

There was a mission in Western Canada, and the Order of Preachers was not present.

- Vancouver is a rapidly growing Archdiocese and a door to Asia.
- The Master of the Order of Preachers, Brother Timothy Radcliffe, called all the branches of the Order to respond to this mission together. The friendship and mutual support between friars, sisters, nuns and lay is efficacious for the mission. This was the way the Dominican Order began.
- How could the contemplative nuns respond to this call ? No single monastery could begin a foundation or provide the nuns.
- Brother Timothy encouraged creativity and innovation for the sake of the mission. He asked the autonomous monasteries to collaborate and called for volunteers from various monasteries.
- Five nuns volunteered. They arrived in Vancouver with a van , \$700 between them, and an intrepid determination to establish a Dominican monastery.
- They were not young. In fact, Sister Maria Dominica was about to turn 80 and had never left her beloved monastery. She was compelled by the mission as well as the call of the Master. She became a pillar of the foundation.
- These five nuns had been formed in different monasteries with different cultures,
- each had strong conceptions of what Dominican monastic life should be.
- There were those who were dedicated to perpetual adoration
- others to perpetual rosary
- each were attached to a particular liturgy
- With this reality confrontation, began the period of dispossession, a dying to individual 'dreams' ... a time of forming a common vision.
- It was a difficult passage. What were the essentials and were 'leeks and onions of Egypt' ? Trying to reproduce what they lived in the past was not working because the Lord was doing something new.
- Indeed, the new Master of the Order quoted Isaiah : Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing: now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness. Little did he know what a prophetic word

that was!

- We walked together and we listened to one another, in our deepest aspirations as well as the gifts that each sister brought to the foundation.
- we did common study in order to listen together to our sources all the way back to the desert fathers with the question ; How could these fundamental intuitions be transposed into this Canadian context at our time.
- We listened to the people who came to our door. They echoed those who, in the time of Jesus, said to Philippe, “we want to see Jesus” People are searching.
- Listening to Canadians and we perceived that the quest for adventure and for beauty in nature is a quest for God.

We also listened to circumstances; the place where we had initially settled was wonderfully comfortable and cozy. Only, the zoning restrictions prevented us from growing or providing monastic welcome. The temptation was to stay in our comfort zone and die. A beautiful piece of land was available but it was within 5 kilo-meters of three other monastic communities. Why light our little lamp where there was already plenty of light shining through those beautiful monastic communities?

- We decided to search for property where there was no other presence of religious communities: in the Upper Squamish Valley. It is on the edge of wilderness, accessible to Vancouver, in the ancestral territory of the (Squamish Nation).
- Dominican nuns are an integral part of the Order of Preachers ...we are a preaching.
- Consecrated to God and centred upon His Word, our life is intentionally structured so that we may listen, ponder, study and celebrate the Word, so that this Word may dwell richly in our hearts.
- This Word becomes flesh in the context of community life, it is the community that radiates more than any individual, it is a preaching.
- Our location is a preaching.
- Folks who would not be caught dead in a church are drawn by the beauty of the environment, the chapel and the liturgy.
- There, God is able to welcome and speak directly to their hearts.

- Someone with a Celtic soul called our chapel a thin place; where the veil between the visible and invisible are so close.
 - When building, we tried to honour the age old monastic architectural principles while using West Coast materials:
 - Simple and spare / wood and stone
 - The trees that came down for the building were milled by our friend Dan who is a neighbour.
 - He made our refectory tables, benches, desks and library shelving.
 - So many people are longing for a sacred space of beauty and peace where they are carried by the the liturgy and can sink into that silence where the shimmering presence of God is revealed,
 - Upon our arrival, we were approached by a young man, Stefan, who was looking for land to do organic / biodynamic gardening.
 - Yes ! We would share the land. It was win /win. This would allow us qualify to have farm status.
 - Stefan is inspiring by his love for the land
 - his nutrient dense vegetables,
 - and the way he is passing on his knowledge to the community of sisters.
 - He rejoices when he hears the bell knowing that we join him in praying for the earth. More than ever, we are simultaneously listening to the Word of God and to all of creation.
 - We hear it's groaning. We carry the beauty and the suffering of all creation in the intimate sanctuary of our hearts.
 - We recently completed the installation of a micro hydro electric plant. The monastery now generates its own power. We have traded in our vehicle for a used electric car.
 - The young women who have joined us want to live Laudato Si.
- They are looking for strong, visible, authentic religious life.
- Fundamentally, it is the life of prayer that is attracting young women to our community.
 - They believe that prayer is a way of loving both God and humanity...
 - that prayer is vital and extremely urgent at this time ...

- for the sustaining and healing of our beloved world ... they are staking their lives on it.
- Consecrated to God, and centred up on His Word, this Word is also expressed and spread through our work of artistic creation.
- Our monastic arts, soap, candles, sculpture, pottery and icons workshops are of great interest to them.

As I mentioned, we live on the traditional territory of the Squamish Nation.

We were deeply honoured when the spiritual elders of the Salish people blessed the land and community with their presence, prayers and wisdom.

- Squamish is the people, Squamish is the land, Squamish is the cedar, Squamish is the salmon. They are all one. Like the cedar and the salmon, the Squamish are generous. They had a gift economy.

- We waited a long time for the elders to accept an invitation to the monastery. When they did, we decided to share a meal with them. At first, they were silent, they were quiet, but by the time we got to the pie and ice cream, we could hear their laughter all the way through.

we could hear their laughter all the way to the chapel. Towards the end of the afternoon, they began to sharing their stories. One novice described their time together as Eucharistic, Jesus was truly mysteriously present.

- An elder from Squamish encouraged us to simply listen to the earth that has welcomed us....

- The bear

- The puma

- As I prepared to speak to you, I listened and asked the salmon what it could say... he could say... He kept swimming.

- This intrepid salmon has spared no effort on its long journey to return to the source, to its origins. to the place where he would give his life to give life. What are our sources of Life?

- I put the question to the cedar, which stood there, its roots sunk deep into the ground. Because it was so old, it captured masses of carbon and was the mother of a multitude of trees. The enormous mycorrhizal fungal network connected to its roots sustains and the whole forest.

- Turning around, I looked up at the glacier and contemplated its ancient beauty.

- There it was, willing to remain motionless and exposed to the sun's rays.

- In so doing, rivers of living water flow into our world, irrigating it and making it fruitful.

- Who knows the fruitfulness of our common life, especially that of our elders? Perhaps most fruitful through their contemplative life, their secret prayer.

- And, because we are one; perhaps the young people who are entering Queen of Peace at the moment are the fruit of your prayer. They are your vocations. They entrust themselves your prayer.