



# MISSION WEST

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

As challenges emerge inside and outside the Church, God raises up faithful men and women to respond—even to the ends of the earth. Your partnership with the Dominicans is critical.

## THERE'S HOPE FOR THE WORLD

- ✦ Is Jesus' Birth Date Really December 25?
- ✦ The Largest Novice Class in 16 Years!
- ✦ A Church in Need of Cleansing



## St. Louis Bertrand, O.P.

1526 – 1581

Feast Day: October 9

St. Bertrand, patron of Dominican novice brothers, is known as the “Apostle to the Americas.” He is renowned for his missionary work in Colombia, Panama, and the Lesser Antilles from 1562 to 1568, and converted many to the faith. He once had a gun pointed at him by an attacker. Upon making the sign of the cross over it, the weapon miraculously changed into a crucifix.

“If because of your preaching men lay aside enmities, forgive injuries, avoid occasions of sin and scandals and reform their conduct, you may say that the seed has fallen on good ground. But to God alone give all the glory and acknowledge yourselves ever unprofitable servants.” —St. Louis Bertrand, O.P.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Joining the Western Dominican

Province is a process of

mutual discernment

between the Order

and the candidate

that is guided

by deep prayer.

An applicant must

submit sacramental

records, transcripts,

and references, and complete an

autobiography, interviews, background

checks, as well as psychological and

physical evaluations by third-party

professionals.

This careful and thorough process

ensures that only qualified and

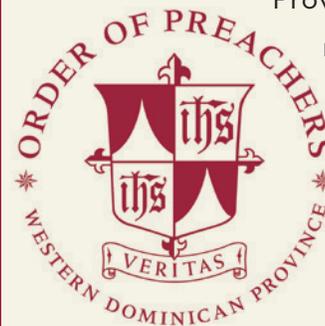
appropriate candidates are admitted

to the novitiate. This is imperative

not just for the Order but also for the

candidate to properly consider God’s

will in his life.



For more information, please contact our Director of Vocations at [vocations@opwest.org](mailto:vocations@opwest.org).

**Cover Photo:** Like the lay Dominican Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati—an avid hiker who evangelized young adults while enjoying the outdoors—Fr. Thomas Aquinas Pickett, O.P., celebrates Mass following a hike with Catholic Young Adults in the Cascade Mountains. Dominicans have always preached the unity of truth and the beauty of God’s world.

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

## from the vicar provincial for advancement

**What we can do together to help cleanse and heal our wounded church**



My Dear Friend,

**We are living at a time where there is a lot of bad news.** We see increasing divisions everywhere.

In our politics you see the anger, rancor, and frustration that characterizes our national conversations. Human life is discarded through so many means—abortion, shootings, and euthanasia. We see sad news regarding our young who are increasingly leaving their faith. And we see divisions, failures of leadership and scandal in our own Church—the place where we should be able to turn for comfort and strength!

In the midst of all this, more and more people are turning to the example of St. Catherine of Siena. She's a fantastic role model. But why? Like in our times, the 14th century Church and world were being devastated by scandal in the Papacy and clergy, and massive suffering from the bubonic plague. Many people legitimately thought the world was ending.

During all this, God raised up St. Catherine to push back against the error of sin and preach God's hope. She pleaded with the Pope to heal the Church, prayed incessantly, sacrificed for the poor, and was a savvy political and cultural observer, not to mention a compassionate messenger of God's Word. Ultimately, her work helped repair the Church and bring lost souls back to God. We should be no different today.

**In that spirit, I have great news to share!** Like in St. Catherine's time, God is raising up more faithful men and women to respond to the divisions of our day. The Dominicans in the West are flourishing, and we have a record number of men in formation. In fact, this past summer we welcomed our largest novice class in sixteen years—ten new brothers!

**Why are we growing?** Because we are committed to faithfully following God's will for us. He wants us to preach Truth, rooted in Love, regardless of what the world tells us.

Thanks to God's grace and your friendship, we have the means to support our growth and prepare our brothers to be on the front lines of healing our culture, bringing the young back to the faith, protecting the vulnerable and repairing the divisions that drive people from one another and from God.

Yes, there's a lot of bad news, but the Good News always triumphs. Remember: God loves His creation (you!) so much that He stooped down and became lower than the angels—He became one of us! Emmanuel! He became our food, died for us, smashed the gates of hell and opened up for us the gates of Heaven. He will never abandon us.

In Christ and St. Dominic,

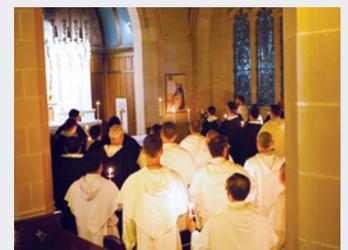
Very Rev. Fr. James Junípero Moore, O.P.  
*Vicar Provincial for Advancement*

# Your Prayers Have Inspired the Largest Novice Class in 16 Years!

Record numbers of men are asking to join the Dominicans. This past summer alone, 10 men entered the Order. Please join us in praying for our new novices and a continuing increase in the number of Friars Preachers around the country.



On August 30, in a special ceremony called Vestition (below), 10 faithful men put on the habit of St. Dominic and began their discernment as Dominican novices. Please pray for our new novices throughout the year. Back: Br. Luke Maria, Br. Diego María, Br. Christopher. Middle: Br. Thaddeus, Br. José María, Br. Francis Dominic, Br. Philip. Front: Br. Dominic Agustín, Br. Koa Mary, Br. David



# Is Jesus' Birth Date Really December 25?

Learn the true history of this date and how you can explain it to your skeptical friends

The near universal celebration of Christmas on December 25 dates to the early fourth century. It is commonly said that this date was chosen to counter the birthday of the pagan "Invincible Sun" on that date. Personally, I do not find that explanation very convincing.

St. Hippolytus of Rome's Commentary on Daniel 4:23 (dated A.D. 203), gives December 25 as Christ's birth date. Although some think this text is an interpolation, it is a very early one. Since celebration of the Invincible Sun's birth was not instituted at Rome until the reign of Emperor Aurelian (A.D. 270-275), the earlier existence of the Christian date makes a borrowing from pagan practice unlikely.



So why would Christians have picked December 25? Luke's Gospel tells us that the births of Jesus and John the Baptist were separated by six months, and that John the Baptist was conceived after his father Zacharias saw a vision in the Temple and was struck dumb. The popular stories of the "Infancy Gospel of James" (early 100s) also say—erroneously—that Zacharias was a high priest, implying that his

Fra Angelico, *The Nativity* (1440).  
Convent of San Marco, Florence.

vision happened on the Jewish Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). That feast comes mostly in late September and probably did so in the second century too.

Ancient Christians could then have calculated nine months to the birthday of John the Baptist (late June) and then six months more to the birthday of Jesus (late December). Since the ancients believed June 24 was the longest day of the year and December 25 the shortest, settling on those as the exact dates would have been natural. Why? St. Bede (700s) wrote that John the Baptist preached that he had to decrease and Christ had to increase, and that is exactly what the daylight does, beginning on their respective birthdays. That is, the sunlight begins to decrease on June 24, and later begins to increase on December 25.

—Fr. Augustine Thompson, O.P., Ph.D., S.T.M.

Fr. Augustine is a professor of History at the Dominican School of Philosophy & Theology. His recent book *Dominican Brothers: Conversi, Lay and Cooperator Friars* has received broad acclaim and is available on Amazon.com.



The Dominicans are one of the fastest growing men's religious orders in the U.S. Please consider helping us.

## End of Year Giving Opportunities

December 31 is just around the corner! Whether you're trying to meet the tax deadline, or looking to make a special Christmas gift to the Dominicans, there are a variety of ways you can help.

### IRA Charitable Rollover

Visit [opwest.org/ira](https://opwest.org/ira)

Avoid taxes and fulfill the IRS' Annual Required Minimum Distribution (Age 70½) by transferring up to \$100,000 to the Dominicans. Contact your plan administrator to make the request.

### Make a One-Time Gift

Give securely at [opwest.org/give](https://opwest.org/give)

Make a secure gift online before the December 31 tax deadline. Have an immediate impact on the ministry of the Dominicans and increase your tax deductions!

### Donate Stock

Visit [opwest.org/stock](https://opwest.org/stock) or call (510) 658-8722

Avoid the capital gains tax and help the Dominicans by donating publicly traded stock to the Western Dominican Province. Visit the link above for more instructions or give us a call and we'll help!

### Join the 1216 Society

Sign-up at [opwest.org/1216](https://opwest.org/1216)

Join nearly 250 friends around the world and become a monthly donor to the Dominicans. Direct your gift to support our Rosary Center, House of Studies, Dominican School, or the greatest need of the friars. Members are honored in the cloister garden of St. Albert the Great Priory.

### Include the Dominicans in Your Estate Plans

Learn more at [opwest.org/plannedgiving](https://opwest.org/plannedgiving)

If you're working on your will, trust or retirement accounts, please consider remembering the Dominicans in your plans. Your plan advisor can easily help you include the Western Dominican Province as a full or partial beneficiary of your estate. Then let us know at [development@opwest.org](mailto:development@opwest.org) or (510) 658-8722, so we can enroll you in the St. Dominic Legacy Society.

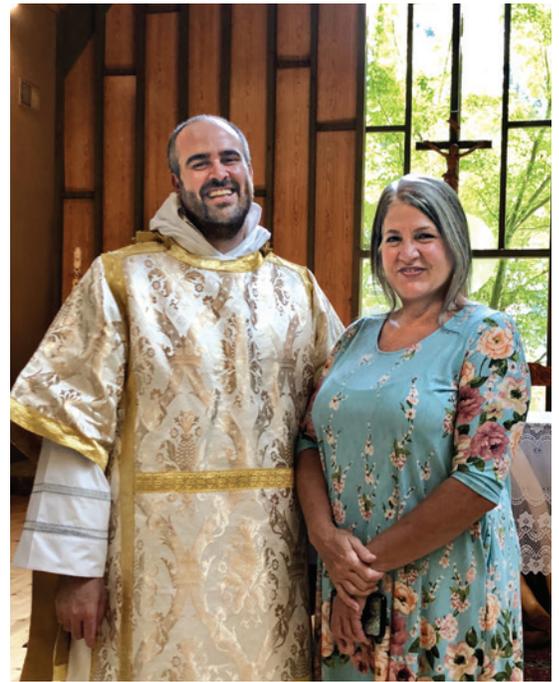
## Deacons Made

**Rev. Br. Cody and Rev. Br. Andrew give thanks to God and to you for helping them persevere in their formation**

**O**n August 8, at St. Benedict's Lodge—the Dominican retreat center in McKenzie Bridge, Oregon—Brs. Cody Jorgensen, O.P. and Andrew Opsahl, O.P. were ordained deacons by the Most Rev. Robert Christian, O.P.

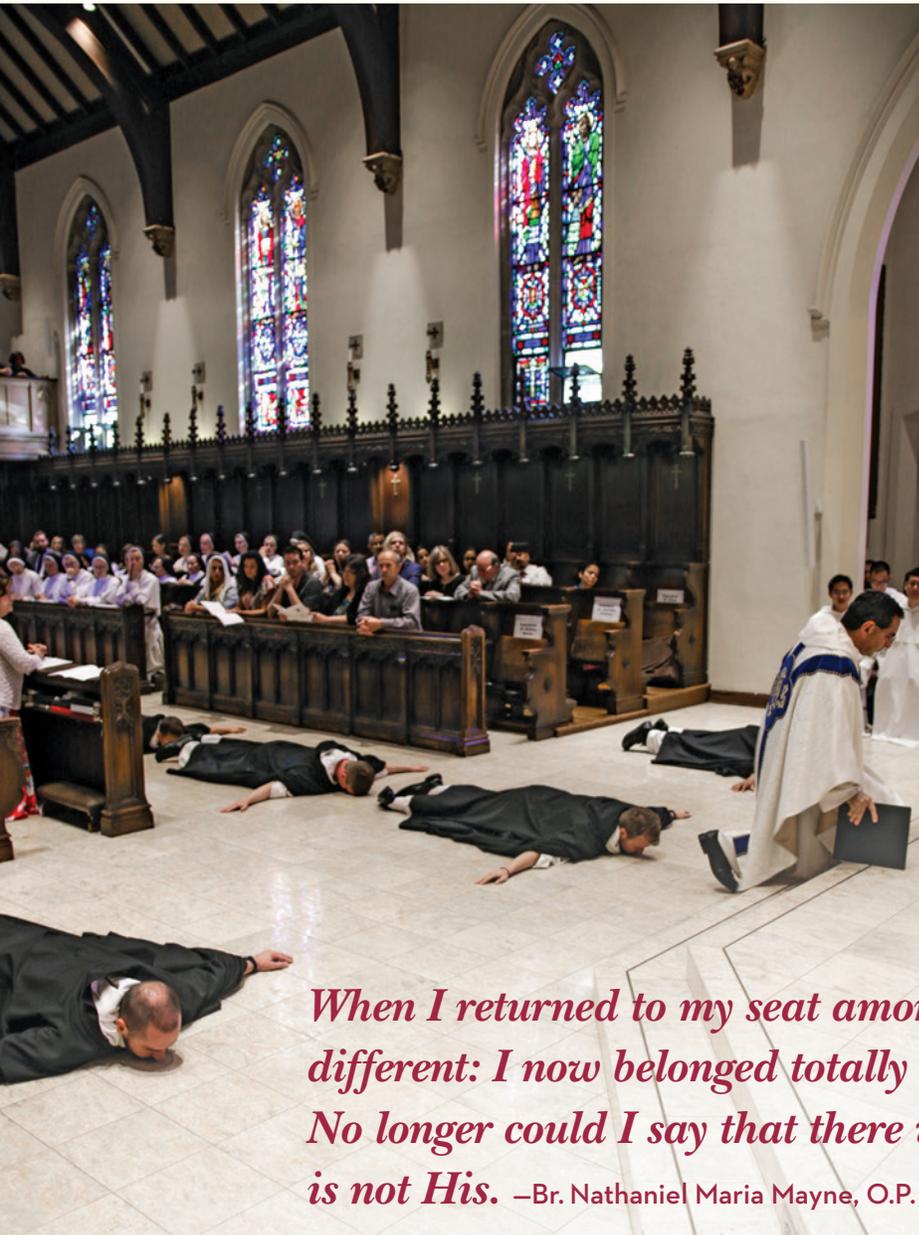
A deacon shares in Christ's mission and grace in a special way. Through the sacrament, they are marked with what the Church calls an imprint or "character" which cannot be removed, and which configures him to Christ, who made himself the "deacon" or "servant" of all. The title "deacon" comes from the Greek word "diakonia," which in Christian theology signifies service (CCC 1570).

Thank you for praying for our brothers during their ordination to the transitional diaconate!



Bishop Christian, O.P. (above) presided over the ordinations, held at the beautiful Dominican retreat center and chapel in McKenzie Bridge, Oregon. Br. Cody is pictured with his family (top and middle), as is Br. Andrew (bottom). Thank you for your prayers!





## Five More Brothers Take First Vows

We are so grateful for your continued generosity as our brothers move forward in their formation as Dominicans.

**O**n September 1, all five of our 2017–2018 novice brothers made their First Profession of Vows at St. Albert the Great Priory in Oakland, the house of studies of the Western Dominican Province.

These vows are the first step in transitioning from life in the novitiate to full-time studies. It also means they are now permitted to use “O.P.” after their names, having taken vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Life as a student brother is spiritually and intellectually rigorous and lasts about seven years. However, formation will yield much fruit in their lives and those they will one day serve—you!

*When I returned to my seat among friends and family I felt different: I now belonged totally and completely to God. No longer could I say that there was any part of my life that is not His.* —Br. Nathaniel Maria Mayne, O.P.

These friars recently made their First Profession of Vows, submitting themselves entirely to a life of poverty, chastity and obedience, and officially entered the Order of Preachers as student brothers. (L to R) Br. Elias Guadalupe Ford, O.P., Br. Matthew Wanner, O.P., Br. Antony Augustine Cherian, O.P., Br. John Peter Anderson, O.P., and Br. Nathaniel Maria Mayne, O.P.



## A Profile in Generosity: Allison Pearce

### A Young Adult Finds the Dominican Commitment to Truth and Love Infectious

#### How were you first connected to the Dominicans?

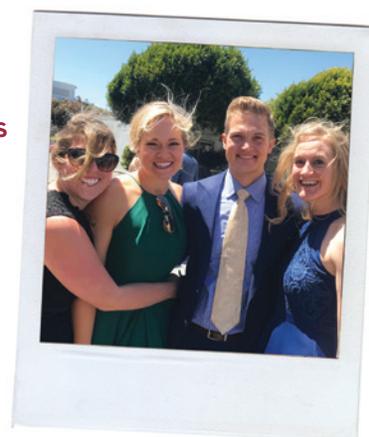
A Dominican sister was involved with our student Catholic community in graduate school, and the nearby Dominican priory had the latest Sunday Mass in walking distance. I wasn't fully indoctrinated until I moved to San Francisco and started attending the Young Adult's Group (YAG) at St. Dominic's Church.

#### Why do you choose to support the Dominicans?

My first reaction to the novices' vocation stories was "I must be doing something right if I'm on the same team as these guys." I want them to keep doing what they're doing.

#### What do the Dominicans offer that you believe is of the most value to society today?

I think people are increasingly looking for truth and finding themselves unsatisfied with shallow answers. The Catholic Church uniquely possesses a truth that's held up to 2,000 years of questioning, and therefore can offer 2,000 years of answers from some of the most brilliant minds ever to grace humanity. Dominicans tend to be among the best prepared to preach and defend our teachings in a way that's both engaging and intellectually rigorous.



Allison, and her friends from the St. Dominic Young Adult Group in San Francisco, have been inspired by the vocation stories of the friars and their pursuit of truth.



Fr. James Moore, O.P. and Allison pose together with their mutual friend, Kiley Sheehy. Being a part of 'the Dominican team' is rewarding to Allison and Kiley, and they appreciate the friendship of the friars.

#### What's your favorite memory of a time working with a Dominican?

I've had the pleasure of working with lots of Dominicans to plan events for our Young Adult Group, and it's always a good time. One of my favorite experiences was when we had the novices from a couple of years ago talk to YAG about their vocation stories. They showed up with an almost unbelievable amount of humor, intellect, and humility. Few of them were cradle Catholics, more than half had advanced degrees, several were of a science or engineering background. It was fascinating to hear them talk about the search for understanding that led them to the Church and eventually the Dominican Order.

## Rosary Sunday

DOMINICAN STUDENT APPEAL



### Your Investment Has a Big Return!

Br. John gives you a big 'thumbs up' for your generous support of our annual Rosary Sunday appeal. Your investment helps our fantastic student brothers prepare to be your future priests.

**Please pray for our 34 men in formation!**