



MISSION WEST

A newsletter for friends of the Dominican Friars, Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus

SEEK WHAT IS ABOVE

- ✦ Four Brothers Profess Solemn Vows
- ✦ Three Dominican Friars Ordained
- ✦ How an Alaskan Documentary Took Shape
- ✦ A Joyful Jubilee

THE QUOTABLE DOMINICAN

St. Vincent Ferrer, O.P.

1350-1419

Patron of Builders

Feast Day: April 5 (*May 5 in the Dominican calendar*)



*“Do you desire to study to your advantage?
Let devotion accompany all your studies,
and study less to make yourself learned
than to become a saint.”*

St. Vincent entered the Order of Preachers at age 19. He became a professor of theology in Valencia and eventually devoted his life to missionary work throughout Europe, attracting large crowds with his preaching and converting many.

St. Vincent Ferrer, Francesco del Cossa (1473)

DID YOU KNOW?

St. Hyacinth of Poland, O.P., is the patron saint of weightlifting.

During a Tartar invasion in Kyiv, St. Hyacinth went into the church to retrieve and protect the Blessed Sacrament from the invaders. When he did so, he heard a woman's voice saying: "My son, will you leave me behind?" St. Hyacinth, understanding this to be the voice of the Blessed Mother, lifted the massive alabaster statue of Mary, far exceeding what he could normally lift, and carried both the statue and the Blessed Sacrament to safety.



Fresco of St. Hyacinth from the sacristy ceiling of the Dominican Priory in Krakow. Photo by Fr. Lawrence Lew, O.P.

Cover Photo: Fr. Andrew Opsahl, O.P., Pastor of St. Dominic's Church in Benicia, processes with the Blessed Sacrament during the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage's Serra Route.

Our sincere gratitude is extended to all those who helped make this edition of the newsletter possible.

From the Chief Advancement Officer



My Dear Friend in Christ,

My name is Br. Michael James Rivera, O.P., and I was recently appointed the Chief Advancement Officer of the Western Dominican Province. I am grateful to have this opportunity to serve the Province and you, our friend, and benefactor. My hope is to provide you with the best experience as a member of our Dominican family.

The world needs you, and the world needs Dominicans. Together we are bringing lost souls back to Christ. Without you, our ability to preach the Gospel would be greatly hindered. Your gifts make it possible for us to focus on our prayer and studies, so that we can bring the name of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.

When I was younger, the days of summer were filled with activity: visiting my grandparents, swimming with friends, and Vacation Bible School. My parents also made sure that we went to the public library each week to check out a new book. Classics such as *Johnny Tremain*, *Where the Red Fern Grows*, *Tuck Everlasting*, and *The Hardy Boys* series fostered a love of reading that eventually became the pillar of study which is such a large part of the Dominican vocation.

Speaking of vocations, in this issue of *Mission West* you'll find reflections from our four brothers who recently professed solemn vows (until death), promising to preach the Gospel for the rest of their earthly lives. You'll also hear from Fr. Andrew Thomas Kang, O.P., one of three Dominican Friars ordained to the priesthood this past May. And don't forget to save Saturday, August 31 on your calendar. That's when our current novices will profess first vows and we'll be welcoming a new class of novices.

Finally, make sure to check out a sneak-peek behind the scenes of *Mission Alaska: To The Ends of the Earth*, to discover how this incredible documentary came to be.

Respectfully,

Br. Michael James Rivera, O.P.

P.S. You'll notice that I go by "Brother" and not "Father" because I am not a priest. I joined the Dominicans in 2007 and professed solemn vows in 2013 as a cooperator brother, or permanent brother, in the Order of Preachers. More will be shared about this wonderful vocation in the coming year.

Four More Dominicans Profess Solemn Vows

Brothers have committed themselves to preach the Gospel until death



**Br. Benedict Mary
Bartsch, O.P.**

"To me, solemn vows mean death. It's a crucifixion to the world and its fleeting pleasures which ushers in the resurrection joy of living a life totally consecrated to seeking the face of God and His love. In religious life I've experienced the deep happiness that is living the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; the contentment of a life that is more closely conformed to that of Jesus. Ultimately, it's holiness of life and union with God that I seek, and it's freeing to know that He has called me to this for the rest of my earthly life.

Thank you to all those who make our life possible. Our reliance on donations as part of our mendicant way of life is precisely what frees us to devote our time to assiduous study of God and His truth and to preach that truth to bring souls to Him. Your support, whether material or spiritual, is what makes the formation of future preachers possible."



**Br. Philip Neri
Gerlomes, O.P.**

"I am so grateful for the family and friends through whom God first revealed His love to me, for the brothers with whom I now have the privilege of sharing this life until death, for the benefactors who make our vocation possible, but most of all to God Himself for the gift that is religious consecration. I never knew how much I needed this life until I was living it, and now I just hope that the way I live it truly proclaims that the Kingdom of God is at hand!"



**Br. Luke Maria
Lee, O.P.**

“Professing solemn vows is an answer to my prayer for clarity in vocational discernment over the past several years. In a sense, solemn profession is an extension of the vows I made at simple profession five years ago—in fact, the primary difference between the two ceremonies is the inclusion of the words ‘until death’—but what a difference those two words make! It is a joy to commit my life fully to the Church as a sign of our Lord’s love.

I am grateful to our benefactors for your participation in our preaching mission. Your prayers as well as your donations make our religious life possible, and your generosity inspires us toward greater sacrifice in our own lives. Your support reminds us of the purpose of our formation and our studies: preaching for the salvation of souls.”



**Br. Francis Dominic
Nguyen, O.P.**

“Solemn vows is taking an oath that, until my dying breath, I will do my best to let nothing in this world prevent me from growing in love for God and neighbor. It is a death—an eager death to my old self. But it is life in its fullest—finding myself alive in Jesus Christ! It is a joyous day, overflowing with grace! My purpose in this life is now crystal clear: a common life of contemplating and sharing the Truth through holy preaching.

Your gifts and your prayers have supported me and prepared me to make this radical commitment. From the bottom of my heart, thank you! You are an image of God’s providence for us!”

St. Dominic's Church Celebrates Its Sesquicentennial Jubilee

Celebrating a 150th anniversary with over a year of events!

Established in 1873, St. Dominic's in San Francisco began celebrating its long history with a presentation by Dr. Scott Hahn on "The Joy of Scripture" in April of 2023. The following month included an evening of worship featuring a talk by Scottish composer Sir James MacMillan in anticipation of his newly commissioned motet for the 150th Jubilee.



Sir James MacMillan, composer of a special jubilee motet, speaks at St. Dominic's.

Late in June, the parish celebrated the official opening of the Jubilee Doors, a Mercy Night, and the announcement of the Jubilee Plenary Indulgence.

The Apostolic Penitentiary, in Rome, charged with the granting and use of indulgences, designated the Church of St. Dominic in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, California as a Vatican Recognized Pilgrim site for Plenary Indulgence and has granted a Plenary Indulgence to the faithful who truly repent and are driven by charity under these certain conditions from June 24, 2023 until August 4, 2024.

Dominican friars and sisters celebrate at the Jubilee Gala.

In July, St. Dominic's schola cantorum performed an operetta. During the month



The parish schola cantorum performs Gilbert & Sullivan's "Trial by Jury."

of August, community members hosted a parish picnic, followed by Chris Stefanick's "Reboot!" in September, an event to invigorate Catholics in the beauty and joy of the Gospel.

The parish held its Jubilee Gala in October, celebrating 150 years since its foundation. The evening included a cocktail hour, dinner, auction, and dancing. Dominican Friars, Sisters, laity and all those who have been involved at St. Dominic's over our many years participated in a joy-filled evening that will be remembered for many years to come!



In November, parishioners participated in the Unbound Freedom in Christ Conference, and in December the parish held a special Christmas Concert.

Various retreats throughout 2024 were led by Fr. Michael Hurley, O.P., in January, Catholic evangelist Michael Gormley in April, and Rwandan-American author and motivational speaker Immaculée Ilibagiza in June.

The Jubilee will close with a Mass celebrated by the Master of the Order, Fr. Gerard Francisco Parco Timoner III, O.P., on August 4, 2024.



Catholic author and speaker Chris Stefanick speaks at his Reboot! event.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE



Please pray for the repose of the soul of Fr. David Bello, O.P., who died on Sunday, April 21, 2024, in Mexicali, Mexico, surrounded by friars, sisters, lay members of the Order, and dear friends. Learn more about Fr. David Bello, O.P. at opwest.org/blog/frdavidbello

FRIARS ON THE MOVE Your place to stay up-to-date on the friars you know and love.

Friar	New Assignment
Fr. Matthew Wanner, O.P.	Angelicum (Rome) — Licentiate Studies in Patristic Theology at Pontifical Oriental Institute
Fr. Andrew Thomas Kang, O.P.	St. Dominic Priory (Los Angeles) — Parochial Vicar
Fr. Columban Mary Hall, O.P.	Holy Family House (Anchorage) — Parochial Vicar
Br. John Paul Puschautz	St. Raymond of Peñafort House (Menlo Park) — Residency Student at St. Raymond Parish
Br. Scott Norgaard, O.P.	St. Raymond of Peñafort House (Menlo Park) — Teacher at Chesterton Academy of St. James
Br. Athanasius Thompson, O.P.	St. Dominic Priory (San Francisco) — Teacher at Nativity Catholic High School
Br. Elias Guadalupe Ford, O.P.	St. Dominic Priory (San Francisco) — Director of St. Jude Shrine
Fr. Bartholomew Hutcherson, O.P.	St. Raymond of Peñafort House (Menlo Park) — Pastor of the Catholic Community at Stanford
Fr. Xavier Lavagetto, O.P.	Priory of St. Albert the Great — Pastor of Newman Hall-Holy Spirit (University of California-Berkeley)
Fr. Pius Youn, O.P.	Priory of St. Albert the Great — Parochial Vicar of Newman Hall-Holy Spirit (University of California-Berkeley)

The Story of How an Alaskan Documentary Took Shape

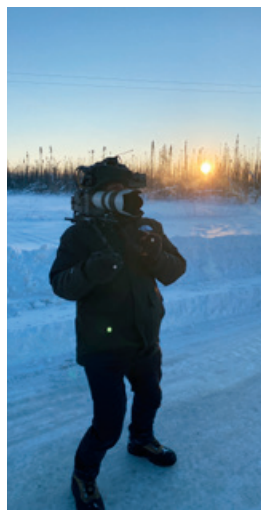
The Western Dominican Province's Media Team shares the beauty of Alaska mission territory

On a cold winter night in early 2022, a meeting took place by an open campfire near Palmer, Alaska. While still pastor at Holy Family Old Cathedral, then-Fr. Steven Maekawa, O.P., led provincial staff members, Casey O'Leary and Christopher Hanzeli, snowshoeing through a snow-covered field to a quiet spot nestled in the trees overlooking a frozen lake. Having arrived, they began digging in the snow until a fire pit emerged. Without wasting time, the small expedition lit a bustling fire and began sharing

stories, marveling in the Lord's beautiful creation and the spectacular scenery of The Last Frontier state.

Before long, the conversation turned to ways the Western Dominican Province could tell the story of the Church's incredible ministry in Alaska, and the invaluable role the Dominicans have played over the decades in carrying out that mission.

The crew filming in -20 degrees on Christmas Eve.



Alaska is one of the last true mission territories in the United States, where some of the faithful are incredibly isolated and go months—even years—without seeing a priest. And without a priest, there is no Eucharist. This was an inspiring story of faith and perseverance in hard conditions; and this story was one they knew could help set hearts on fire for Christ. But the scale was too big. How then could this be accomplished?

After much prayer and more conversations, an idea came to create two films that showcased the wonderful ministry in Alaska. First, a short documentary that told the story of the friars bringing Christmas Mass to the faithful in what is affectionately called the “Sleigh Ride.” About 20 minutes long, the film would be a fun and heartfelt way to introduce the Alaska mission to a broader audience and prepare them for the second idea: a feature-length documentary.

Second, the team envisioned a feature length documentary about the mission of the Church across Alaska. What's more, the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist's Openlight Media apostolate welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with the Western Dominican Province in producing both *The Sleigh Ride* and *Mission Alaska: To the Ends of the Earth*.



Bishop Steven Maekawa, O.P., and Fr. Yakubu Aiden with the faithful at the Church of the Nativity in the remote Yupik village of St. Mary's, Alaska. The village of Mary's can only be accessed by plane or snow machine during the winter months.

To tell these stories, a production team has been filming in Alaska since June 2022, and was fortunate enough to be present shortly after Fr. Steven Maekawa, O.P., was appointed by the Holy Father as Bishop of Fairbanks.

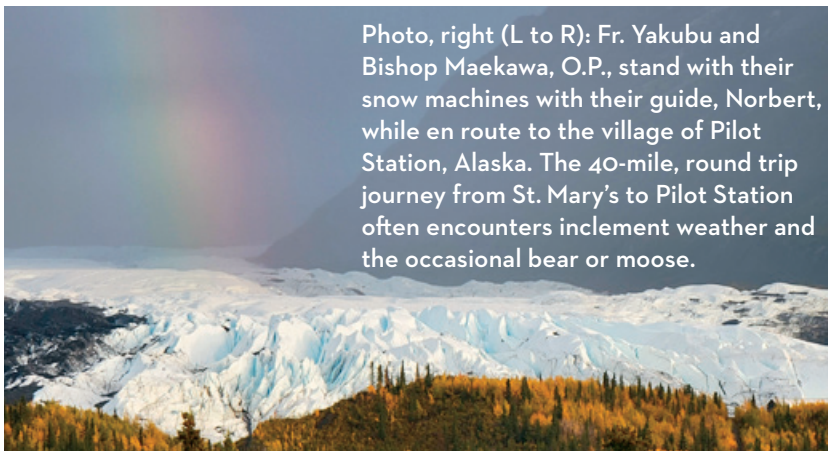
Most recently, the team filmed Bishop Maekawa in the small Yup'ik village of St. Mary's, following him on a nearly 40-mile roundtrip journey on snow machines from the Church of the Nativity to the village of Pilot Station to say Mass. The team encountered near white-out conditions at night on the return trip and the footage is, to say the least, remarkable.

The team is wrapping up filming in the coming months and plans to release the documentary in 2025. Over the coming year, the team will be working with partners and experts in the industry to develop plans for releasing and promoting the film. Please continue to keep us in your prayers as the project progresses!



During filming, Fr. Andy Opsahl, O.P., celebrated Mass while leading Holy Family Parish's annual Father's Hike in Chugach State Park. The park contains approximately 495,000 acres of land and is one of the four largest state parks in the United States.

The film crew arrives by bush plane in the Village of St. Mary's on a frozen runway.



Photo, right (L to R): Fr. Yakubu and Bishop Maekawa, O.P., stand with their snow machines with their guide, Norbert, while en route to the village of Pilot Station, Alaska. The 40-mile, round trip journey from St. Mary's to Pilot Station often encounters inclement weather and the occasional bear or moose.



Fr. Matthew Heynen, O.P., sitting for an on-camera interview in the rectory library.



Sign up to receive updates
about the documentary at
sleighridefilm.com

Three Zealous Priests Ordained to Serve Christ and His Church

Newly ordained Fr. Andrew Thomas Kang, O.P., reflects upon his ordination

It's a strange feeling when something you've desired for ten years seems to pass in a few short moments. Every part of the rite of ordination was so moving, but what struck me the most throughout the liturgy was a deep feeling of the support of others. Every little thought of doubt or fear, like a lingering ember, was immediately drowned by the assurance of others, like a flood of prayers. The joyful acclamation of the people at our election as candidates, the litany of the saints, the laying on of the hands of all the priests present, each moment was an assurance of the people, of the clergy, even of the saints in heaven: You are a priest forever...



By Fr. Andrew Thomas Kang, O.P.

Even the long lines of first blessings—though they were a way for me to start giving to the people present through this new priesthood—seemed to be more significant for me as a newly ordained priest than for those who asked to be blessed. Every person who came for a blessing was making an act of faith in this new conformity to Christ in my soul. It was at the same time an assurance and reminder: I have truly been ordained a priest of Jesus Christ, but for others. I did not receive this priesthood for my own good, but to be an instrument of God's saving love for souls.

I experienced some of that reality, the priesthood as a gift for others, in the week following: celebrating Masses every day in various languages, hearing the occasional confession, visits to the hospital, being asked to preach shortly before Mass. It was a busy week, but seeing God work through me, an unworthy instrument, to feed, console, and strengthen his flock has been a reminder of why I wanted to be a priest and of what the rest of my life will be. I, Fr. Andrew Thomas Kang, O.P., am a priest of Jesus Christ, an instrument in the hand of my God, and I have been ordained for you. Through the prayers and support of you who have believed in this vocation, you have been instruments of God's providence in my own life. With this priesthood, I hope to pay it back, not with my own gifts, but the gifts of God for the souls He loves so zealously that He would make me a priest.

Photos by Elle Ornidó





Left: Frs. Columban Mary Hall, O.P., Andrew Thomas Kang, O.P., and Matthew Wanner, O.P., process into their Mass of Ordination.

Top: Bishop Steven Maekawa, O.P., confers the gift the Holy Spirit on Fr. Andrew Thomas by the laying on of hands.

Bottom: Fr. Andrew Thomas stands with family and friends at the Mass of Ordination.



Photos by Elle Ornido