

## From the Director...

Dear Mission Friends:

In our newsletter of February 2007 I gave a report on our newest mission endeavor, the *Casa del Migrante* in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.



In June 2006 the friars of the Dominican Province of Mexico, in collaboration with our Western Dominican Province and our mission office, accepted the responsibility of ministering to migrants at the *Casa del Migrante*. In 2007, 81,088 people were deported from the United States through El Paso, Texas across the Rio Grande River to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. The deportees arrive in Ciudad Juarez, a city unknown to most of them, confused and disoriented and usually without any money. Sometimes whole families are separated in deportation, with some members ending up in Tijuana and others in Ciudad Juarez.

Our Dominican missionary in Mexicali, Father Carmen Mele, O.P., recently visited the *Casa del Migrante* and wrote the following report for us on the ministry now being carried out with Dominican collaboration. In my report on the *Casa del Migrante* in the February 2007 newsletter, I closed the report with the following statement which I would like to share with you once again:

“As Americans, we all have very different opinions about the situation of migrants crossing the border. However, when we have the cold, hungry, sick, and injured arriving here at the *Casa del Migrante*, we recall the words of Jesus: *‘I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me.’ (Matthew 25)*”

In Christ’s Peace, *Fr Martin de Porres Walsh O.P.*

## Dominicans Unite to Assist Immigrants

*By Fr. Carmen Mele, O.P.  
Ciudad Juarez, Mexico*

St. Dominic Guzman, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Martin de Porres – when people think of Dominicans, they often have in mind religious men like these three great saints. However, the Dominican Order, started by St. Dominic with the founding of a monastery for women in 1207, encompasses men and women, religious and laity. In fact, Dominican women outnumber men, and Dominican laypersons outnumber Dominican religious. Nor are the achievements of Dominican women and laity insignificant in comparison to Dominican male religious. St. Catherine of Siena was a mystic theologian and Church activist whom Pope John Paul II named as one of the patrons of not just Italy but all of Europe. Blessed Giorgio Frassati, a handsome Italian of the early twentieth century, dedicated his short life to the poor as a Dominican layman. He is being hailed today as a “saint for the youth of the third millennium.”

All Dominicans share a zest for the apostolic life. Indeed, St. Dominic founded the Order to preach the gospel for the salvation of souls.



*The Casa del Migrante, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico*

Some may wonder how Dominican nuns – that is, women religious living in cloistered monasteries and dedicated to prayer – participate in the Order’s apostolic thrust. The explanation is credible although it makes sense only to those with faith. It was St. Dominic’s genius to first organize women whose prayers would insure the success of his friars’ (a word from Latin meaning *brothers*) preaching.

Over the years there have been many instances of collaboration among the members of the Dominican family. Friars usually serve as chaplains to Dominican monasteries and Dominican lay chapters. Dominican religious sisters often staff schools in parishes administered by Dominican priests. **Currently, the Dominican family is joining together to assist Latin American immigrants. Friars, sisters, and laymen are meeting the physical, social, and spiritual needs of these poor people with a project called Casa del Migrante (the Migrant’s House) in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, just south of El Paso, Texas.**

The Western Dominican Province has invested in this cooperative effort and has assigned one of its

friars, Br. Pascual Manalio-Passarelli, to live and work at the immigrant shelter.

Scalabrini missionaries founded *Casa del Migrante*, Ciudad Juarez, in 1990. These priests and brothers originally came from Italy to work with Italian immigrants in the new world. As Italian immigrants became successfully integrated into the various societies of North and South America, the Scalabrinis pursued their specialty with the new migration from the South to the North. They not only established the *Casa del Migrante*

*The staff at Casa del Migrante with the Papal Nuncio to Mexico & the Bishop of Ciudad Juarez.*

*Left to Right: Gerardo Lopez (volunteer), Bro. Pascual Manalio, O.P. (Western Dominican Province), Diana*

*Rodriguez (social worker), Sr. Maria de la Luz, O.P., Bishop Christopher Pierre (Apostolic Nuncio from the Vatican to Mexico), Fr.*

*Jose Barrios, O.P. (Director of the Casa del Migrante), Bishop Renato Ascencio Leon (Bishop of Ciudad Juarez), Bro.*

*Arturo Diaz, O.P. (General Administrator of Casa del Migrante), and Carlos Gil, O.P.I.. (lawyer).*

in Ciudad Juarez, but also in several other cities along Mexico’s northern and southern borders. The Scalabrinis see their mission as more than providing immigrants’ shelter; they also advocate publicly on their behalf.

Two years ago, in 2006, the Dominicans took over the administration of *Casa del Migrante*, Ciudad Juarez. Although their efforts there have so far concentrated upon providing direct services, the Dominicans plan to make much more of *Casa del Migrante* than a halfway house for immigrants. The Mexican Dominican Province has named the site as a human rights center where Dominicans will study the realities of immigrants in the globalized world. They further hope to discuss their findings in forums of Dominicans and other groups. In these ways, the project’s participants will not abandon but extend the Order’s celebrated motto, “*Contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere*” (to contemplate and to hand on to others the fruit of contemplation).





*The dining room of Casa del Migrante.*

**T**oday eleven Dominicans are fulltime staff members. Four are friars: three from the Mexican Dominican Province and one (Br. Pascual) from the Western Dominican Province. Two are Mexican sisters of the Dominican Congregation of the Queen of the Holy Rosary (Mission San Jose). And five are Dominican laity (four men and one woman). Let's meet a few of them and, in the process, learn how *Casa del Migrante* operates.

Fr. Jose Barrios Varela, O.P., is director of the project. He was born in Mexico City in 1947 and ordained a priest in 1986. Every week Father goes to the Santa Fe Bridge connecting the centers of Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, when the immigration authority in the United States releases undocumented immigrants whom it is returning to Mexico. Fr. Barrios invites them to *Casa del Migrante* where they can stay free of cost for 18 days. Often returned immigrants are robbed when they stay at cheap hotels in the city's center.

Sr. Maria de Luz Munoz, O.P., looks after the material and spiritual needs of women and

children who come to *Casa del Migrante*. Immigrants arrive from both directions. Some come from the South hoping to enter the United States. Others arrive from the United States where they lacked visas. Although the *Casa* provides lodging to immigrants who plan to cross the border illegally, it does not allow the infamous coyotes or polleros on its premises. These human traffickers promise to transport immigrants for a fee past the Border Patrol to their destinations. Some unscrupulously leave their clients in the desert after taking their money.

*Sister Maria de la Luz, O.P., from the Mission San Jose Dominican Sisters, interviewing a new arrival at the Casa del Migrante.*



Carlos Eduardo Gil Rodriguez assists immigrants especially with legal matters. He is a Dominican layman trained as a lawyer in his native Colombia. Residents stay at *Casa del Migrante* only during evening and night hours. After they eat breakfast around six in the morning they are expected to work or take care of pressing social needs. Since many come from Central America and have no documentation to work in Mexican factories, they find jobs as day laborers. Employers sometimes refuse to pay the agreed upon wages. Lawyer Gil Rodriguez will interview the exploited immigrants and bring their cases to the attention of the police.

**I**n the near future Dominican men and women, laity and religious, plan to meet at *Casa del Migrante* for a major conference regarding immigration. In doing so, they will fulfill part of the dream of St. Dominic in founding the Order. They will also realize the hope of the Mexican Dominican Province in assuming the shelter's administration to promote human rights.

*Dear Mission Friends:*

*For a number of years, many of you have followed the articles in our newsletters by our beloved Mexicali missionary, Fr. Tom Kraft, O.P. Fr. Tom has been diagnosed with cancer that is already in his lower esophagus, upper stomach, and now in his liver. Our provincial, Fr. Emmerich Vogt, O.P., has asked all of us who have known Fr. Tom to recite a prayer to Mother Teresa asking her intercession for him. Fr. Tom has great devotion to her. I have included the prayer below and invite you to join us in reciting this prayer for the healing of Fr. Tom.*

*In Christ's Peace,  
Fr. Martin*

*Fr. Tom  
Kraft,  
O.P. in  
Mexicali,  
Mexico.*



### **Prayer for canonization of Mother Teresa**

*Jesus, you made Blessed Teresa of Calcutta an inspiring example of firm faith and burning charity, an extraordinary witness to the way of spiritual childhood, and a great and esteemed teacher of the value and dignity of every human life. Grant that she may be venerated and imitated as one of the Church's canonized saints. Hear the requests of all those who seek her intercession, especially the petition I now implore: the healing of Fr. Tom Kraft, O.P.*

*May we follow her example in heeding Your cry of thirst from the Cross and joyfully loving You in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor, especially those most unloved and unwanted.*

*We ask this in Your name and through the intercession of Mary, Your Mother and the Mother of us all. Amen.*