is a beautiful country, rich in mineral resources and agriculture, but it is one of the poorest countries of the world. Exploitation creates unemployment and inadequate infrastructures.

She described the history of her congregation and today it has 136 members, ten novices and five candidates. Their work is health care, education, and catechesis, especially to the young and orphans. Sr. Romana said, “Since we are prophetic sign among our people, we give care and hope to the people.”

**Fr. Gianni Festa, OP, Postulator for the Order**, talked about his work for the causes of saints in the Dominican Order. His office is presently entrusted with 24 causes for beatification of Dominicans and he

encouraged prioresses to know more and to share more about their sisters who could be saints. He discussed the process for beginning a cause for sainthood and some examples of different causes. They are a source of inspiration and hope for us.

Monica Marco from Spain, talked with the group about the **International Dominican Youth Movement (IDYM)** and their efforts to build bonds with each other and among the congregations. It is the youngest branch of the Dominican Family and desires to share the pillars of Dominican life in their groups. They are growing all over the world and they want to collaborate with sisters on missionary projects. “We live out Dominican charism in the context of our national identity,” she said.

The International Commission held its last meeting in 2016 in Toulouse, France and the next meeting will be in Nairobi, Kenya.

Fr. Benedict Croell, OP, Director of Mission Advancement, with Sr. Helen Alford, OP, Vice Rector, described the [Angelicum, Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas](#), and encouraged prioresses to consider sending students to the school and continuing their support. A video about DOMUNI, an online learning site, related to the Angelicum was shown. [Domuni.edu](#).

The Assembly concluded with an affirmation of its work and thanks to all who helped to make it possible. A ritual of creating a new quilt helped to capture the moment of closing the Assembly. Sr. Marie Therese thanked everyone for coming and being willing to be led by the Spirit in the processes and reflected on her time as International Coordinator and welcomed Sr. Margaret Mayce, OP, in the role. A Mass of Thanksgiving completed the gathering.

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**Dominican Sisters International** is an International Movement of Dominican Sisters of Apostolic Life founded in Rome in May 1995 primarily to unite Congregations of Dominican Sisters of Apostolic Life worldwide in their preaching mission. For more information visit the website: [www.dsiop.org](http://www.dsiop.org).