

The Centenary of The Dominican Congregation of St Catherine of Siena in England 1921 - 2021

And The Internment of Ashes of Sr. Maura Kelly Feast of the Visitation 31st May 2021 at St. Luke's Pinner

As Mary set out to visit her cousin Elizabeth she needed both faith and courage to undertake the journey and to make that act of loving kindness to support the much older woman who like her was expecting her first child. Elizabeth's babe leap in her womb as Mary, the Ark of the Covenant bearing Jesus, God's promise, entered the house. There was joy and amazement as both women recognised that God is always true to His promise but that He works in mysterious ways.

One hundred years ago, in 1921, the Oakford Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena, arrived in England to begin God's work here. Like Mary, theirs was a journey of faith and courage from South Africa and Germany to make their first foundation in this country. There was great hope, there was fear but above all there was trust in the Lord as they arrived both to bring and to be the Good News in lives of dedicated service to Christ and His Church in our country.

Convents were founded, work was commenced and continued, recruits for the Order were accepted especially from Ireland. It was a time of planting and harvesting and with enthusiasm the Sisters could truly sing with Mary,

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."
(Luke 1:46)

With all the ups and downs of normal life the Sisters did great work in education and nursing, in parishes, retreats and wherever the need was so that they truly served the Lord mindful of St Paul's words in today's Reading:

"Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with great earnestness of spirit"
Romans 12:11

These Daughters of St. Dominic sought for God's kingdom to come powerfully and His will to be done in great things and small.

The Second World War came then the hard won peace and a time of great austerity. The world, as always, was changing. At last material prosperity emerged bringing new challenges to the western world and to the Catholic Church. We all know to our cost today, in the light of the Covid pandemic, that the term, *'return to normal'*, is wishful thinking and that yesterdays world is gone, gone forever however much we may want it to return.

It was in the Twentieth and now in the Twenty-first Century that we all experienced a time of great change and the Oakford Dominican Sisters have been no exception. From large convents and communities they, and many of us, have experienced *'downsizing'*. Great expectations and traditions could and often did disappears over night. The *'many'* became the few and for our Dominican Sisters *'the few'* have now become *'one'* here in Britain, our dear Sr Sarah at St. Vincent's Nursing Home.

Today we bury the ashes of Sr. Moira Kelly after this Mass. We welcome her family and friends as we thank God for Sr. Moira's life of service and give thanks in this Holy Mass also for all the Dominican Sisters, living & dead, who have laboured in this country in the last 100 years.

Here at St. Luke's Parish in Pinner three sisters lived with us for many years, Sr Anthony, Sr. Brenda and Sr Sarah. A brief picture of one sister, Sarah, gives but inadequate *'hint'* of what all our Pinner Sisters have done for the Lord and for us. For over thirty years Sr Sarah was parish catechist, youth leader, parish visitor and friend. So many of the sick and housebound received visits, Holy Communion and loving care from her and Sr Anthony & Sr Brenda. Generations were prepared for First Communion, Reconciliation and Confirmation by Sr Sarah & her team of catechists.

Comfort and practical help was given by all the sisters to the sick, bereaved and the needy. Their generosity and service knew no bounds and so many parishioners counted the sisters among their greatest friends. What a testament to Christ and a tangible experience of the goodness of God working through these committed Dominican women.

Sisters you may have no bricks and mortar left in England but you have a multitude of 'living some' in the many people whose lives you have touched and thank God for you.

So dear sisters around the world – South Africa, Germany and the USA – today streaming in to this Mass of Celebration and thanksgiving: Take heart – it is not 'all over', you are not 'finished'. Go back to today's First Reading – St. Paul to the Romans - for both inspiration and comfort:

'Do not give up if trials come; and keep on praying..... make real friends of the poor.' (Romans 12:12...16)

We pray that our dear Sisters, Anthony, Brenda and now Moira whose ashes we lay to rest together after this Mass and all their deceased sisters may be numbered among the saints in heaven. We pray also that our dear Sr. Sarah and all you, the Sisters of St. Dominic living throughout the world, may pray for us as we give thanks for you today. With our Mother Mary we pray :

"May God come to the help of you, his servants, mindful of his mercy – according to the promise he made to our ancestors – Of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.
(Luke 1:55)

Light eternal grant to Sr. Maura –
Be at peace good Sisters of St. Dominic – Keep going !

Lord, Thy Will be done +