

A Brief History of the Dominican Order in the U.S.

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Members of the Dominican Order (Order of Preachers) have been on mission in the United States for more than two centuries. The mission given them by Dominic de Guzman (1170–1221) from the founding of the Order is to proclaim the word of God by preaching, teaching and example, while they are sustained by life in common.

The single mission of the Order of Preachers embraces many ministries, developed as needed to bring the word of God to persons in varying societies and circumstances. St. Dominic had this in mind when he urged the first members to identify with each culture through the use of the languages. For the same purpose he asked the meet all people as mendicants, ready to exchange gifts and necessities with others in the spirit of Jesus and the apostles.

The Order of Preachers is composed of men and women of four branches: friars, who may be priests or brothers; cloistered nuns; sisters; and laity. Dominic de Guzman was called to ministry in the universal Church. His followers have proclaimed the gospel around the world to peoples never known to the founder, including those of the Americas.

Early Missionaries to the United States

Three centuries after the death of St. Dominic in 1221 the first Dominicans landed on the Atlantic coast with Spanish colonists, arriving in 1526 near the current site of Georgetown, South Carolina. Among them was the friar Antonio de Montesinos, whose vehement protests against the conquerors' oppression of the native peoples have been acclaimed as the first voice for liberty raised in the New World. When the intended colony failed, Montesinos returned to his prophetic preaching in the Caribbean. However, other Dominicans followed him into the southern region of the present United States. These included Fray Luis Cancer, who was martyred in Florida, and the men who accompanied De Soto and other explorers into regions along the Gulf Coast. Friars of Mexico, which then extended north beyond the Rio Grande, evangelized the natives of the present Texas, some losing their lives in that endeavor. After them, nearly two centuries intervened before the Preachers came to stay.

The continuing presence of Dominicans in the United States began in 1786. A friar of the Irish province, John O'Connell, was assigned to New York, the nation's temporary capital to serve primarily as chaplain at the Spanish legation. Following O'Connell more than twenty friars, the majority from Ireland, were sent as missionaries to the new nation. Of these the first twelve served with Bishop John Carroll in the vast Diocese of Baltimore, then the only one in the United States.

One of the Preachers on mission with John Carroll was Francis Antoninus Fleming, the bishop's vicar

Foundations in the First Half-Century

The initial move toward founding a Dominican province in the United States was made by Edward Dominic Fenwick, O.P., an American descendant of early Maryland colonists. Fenwick entered the Order of Preachers of the English province in 1788, after completing his studies at the Dominican college of Holy Cross in Belgium. While serving for ten years in the English province he dreamed of establishing an American province of the Order in his native Maryland. The dream was realized finally by Fenwick and three English friars, with the support of Dominican superiors in Rome and the encouragement of Bishop John Carroll. However, Carroll requested that the province be founded far from Maryland, out in frontier Kentucky, where the first westward-moving Catholics were begging for priests.

Dominican Province of St. Joseph was established in 1806 at St. Rose, Kentucky, near Bardstown. In 1811 the Dominicans welcomed to the ecclesiastical outpost of Kentucky the first bishop on the western frontier, Benedict Joseph Flaget. In his Bardstown diocese the friars served as itinerant preachers, instructors in their college of St. Thomas Aquinas, and pastors of the earliest parishes formed in the wilderness. The people responded favorably to their pastoral ministry, finding their practices more acceptable than the rigorous ones of the veteran French missionary Stephen Theodore Badin and his Belgian coworker Charles Nerinckx.

As itinerant missionaries the friars traveled widely among the settlers in Kentucky; then Edward Fenwick ventured north across the Ohio River into the forests of Ohio. There in 1818 he and his Dominican nephew, Nicholas Dominic Young, built the first Catholic church in the state, a log cabin at Somerset in Perry County dedicated to St. Joseph.

the French Jesuits. In 1830 he assigned the newly ordained Samuel Mazzuchelli to the missions of the old Northwest, then in the territory of Michigan. Subsequently the Italian-American missionary became the first Dominican to serve the Church in the new dioceses of St. Louis, Detroit, Dubuque, Milwaukee, and Chicago. In 1844 he initiated at Sinsinawa Mound, Wisconsin, the third collaborative foundation of Dominican friars and sisters: a province of the friars which was short-lived, and in 1847 the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters. The cause of Samuel Mazzuchelli, the first American Dominican missionary proposed for canonization, was advanced in 1993 when he was named Venerable by the Holy See.

The fourth collaborative mission of Dominican men and women in the United States was initiated in California in 1850 by Dominican friars and sisters who accompanied Joseph Alemany to his bishopric in Monterey. There Alemany and Sadoc Vilarrasa, a fellow Spanish missionary who had been serving with him in Ohio, founded the friars' Province of the Holy Name. At the same time Alemany's hope for sisters was

Dominican nuns from Ireland also came to help immigrants to the United States at mid-century. In response to a call from a pastor in New Orleans, Mary John Flanagan and five other nuns from Dublin opened a parish school in that city of French and Spanish culture in 1860. Coming from a contemplative monastery, as did the nuns from Germany, they struggled in this new environment with the ambiguities of a cloistered life in active ministry until they became the Congregation of St. Mary's of New Orleans. [DSoP].

arbitrary action of the bishop of Grand Rapids. They became an independent congregation under the leadership of Aquinata Fiegler.

The initial ministry of Dominican sisters among Franco-Americans began with a call from Canadian friars at work in New England. Mary Bertrand Sheridan and several Dominican sisters from Washington,

Monasteries of nuns of the Order multiplied in the decade between 1915 and 1925. With eight new foundations established at great distances from one another. Nuns from Newark opened a monastery in Cincinnati in 1915 and another in Los Angeles in 1924. From Farmington Hills, Michigan, a new community was formed in Albany, New York, in 1915; and in New Jersey a group from Union City opened a house in Summit in 1919. From the Bronx monastery a foundation was made in Menlo Park, California, in 1921. Nuns from Catonsville, Maryland, established a monastery in West Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1922 and another in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1925. In the same year, the monastery at Camden opened a daughterhouse at Syracuse, New York.

Two widely separated provinces of the Newburgh congregation became autonomous congregations in 1923. The first province founded at Aberdeen, Washington, in 1890, now became the Dominican congregation of Everett, later Edmonds, Washington. The second group had become a province of the Newburgh congregation in 1892, centered at Adrian, Michigan. In 1923 that province became autonomous and their provincial, Camilla Madden, became the first prioress of the new Adrian Dominican Sisters.

At the end of the 1920s individual sisters of the Caldwell congregation, by arrangement between the bishops of Cleveland and Newark, were given the choice of remaining in the New Jersey congregation or joining a new branch of the order at Akron, Ohio. [DSOP] This second Ohio Dominican congregat

Dominican sisters who had come from Speyer, Germany, in 1925 to serve in the northwestern states became the autonomous American congregation of Spokane, Washington, in 1986.

Laity in the Twentieth Century

Members of the Dominican laity in the United States have developed their contemplative-apostolic role in the Order of Preachers within each province of the friars. Chapters now exist in thirty-three states, and their members collaborate with Canadians in the CANAM organization. In 1985 they welcomed to Montreal lay

qualified for faculty posts in higher education began to establish colleges for women. In 1904 bachelor's degrees were first granted by the Dominican Sisters of St. Clara College at Sinsinawa, which under the name Rosary College [now Dominican University

El Salvador	Maryknoll, Sinsinawa
Guatemala	Akron, Houston, Maryknoll, San Rafael
Honduras	St. Albert, St. Martin de Porres
Jamaica	Blauvelt
Kenya	St. Joseph, N. Guilford, Racine, St. Albert, Maryknoll, Adrian
Mexico	Holy Name, Mission San Jose, Racine, San Rafael
Nigeria	St. Albert, Great Bend
Pakistan	St. Joseph, Sparkill, Los Angeles Monastery

among major superiors of American congregations and provinces, holds an annual meeting, and encourages various forms of collaboration by means of the following groups:
Parable Conference for Dominican Life and Mission. Staff members provide "Encounter with the Word" retreats; study tours to the lands of Dominic and Central American missions; and preaching teams for parish missions.

