A Jubilee Year is a special time in religious congregations—both for individuals and for Orders as a whole. The Order of Preachers celebrated a Year of Jubilee during 2016—800 years since the Church officially recognized the founding of the Dominican Order. To close the Jubilee Year, the entire Order was invited to participate in a Mass celebrated at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome on January 21, 2017. continued on page 2
Dear Friends,

For those of us who have lived and worked in northern climates, winter makes us think of such things as snowstorms, warm clothing, icy roads, and school closings. But winter is also the time of year when the early evening darkness begins to yield just a bit to the light, reminding us that that spring is truly coming.

In so many ways, you—our faithful friends and benefactors—are like beacons of light shining through the darkness. In fact, we have named our annual awards dinner “Sparks of Light” because each of our friends has that divine spark of light of which Pope Francis has spoken, the divine spark that is so vital to the healing of our world.

You are there as shining lights in the many ways you so generously support our ministries here in the United States, in Pakistan, and in Haiti, and in the ways you help us to provide the most loving care possible for our elder members. To see some exciting examples of how our Sisters continue to be “women making a difference,” please go to our Facebook page (facebook.com/SparkillDominicans) where you can view our new video—appropriately named Women Making a Difference.

We are excited to inaugurate a new feature with this issue of Weavings—“Threads of Wisdom and Grace,” written by a member of our leadership team, Sister Margaret Palliser, OP. I’m sure you’ll find Sister Margaret’s inspirational reflections a welcome addition to this publication.

Truly, you are lights in our world. May God bless you for sharing in and supporting our mission! Be assured that your intentions are remembered in our daily prayers.

Gratefully,

Sister Mary Murray, OP
President

Pope Francis Closes the 800th Anniversary Jubilee Year for the Dominicans

It was a beautiful, sunny day in Rome as we waited in Piazza San Giovanni to pass through security and find a seat in the church. The line of Dominican sisters, brothers, priests, and lay Dominicans snaked across the piazza. What a sight!

Pope Francis presided at the Mass, and our Dominican priests conconcelebrated with him. Being with Dominicans from all over the world brought us an awareness of the fulfillment of St. Dominic’s dream to preach the Gospel throughout the world. The readings, prayers, intercessions, and hymns were in Italian, English, French, Spanish, German, Vietnamese, Polish, and Igbo (Nigeria), representing the diverse languages of our ministries. The Mass closed with the singing of the Salve Regina and O Lumen, the Latin hymns to Our Blessed Mother and Saint Dominic that we all chant at the end of Night Prayer.

It was so moving to sing with our sisters and brothers the hymns that have been an integral part of our prayer life from the very beginning of our journey in this Dominican life.

Celebrating this liturgy with our pope and our Dominican family from around the world was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We feel so blessed to have been able to be present with our international Dominican Family in Rome for this wonderful occasion as a way of celebrating our own Golden Jubilees.

Sisters Mary Jane Bookstaver, OP & Kathleen Donnelly, OP
A professional musician friend of mine in London had the habit of carrying a tape recorder whenever he went out for a walk. He would record interesting sounds to bring back to his studio. He heard the potential for music in the strangest places!

One day he heard the raspy voice of an elderly homeless man coming from under a bridge. He was chanting (very off-key!) two lines from an old hymn: Jesus’ blood never failed me yet... This one thing I know, that he loves me so... The tape recorder captured it.

My friend brought the recording home to his studio, created a loop that repeated over and over, and began adding instrumental voices to it. First, a deep ostinato on string bass, then, one by one, strings, woodwinds, and horns. Each time the refrain repeated, an additional voice joined the ensemble. By the end of the tape, the old man’s raspy singing was transformed into the haunting melody at the heart of a beautiful orchestral poem.

In our daily lives we may hear only our own slightly off-key contributions to life’s music. But, like my musician friend, God recognizes the true beauty of our less-than-perfect attempts to be “songs” of love and compassion. God hears our voices blending in harmony with those of the legions of saints who have gone before us—and with the voices of all our brothers and sisters who daily seek to live the gospel in our broken world.

— Sister Margaret Palliser, OP

Sister Margaret has a Doctorate in Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and is a member of the leadership team at Sparkill.

National Catholic Sisters Week (NCSW) 2017 will be celebrated this year on March 8-14. This annual event honors women religious through special events and media campaigns across the country.

NCSW brings a greater focus to the lives and work of Catholic Sisters, helping the public to see the impact Sisters have made—and continue to make—on their local communities.

The Dominican Sisters of Sparkill will be taking part in the online dialogue during NCSW by sharing reflections, photos, and more from our community members.

Connect with us on Facebook to see what’s in store at facebook.com/SparkillDominicans. You can read more about NCSW at nationalcatholicsistersweek.org.

Dominican Sisters of Sparkill proudly announce their participation in the Amazon Smile Program.
On January 12, 2010 an immense earthquake hit Haiti. Over 220,000 died, 300,000 were injured, and 1.5 million were left homeless. The consequences have been devastating for this country that was already suffering from great poverty (Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere), as well as deforestation, a weak infrastructure, and destructive tropical storms.

In response to the Haitian crisis, Sparkill Sister Valorie Lordi, OP traveled in 2010 to the village of Cuvier, ten miles from the epicenter of the earthquake, to learn how the Sisters might help. Since that time, the Dominican Sisters and their friends have partnered with the Ministry of Presence, the Sisters of Charity of Convent Station, and Dominican Sisters from Blauvelt and Caldwell. Together, they are making a difference in this village where the average annual income is $100.

Sister Valorie and Sister Jeanne Shary, OP have traveled together to Cuvier yearly since 2011, along with Jackie Baptiste, a Haitian-American nursing assistant in Siena Hall in Sparkill, who has been invaluable as a translator and mediator of the Haitian culture. Sister Valorie and the other volunteers have created a health clinic that now hosts a mobile medical program which includes a medical team that visits throughout the year. The Sisters and their partners also created Fle La Via (“Flower of Life”) Training Institute for local community leaders and volunteers for community outreach projects. One such project is the two-week camp experience created by Sr. Jeanne and now enjoyed by almost 500 children. The newest project is Elizabeth’s Place, a center where the programs will be expanded to include the education of children and the training of the residents as medical assistants. Sister Valorie tells us that one of the most beautiful projects is the Haiti Circle of Support, which keeps young children from being kidnapped and trafficked.

The outpouring of donations from generous benefactors have supported these improvements. Gifts have supplied tents for shelter; water and
The children of Haiti live in tough conditions yet are so kind and gentle.

Water purification kits; truckloads of bags of rice, beans, and other nutritional items; and antibiotics to treat the outbreaks of cholera. In addition, new wells have been dug to address malnutrition and disease.

Blessings and appreciation to all our benefactors from Sister Valorie, Sister Jeanne, Jackie, and the community in Haiti!

The children of Haiti live in tough conditions yet are so kind and gentle.
On October 27, 2016, over 180 guests celebrated at our second annual *Sparks of Light* Dinner at the beautiful Rockleigh Country Club. Sister Mary Murray, president, presented three Veritas awards to honorees whose lives embody the mission of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill. The Award recipients were: John Tortolani of Brenner, McDonagh and Tortolani, who has been a trusted guide of the Sisters for over 40 years; the John Paulding Engine Company No.1 Sparkill-Palisades Fire District, whose firefighters have nobly served their community for many generations; and Sister Margaret Theresa Oettinger, OP, director of spiritual care at Hospital for Special Surgery. Following the elegant cocktail hour and luscious dinner, guests enjoyed inspirational words from the honorees and their friends, and the Sisters shared a video presentation, *Women Making a Difference.*

A Spark of Divine Light is Within Each of Us!

– Pope Francis

Sparks of Light Honorees Left to Right Are: John Tortolani, Sr., Margaret Theresa Oettinger, OP, Chief Domenico Seminelli of Sparkill-Palisades Fire Department, and Sr. Mary Murray OP

Attendees enjoying presentations
Sparks of Light Award Dinner Supporters

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Thanks to Our Many Donors and Sponsors
Twenty years ago, Sr. Cecilia LaPietra OP, was looking to get involved with a social ministry that assisted Spanish-speaking Catholics. She recognized a great need in her local Rockland County, NY community which had a growing immigrant population seeking education and opportunities to learn the English language. Out of this need, One to One Learning, Inc. was born — a non-profit, outreach organization sponsored by the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill with the mission of providing English classes and other supportive services for immigrants to empower them to reach their full potential and lead meaningful lives in the communities where they live and work.

One to One Learning’s students come from all over Rockland County and Northern NJ. The program primarily serves the Latino community, with individuals and families hailing from El Salvador, Mexico, Ecuador, Guatemala, and other Central and South American countries, as well as smaller groups from Haiti, Eastern Europe and Asia. A student’s ability to speak English leads to his/her advancement which impacts the local economy and provides competent workers in a large variety of fields. In addition to language classes, One to One also provides food and clothing distribution, assistance with job placement, immigration counseling, and housing information among other services.

The teaching model at One to One is based on small group learning, allowing each person the chance to practice speaking during classes. Over 60 volunteer teachers make this small group structure possible; without their selfless dedication the program could not exist as it does.

Rita Callan, (seated, right) a volunteer teacher at One to One, pictured with some of her students. These women started the program with no English comprehension and are now approaching an intermediate level.
As the One to One Learning program turns 20 years old, it celebrates having served over 6,000 students. A strong foundation has been laid during the past 20 years with the assistance of the Sparkill Congregation and many other benefactors. “We are so grateful to all involved,” Sr. Cecilia said, “and we continue our focus on this important work, joining with other community groups to examine how we can reach out to immigrants even more.”

A formal 20th Anniversary celebration and fundraiser will be held on May 5th and will be open to the general public. More details will be shared on One to One Learning’s website as they become available.

Janet Fenton, children’s program coordinator, sits with a group of children whose parents are students at One to One Learning. The children’s program includes homework help, story time, crafts, etc.

A group of students receiving their certificates as they advance to the next level of language study.
You would never guess that Sr. Lois Liekweg, OP is the oldest member of the congregation—a statistic of which she is extremely proud. In fact, on Tuesday, December 6, 2016, Sr. Lois turned 100 years old! Yet, Sr. Lois still participates in retreats, preaches at congregational services, and is an active member within the Days for Girls ministry at Dominican Convent.

In her century of life, and 83 years in religious life, this St. Louis native has witnessed incredible developments in our world: from dramatic improvements in the classroom, where she spent the majority of her 60 years of active ministry, to widespread changes in American life and society and science.

Much of what has been constant throughout her life has been change. When asked about the most substantial changes she has seen take place in the world, Sr. Lois shared:

In my lifetime, I have witnessed the development of technology which has provided some of the greatest “toys” ever brought forth. The contribution of tech gadgets to society is on par with what the automobile has done over the years. Also, today it seems there is no peace in the world. Having lived through two World Wars, I can say the atmosphere in our world right now feels different. I think of groups like Boko Haram and ISIS, and I ask God to change their minds and scatter them so they can’t become a powerful body. Every day I pray for that. I also don’t remember as much physical hunger in the world as there is today… I think about it a lot—what it must be like to be hungry, or to have children cry because they’re hungry.

When asked what thoughts she would like to share about her 100th birthday, Sr. Lois simply said:

It was beyond anything I could have expected! Every part of the celebration, and having so many of my family members here, brought me so much energy. I have been so blessed by God to reach this stage with a clear mind. I am very grateful for what I have and what I’ve received from God during my life. Now I wonder what lies ahead.
About nine years ago, Bob Laughlin of St. Louis learned that the Dominican Sisters did not have enough savings to pay for their retirement needs. Bob thought “how could this be?” and got to work.

He gathered a group of friends, all of whom had grown up in Brentwood and placed a high value on the education they had received from the Dominican Sisters at St. Mary Magdalen School. Thus began the Friends of the Dominican Sisters – STL.

The St. Louis “Friends” are individuals who do not let an opportunity to do good pass by—nor miss an opportunity to have fun! So over the years, they’ve held a dance, a sock hop, several golf outings, and on October 1, 2016, the “Friends” held their sixth annual Trivia Night at Christian Brothers College High School (CBC). Thanks to the ongoing support from 70 table sponsors, along with 36 silent auction items, 18 raffle prizes, a 50/50 raffle, a special “wheelbarrow of booze” raffle, and Missouri raffle tickets galore, the 400 participants shared a fantastic evening of laughter, friendship, and spirited competition. In November, Bob and his fellow Friends of the Dominican Sisters—STL made a gift of $25,000 to the Dominican Sisters, bringing the total of their generous support over the years to $275,000. Bob credits Sister Marie Louise Ruggeri with much of their success.

The Sisters are very grateful for the continuing support of this wonderful group. The seventh annual Trivia Night will be held again at CBC on Saturday October 7, 2017.

For more information about the group or event, check their website: www.friendsofdominicansisters.org.
Learn More About The Dominican Sisters of Sparkill by visiting our website: www.sparkill.org and our Facebook link.

To Make a Donation, go to Development’s Home Page on our website and Click: Make a Donation which will take you to the secure page.

Thank you!

www.sparkill.org