



Searching for truth and beauty, preaching through the transforming power of the arts

Winter Newsletter 2014 Volume 16 Issue 1

Adrian Gathering to Explore “Art & Spirituality” July 23-26, 2014



Elizabeth Slenker, OP (Sparkill) and the Planning Commission are working hard to enhance our time together with keynote speaker Frances Belmonte. She will lead us in a process to stimulate our imaginations artistically and spiritually through our chosen media. We will spend some time exploring how, through the DIA, we can move the arts as preaching. “We look forward to seeing you all,” says Elizabeth, “for when we gather together, we not only witness what others do artistically, but we nourish our minds, hearts, and spirits.”

Registration Packets will be sent out at the end of January.

spent thirty years and with whom she retains strong bonds of affection.

Highlights of Frances Belmonte’s professional resume include some remarkable facts. As the first woman in the United States to serve as resident theologian to a bishop, she came to the role while she was completing a Ph. D. She combined her role in the Memphis diocese with a dissertation project: a year-long interdenominational study program which culminated in a nationally- acclaimed reconciliation event attended by over 20,000 people. (Most of us who slogged through the dissertation process would count ourselves lucky to get an audience of twelve people!)

Scanning an academic transcript that includes Latin, French, German, and Hebrew and a list of *Quantum Connections* workshop offerings ranging through ethics, addiction, medicine, and imagination, one might be tempted to envision a scattershot scholar in search of a “unified theory of everything.” But Dr. Belmonte has found unity in her focus on “Integration through the arts.” She has come “to understand creativity and imagination in the spirit which integrates all learning.”

Degrees in theology from Siena College, Memphis, the University of Dayton, and Newton Theological School at Boston College, qualify Dr. Belmonte as a systematic theologian, but she is convinced that theology needs intuition and imagination to avoid being merely an academic discipline. “Intuition means ‘to grasp without intermediary,’” she explains. “Poets and artists approach theology as contemplatives. They understand



Introducing Dr. Frances Belmonte, Keynoter

Dr. Frances Belmonte, an Emerita Professor on the Graduate Faculty at Loyola University in Chicago, will set the tone for the Adrian Gathering with a keynote presentation and group activities on the theme “Spirituality and

the Arts.” A compelling raconteur with a sense of humor, her wealth of practical experience includes building rehabilitation, furniture restoration, and Kosher domestic science. Frances bonded early with the arts, for she was born in Brooklyn, birthplace of so many artists and American cultural icons. Her Dominican bonds are even stronger. She has a long history with the Kentucky congregation with whom she

what it is like, not so much to grasp the truth as to be grasped by it.” Although Frances has never taken an art course, nor practiced any artistic medium, she believes that “Theology should be done by touch and written in poetry.”

It is from her students—Grade 4 through Ph.D.—that Frances claims she has learned the joy of keeping the humanity in the humanities. “Lives and relationships, as well as learning, ultimately come from the depths of one’s center. The act of art comes from that Deep-Down Smart Place.”

When asked to name what she hopes to achieve at the Adrian Gathering, Dr. Belmonte replied: “It won’t come from me. I hope only to lead the DIA artists into a deeper experience of their own power through the arts. I hope to strike a chord that prompts them to recapture something within themselves, either personally or as a group.”

THE ADRIAN GATHERING IS A NOT-TO BE-MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO RECHARGE OUR BATTERIES FROM A DYNAMO OF ARTISTIC ENERGY.



MARIANDALE RETREAT: DOMINICAN ARTISTS ON THE FRONTIERS

It is three decades since the Dominican fathers formally declared the vocation of the order to be a *Mission on the Frontiers of Religious Experience*. In that document, the call to the frontiers *Between Catholics and Other Christians, Between Christians and Non-Christians, Between Christians and Non-Believers* seemed challenging. But since then, interfaith religious dialog has received significant public attention throughout the Church and society. Recently a little-publicized event involving DIA members demonstrates how art can transform denominational borders into spiritual frontiers.

On September 29, participants from the annual Artists’ Contemplative Retreat hosted by the Dominican Sisters of Hope in Ossining, New York, assembled for a memorial service. They came to celebrate the life of

Sandra Hernandez, an artist who had attended every artists’ retreat since Lorraine Ferguson initiated the event ten years ago.

The idea for the retreat actually had its inception in a conversation between Lorraine and Thoma Swanson at a DIA Gathering in Sparkill. It was originally intended as an opportunity for Dominican artists to develop and share their art in an atmosphere of prayer and contemplation. Over the years, Lucianne Siers, Mary Pat Reid, Pat Lee, Ann Eigenbauer, Elizabeth Michael Boyle, and Maura Flannery were among those who formed the Dominican nucleus for the group which included both religious and lay artists.

In the last few weeks of her final illness, Sandy Hernandez requested a memorial service at Mariandale, for through the retreats, she had come to regard the place as her spiritual home. Among the artists and friends assembled in the room that day were three ordained pastors of other Christian denominations, a Roman Catholic Muslim, eight Dominican women, and at least one devout atheist. What they all had in common was an appreciation for art as a spiritual experience.

From time to time, in the newsletter and at DIA Gatherings, Lucianne Siers has recommended that regional artists’ retreats be arranged. In addition to its personal benefit to Dominican artists, the Mariandale event demonstrates the power of art to dissolve boundaries on the frontiers of religious experience.



**Have you remembered to send in
your membership forms due in
January for 2014?**



COLLABORATIVE GRANT

Since Dominican Collaboration is important, we thought there should be a grant to foster the process of collaboration through the arts. And so for the first time we are posting the possibility of a grant to do just that.

As a board we were looking to see how we could encourage and create new ways to grow as a Dominican Entity. This grant is one of the ways.

PURPOSE

To further our Dominican Life and Mission, and our goals of Preaching through the Arts, the DIA Board will award 1 Grant of \$1,000.00 to a Project which qualifies.

GRANT REGULATIONS

- 1) The project demonstrates Preaching through the Arts
- 2) The project involves 2 or more members of DIA.
- 3) The project is new, not part of an existing project.
- 4) The project may be multi-disciplined.
- 5) The project should be completed in 1 year.
- 6) On completion, the recipient(s) will give a short presentation on-line or at the next Gathering.
- 7) The application for the Grant must be in by March 1, 2014 by SNAIL MAIL ONLY
- 8) Send the application to Sr. Mary Pat Reid, OP, 1 Ryerson Avenue, Caldwell N.J. 07006

To get an application, contact Mary Pat Reid OP or go to the member pages of www.diartsop.org and download a copy. There is a committee of board members reviewing applications.



GUATEMALA GRANTS

You may remember Sister Valeria Nougues, OP, General Coordinator and Secretary of CODALC. She has sent us an invitation to the Latin American Conference. Here she is pictured with Thoma Swanson OP at the Gathering in Mission San Jose.



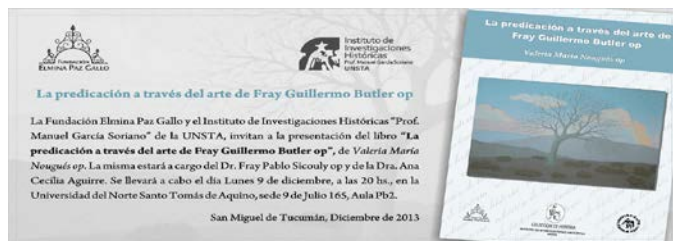
The meeting will take place at Veritas House, in Guatemala City. You can visit the site: <http://casaveritas.com>. The meeting cost is estimated between \$US 150 or \$200, which includes registration, lodging, meals, materials and sightseeing with the group. Closer to the date we will inform participants of the final cost.

You may recall that Armando helped LACA to get started and that DIA members have been part of their conference in the past.

And so the Board has set aside two grants of \$500 to be made to members who wish to attend the Latin American Conference of Artists in Guatemala from next September 27 - Oct 3, 2014. Note: Spanish is essential to full participation. Contact Barbara Schwarz at diartsop@gmail.com.

Valeria also wrote of a book project she has finished.

Dear friends,
I share with you the joy, the fruit of years of study, prayer and support of many individuals and institutions. Heart Hugs for everyone. Valeria





DOMINICAN YOUTH MOVEMENT

We have created two initiatives for this year.

There will be two service scholarships for the Dominican Youth in the Adrian Area. Sister Gina Fleming will try to help us find Dominican Young Adults or Youth Preachers or Dominican Volunteers who can be of service to us during the gathering. We hope to sponsor a juried web show of Dominican Youth on our website. This will draw them, their families and friends to the site to see your work as well. Up to 4 submissions will cost \$25. Each participant will receive a certificate and be on our site during the year. Forms have been made available to them through their Facebook webpages. We hope this project will generate interest in DIA among young Dominican preachers.

2014 CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE FRA ANGELICO AWARD



(Use separate pages to nominate multiple people)

The Fra Angelico Award gives special recognition to members in the Dominican Family represented in the DIA who have distinguished themselves in some area of the arts. We look for candidates in the different fields who have received the recognition of their peers for excellence in their discipline. Please take this opportunity to consider DIA members who qualify for this honor. Your input is very important. DIA Board Members make the final determination.

Mail/Email **by March 1st**: Barbara Schwarz OP
41 Union Ave, Amityville, NY 11701
diartsop@gmail.com

ART AND THE GOSPEL OF HEALING: AN INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA KUKLA, OP



Artists are called “gifted” because their talents can be released and developed, but never invented. Sometimes these gifts have to be discovered. When this happens, the first impulse of the artist newly-aware of her gifts is to give them to others. This, in brief, is the story of Barbara Kukla, Art Therapist from Racine. Like so many others in the DIA, Barbara did not dare to call herself an artist until middle age. Although always recognized as artistic, she was almost fifty years old before she studied art formally and began to focus her energies on making art. It was then that she experienced first-hand the therapeutic effect of releasing an emotional world which until then had been unconsciously suppressed within her. Soon she decided to combine her career as a mental health counselor with the practice of art therapy.

Barbara’s first “studio” was the shelter for battered and psychologically abused women where she was working. Throughout the next two decades, Barbara enjoyed sharing the healing power of artistic expression with many clients suffering from grief, depression, self-doubt and other forms of psychological pain. We asked Barbara to explain for us how Art Therapy fulfills the mission of preaching through the arts.

“Have you ever seen Art Therapy at work? It’s almost like a miracle. In Art Therapy we use art materials to help us express our thoughts and emotions. Any expression of self is healing, so I encourage the women at the shelter to try it. Art Therapy techniques assist the women in letting images speak for them. Each piece

of art is unique. There is no right or wrong way of imaging the emotion. The work really is a mirror of what's inside each person. For example, if the theme for the day is anger, each person will express it in a different way according to her life experience.

"The task of the art therapist is to encourage the client to feel free enough to work with art and safe enough to express the pain she is holding. I have found that most people need to strengthen their self-affirmation, and so, with that as their goal, I show them how to nurture and affirm themselves. Hope is truly what these women need. I have practiced Art Therapy for twenty years. I love art, especially water color, and I'm determined to share the joy of making art with others.

Jesus preached through healing. Tying art and therapy together has been a wonderful way for me as a Dominican to preach and teach through healing."



***THE ARTIST AS
PREACHER:
AN INTERVIEW
WITH
PAT LEE OP***

Since its inception a few years ago, this *OPalette* page has featured testimony from DIA artists about how a favorite artifact has preached to them. Inspiration, in most cases, has come from a masterwork which provoked lofty thoughts whether or not it illustrated a spiritual theme. When we asked Pat Lee to contribute to this issue, we had in mind our own reaction to her breathtaking watercolors and her spectacular soft sculpture of Saint Catherine. To our surprise, Pat chose to hear a homily from a small object in a flea market.

"Several years ago, in the period of one week, another sister and I were offered three apartments. We didn't think we could afford the most attractive option. But we

also thought we should listen to its virtues. The apartment was near the Church and the El. Close by were a laundromat, a Chinese take-out, and a pizza parlor. What else could we possibly need? The die was cast.

"We were friends, but we had lived only in groups of thirty-six, twenty-one, and two hundred. Living with one person is very different from living in a large group. There are different responsibilities, different needs, and different demands. A few weeks after our arrival, the parish held a flea market. We didn't actually need or want anything, but we thought we should show support. Soon my friend showed me a lovely Art Deco container. It was priced at \$5.00, which was a lot for us. 'She doesn't ordinarily go for this kind of thing,' I thought, 'but maybe she wants it. I like it, but how would we use it? Etc. etc.' Finally, I asked her, 'Do you like it?' 'Well, it is lovely and useful,' she replied. So we bought it.

"One we were home, we discussed our new purchase: 'Why did we buy it?' 'I thought you liked it.' 'I thought you wanted it.' 'I do like it, but I don't think we need it.' So we named it *The Folly Pot*. Merriman Webster's first definition of *folly* is 'lack of good sense or normal prudence and foresight.'



"The Folly Pot was a small thing, but it taught us much about truth, openness, and honesty. It taught us to stop tip-toeing around each other. It told us to live humbly, serving the Lord and others in prayer and in truth. From the Folly Pot we learned to say what we mean and to mean what we say. Unlike a museum artifact, the Folly Pot is there in our house, reminding us to be truthful again and again."



REFLECTIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since we gathered in Columbus, the Board has been busy about remaining focused on our mission of Preaching through the Arts.

Communication and visibility are key to our future as a viable organization. You may have noticed that our new website was featured in www.domlife.org. Leadership throughout the country has made our newsletters available to their members and we are grateful. Have you reached out to your congregation for membership?

We have reached out to former members, associates, and laity. We have used our email to reach out to one another as we mourned our losses of Jude Bloch OP, John Gerlach OP, and Rose Marie Conway OP and offer prayerful support to members.

You have seen our board updates and the results of our survey. In this issue you can see our initiatives to help members recognize and foster their preaching arts.

Collaboration is important. Can you remember when you collaborated with other members of DIA? I remember when in Elkins Park, Rudolf put one of my earth poems to music. Let us imagine new ways to work with each other to come up with new dances, videos, songs, poetry, photography or whatever is revealed.


Imagination and creativity are God's gifts to us. Our arts help us to see things differently. At the gathering, you will have an opportunity to share some of those times when your art preached to others. In this newsletter Pat Lee OP and Barbara Kukla OP shared their thoughts. Let us deepen our connections that the preaching continues in a more conscious and public way.

Share your stories. Send your pictures. Tell the history of times spent together as artists. Who influenced you? We are preachers who together can create change in how others see the world. How will you do your part? Send your ideas and stories to diartsop@gmail.com for the web or emichael@caldwell.edu for our newsletter.



DIA COMMUNICATION “GOES VIRAL”

Thanks to rapidly-evolving technological options, communication from DIA leadership and among members is now instant and interactive. Barbara Schwarz updates events and opportunities regularly and urges members to keep their own entries current.

Members' feedback to the page and to each other can be posted as either blogs or entries in the  Guestbook. For an outstanding example, see the Blog (B on top of home page) for tributes to Jude Bloch, OP, recently deceased editor of *OPalette*.

Some alert members have used the web page itself to register appreciation for its expanded features. Exclaimed Rudolf Lowenstein: “My jaw dropped and I was speechless—a definite miracle!” Pat Lee found that the content and format made her “proud to be a member of the DIA.” Associates from whom we’ve never heard before now have a voice and are using it.

SO IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE WEBSITE LATELY, THERE'S NOT A MOMENT TO BE LOST. LET'S HEAR FROM YOU AT www.DIArtsop.org. Go to Member Pages to get the form to update your work on the site.

solemn profession

*to simply, gladly
give a lifetime
is to be held closely
(as moist clay)
by creation-stained
godly hands. — Jude Bloch OP*

May she rest in peace.

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To receive **Collaboration Grant**

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To receive **Guatemala Grant Info:**

Barbara Schwarz OP

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**For membership information &
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etaylorop@verizon.net

**Adrian gathering info will
be sent later this month
watch for it!**

Gathering is July 23-26

**Looking forward to seeing
you there!**

See us at **www.diartsop.org**