

Connecting Continents!

As a part of the Northeast Five OP Congregations' Committed Collaboration Project working with the OP Sisters of Montebello, South Africa, Honora Nolty (Amityville) and Honora Werner (Caldwell) spent two weeks with the sisters in Montebello. Despite the challenges of language (the Montebello sisters speak Zulu as a first language and English as a second or third, while the Americans spoke only English) laughter and hospitality are universal for Dominicans!

From 9 AM to 4 PM daily (except Sunday!) the sisters met to reflect on Dominican Spirituality, to experience the Universe Story, and to learn some basic preaching skills. They used Barbara Schwarz's DVD, *A Journey with Dominic and the Order of Preachers*, viewing a segment each day and discussing its application to our lives. They discussed OP giants (Catherine, Albert, Thomas, Eckhart, the Florentines, the Peruvians – especially Martin, their favorite!) and reviewed the presence of the Order through the centuries in Latin America and Asia. Montebello Sister Michael taught them the history of the Dominican Sisters of Africa (DSA), the resources they share and the challenges they face. Some of their elder sisters recounted the history of the Congregation.

They learned and relearned the Universe Story through placards, a video, and the Cosmic Walk. They noted how often Dominican sisters and brothers through the centuries found creation to be a true revelation of God.

They prayed as preachers every morning, doing lectio divina with the Gospel for July 22nd (Mary Magdalene). Gradually they experienced imaginative ways of probing the text. They learned the importance of the hearers, focus, function and form, plus healthy ways to offer feedback to the preacher. On July 22nd they ended the whole time together with a Festival of Preaching in the context of prayer honoring Mary Magdalene. Fifteen sisters from the oldest woman in the Congregation to the three women in the pre-novitiate preached. What amazing preachers the sisters are! And to think they all did it in English, their second language!

The sisters were delighted each morning to find themselves on Facebook. We had set up a site before leaving the USA and we posted a summary of each day's activities, plus photos and videos every evening. Hearing from people in the US who read the postings was a thrill for us all!

The two Americans delighted in the lively liturgies (Morning and Evening Prayer and Eucharist) – especially the beautiful, spirited singing of the Montebello sisters. On their last night there, the Montebello sisters presented an evening of entertainment that had all present laughing, reflecting, singing and dancing.

On their three free days, the Americans managed to squeeze in visits to Howie Falls, a museum featuring Zulu culture, the PheZulu and Safari Park (yes, a safari ride through the savannah – giraffes, wildebeests, impala, zebra, etc.), the Lion Park (locked car doors and windows, of course!), Albert Falls, and the Indian Ocean beach at Durban. They

enjoyed a short visit with the friars in Pietermaritzburg, delighting in reconnecting with Brian Bricker and Scott Steinkirchner, as well as meeting the South African and other African friars there. The Montebello Sisters arranged all this and served as tour guides and drivers!

The Montebello Sisters Generalate Community in Durban hosted the Americans on their last Sunday there. Sister Lethiwe (Prioress) expressed their gratitude for yet another experience of collaborating with US Dominicans and their hope for many more such times in the future. The two Honoras agreed!