

# The traveling sisterhood

## Local women are connected to Dominicans in Tennessee

BY CLAUDIA MATHIS  
SUN STAFF WRITER

Sister Francine Bauser, O.P., dean of missions for the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia in Nashville, Tenn., has a strong connection to the Syracuse Diocese. For 34 years, Sister Francine served with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in Syracuse. As vicar for religious, during a vocation discernment 10 years ago, she was searching for a teaching order and discovered the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia. "They are very much like the Sisters of St. Joseph with their community life, prayer and ministry," said Sister Francine. "One of the things I like most about my order is the strong prayer life and the way our days are oriented to keeping God first in our lives."

Over the past 145 years, the Dominican Sisters have served in the apostolate of Catholic education. Sister Francine has been teaching at Bishop Byrne High School in Memphis, Tenn. for the last three years.

The order's members are increasing in number. "We are blessed — we've had 18 postulants so far this year," said Sister Francine. "I think they're attracted to the spirituality and the habit and because they want to make sacrifices."

Sister Mariana Thayer, O.P., agreed. "We are living in an exciting time in the church," Sister Mariana said. "Vocations are increasing. Young people are really listening to the Lord and they are ready and willing to be radical and courageous. Serving as a sister is definitely a life of sacrifice, but it is also a life of great joy."

Sister Mariana teaches second grade at St. Joseph's School in Madison, Tenn. A former parishioner of St. Mary's Church in Baldwinsville, she graduated from Bishop Ludden Jr./Sr. High School in 1997. It was during the time she attended SUNY Geneseo and Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio that Sister Mariana knew she wanted to join a religious order. "My prayer life deepened and I attended Mass more frequently," she said. "My relationship with God deepened and I heard Him gently call me to be his spouse."

Sister Mariana entered the order in 2005 and made her first profession of vows in August 2007. "I have given my whole self to Jesus Christ and to the church for the salvation of my soul and the souls of those I encounter each day," said Sister Mariana.

Sister Mariana said that when she visited the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia's Congregation she felt at home and that it was a place where she was meant to be. "I love our community life," Sister Mariana said. "I knew before that it would be wonderful. It has far exceeded my expectations — it's been a wonderful life that's been filled with joy."

Sister Mary Emily Knapp, O.P., director of vocations, said that there are 230 sisters in the order. They educate 13,000 students in 32 schools throughout the U.S. and have started to serve in a new mission in Sydney, Australia. Sister Mary Emily said that there are certain characteristics of the order that potential candidates find attractive. Those include traditional values, a

strong commitment to prayer, a joyful community life, structure and the community's apostolate of education. "Our charism is to contemplate and to hand on to others the fruits of our contemplation," said Sister Mary Emily. "Another Dominican motto is to share with others the truth. I think it's incredible that we have an opportunity as Dominican Sisters, to be a part of an apostolate of teaching — that is, to help another human being come into contact with the person of Jesus."

While the Dominican Order was founded in the 13th century, the Congregation of St. Cecilia began in 1860 as the dream of Nashville's second bishop, James Whelan. The bishop, a Dominican himself, wanted sisters to run an academy of higher education for girls with an emphasis on music and the fine arts. He petitioned the sisters at St. Mary's in Somerset, Ohio to send four sisters to begin the work. Sister Columba Dittoe, Sister Lucy Harper, Sister Philomena McDonough and Sister Frances Walsh arrived in Nashville on Aug. 17 after a long trip by stagecoach, steamboat and train. They set about transforming a building into a convent and school. The academy was named after the third century martyr, St. Cecilia. The Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia have continued to carry out its apostolate of teaching ever since.

Sister Catherine Marie Hopkins, O.P., a native of Cazenovia, has been a member of the Dominican Sisters for 24 years. She has taught at every grade level except for first and ninth and presently serves as executive director of the Dominican campus (a girl's high school and college). Sister Catherine also served for 15 years as vocations director for the order.

A 1978 graduate of the Franciscan Academy in Syracuse, Sister Catherine taught for one year after graduating from Nazareth College in Rochester. She said she felt the call to religious life while teaching in the classroom. "I found great joy in working with small children and joy in seeing them connecting with Christ," said Sister Catherine.

Sister Catherine said she was attracted to the Dominican Sisters because she wanted to join a community that was committed to education and where prayer life was primary. "When I visited, I found a very dynamic community life and I saw so much joy among the sisters," she said.

When asked what she liked the most about her community, Sister Catherine said, "What I appreciate the most is the warmth and vitality. We approach our life wholeheartedly — with one another and with those we teach. We do it with zeal and a strong sense of God's love toward everything we do. That's what I most appreciate and aspire to."

Sister Mary Emmanuel Schultz, O.P., has been a member of the order for the last seven years. She teaches fourth grade at St. Croix Catholic School in Stillwater, Minn. Sister Mary realized she was being called to serve when she was 10 years old. "I was watching the news on TV and when I saw how the people in Somalia were starving,



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Sister Sharon Rose Goellner, O.P.

it touched my heart," she said. "I wanted to help. I wanted to give more of myself to others. I knew God was telling me to help."

Sister Mary Emmanuel, a former parishioner of St. Malachy Church in Sherburne, volunteered for one year with Regnum Christi, a lay movement of consecrated women. "I worked in Ireland helping to bring Jesus to teen-aged girls who were from Venezuela, Mexico and Spain," said Sister Mary Emmanuel. "That's when I discerned my vocation."

After returning home from Ireland, Sister Mary Emmanuel began to investigate religious orders. When she visited the Dominican Sisters, Sister Mary said she knew she had come to the right place because she felt at home and sensed a peacefulness in the atmosphere. "What attracted me was the way the sisters were so joyful," said Sister Mary. "I also liked the way they loved God, the pope, Mary, the Eucharist and wore habits. That sealed the deal. I love our community life. The fraternal love amongst us is evident and very beautiful. We feel we're a family in Christ."

**SYRACUSE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S CONFERENCE**  
*Through the Heart*

**The First Annual Catholic Women's Conference**  
Saturday, October 16, 2010  
Oncenter Complex, Syracuse, NY

8 AM Registration / 9 AM Mass with Bishop Robert Cunningham  
5 PM Conclusion / Lunch Provided

Conviction of the Heart - Gift of the Heart - Healing of the Heart



**Colleen Carroll Campbell**  
*Bringing the Catholic Faith into your everyday life!*

Colleen is an author, television host and former White House speechwriter. She is currently the host of her own international television show on EWTN, "Faith in Culture." She is an op-ed columnist for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and serves as a commentator on FOX news, CNN, MSNBC, and PBS. She is the author of *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy* (Loyola Press, 2002). Her website is [www.colleencampbell.com](http://www.colleencampbell.com)



**Damon Owens**  
*A woman's heart is a gift from God!*

Damon is founder of *Joy-Filled Marriage NI*, providing support for engaged and married couples. He has introduced a program based on Theology Of The Body called "God's Plan For A Joy-Filled Marriage". He has appeared on ABC World News Tonight, CBS News 48 hours, and EWTN to name a few. He and his wife have 7 daughters!



**Regina Doman**  
*"No matter what happens, Blessed be His name!"*

Regina is moving *testimony of her unthinkable tragedy, and how God carried her through*. Regina is the author of the *Fairy Tale Novels*. She is creator and managing editor for *John Paul 2 High series* for teens. Her children's book *Angel in the Waves*, has sold over 100,000 copies. Regina and her husband have six children.  
[www.ReginaDoman.com](http://www.ReginaDoman.com)



**Alicia Heron**  
*Alicia is an inspirational singer and songwriter with over 25 years experience leading worship music. She has led music for the Boston Catholic Women's Conference and Steubenville Conferences. Her CD, *Beloved* is a compilation of songs about women and for women in all stages of their lives.*

*"A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you"*  
- Ezekiel 36:26

Women 18 & Older • Nursing Infants Welcome

For more information and to register, visit [www.syracuseCWC.com](http://www.syracuseCWC.com).

Sponsored by the Diocese of Syracuse