

REPORT YSOP 2023, ROME

43 young dominican sisters from 13 European countries signed up for the 2023 YSOP meeting in Rome.

Day 1. Friday

The YSOP gathering was opened on Friday afternoon by Sr Pilar del Barrio, chairwoman of the DSE. The aim of the weekend was to focus on the question of what path God expects from Dominican sisters in Europe, especially in these difficult times. Europe is currently experiencing many difficulties, including the war in Ukraine and the growing polarization in society. After all these years when we could not meet in person because of the COVID pandemic, it was very nice to meet each other now. During the weekend, therefore, getting to know each other, making friendships and making/establishing connections was an important part of the program.

From the DSI umbrella organization, the weekend is being sympathized with. Chairwoman Margaret Mace and several other board members have sent messages. The DSI was founded in 1995, to get more cooperation between the various apostolic sisters, worldwide. Justice and Peace is an important project of the DSI. The project focuses on the integrity of creation and human rights and looks in particular at women's rights. Each continent has appointed a promoter for this. In Europe this is sr. Philomena Benedict. In Europe, Ukraine is currently a key focus. There are sisters to support the mission in Ukraine, on both sides of the border. This mainly involves helping refugees. Within the DSI, we are also looking at activities that can be taken up together. These are not only Dominican projects, but also inter-congregational.

Truth, Veritas, is the Dominicans' motto. This weekend's focus will be on Truth and Growing in Freedom. The question is what in our society is still truth. Another important point is that many congregations are dealing with fewer sisters and those that remain are generally already of a respectable age. In addition, there are few vocations. This also has consequences for the finances of congregations, which often face financial limits. This situation affects our mission. The question is how to keep the balance between mission, caring for elderly sisters, and vocation to sisterhood.

This assembly will also be about making plans. In 2025, there will be another major assembly for all superiors general, worldwide. As a prelude to this general assembly, an assembly for younger sisters will be organized in 2024. The intention is that 10 younger sisters per continent will be delegated to this assembly. The YSOP meeting this weekend can be seen as the European kick-off of this assembly in 2024.

After the official part, there was an opportunity to visit St Peter's Square and eat an ice cream in Vatican City.

Day 2. Saturday

The morning started with a Eucharist , breakfast and morning prayers. Then the program began.

Led by Sr Teresa Hieslmayer, we started working on the theme of Individuality and Community. Sr. Teresa is a psychotherapist and she has worked extensively with refugees. According to Teresa, humanity is our gospel, and the gospel is humanity. In the workshop, we looked for this humanity

and the linked kingdom of God, or God himself. The thought behind this is that as religious we want to live with God and open this way for others. The sole purpose of our religious communities is to live and seek this desire. Often we miss the goal because we focus on other things. It is important to keep the focus on what we actually want and why we have chosen to live in a community.

From the subgroups came the following keywords: Diversity, support, caring on, good communication, inform, network, online meetings every 3 months, English, formation about important issues, prayer, life, signs of the times, friars, differences culture language and age, how to support each other when the boards don't, deeper mutual knowledge among the younger sisters, smaller groups within Europe, linguistic groups, joint project.

After a short break, there was a live zoom link to New York, with Sr Dusty who, as a Justice and Peace promoter, has many contacts within the UN. There is a particular focus on women and the position for indigenous peoples, including in South America. The sister explained some concrete activities.

After the program, there was an opportunity for a walk to St Peter's.

Day 3. Sunday.

After breakfast and morning prayer, a group photo was taken. Then we had the closing meeting. The conclusions we formulated are preparatory to the global assembly, in 2 years' time. The conclusions are:

Meetings

It is very important to meet each other face to face. For the participants, two days is too short. Maybe the meeting can be expanded to 3-5 days. In the meantime the sisters can meet online, for instance 3 times a year.

Communication

It is important to have a sufficient and efficient communication system. Improving communication is very important. This can be done, for example, by organizing online events through the DSE's website. Another activity that could work is a group to support sisters in their daily lives, learning another language, or groups formed around topics such as mission, academic work and research etc. Sr. Rose, Sr Nadia and Sr Eileen are willing to help in this regard. Sr. Sheeba from the DSE is also already working to improve digital communication.

Concrete projects mentioned are: To have a special promotor for communication. Sr. Catharina Al wants to help to improve the communication, to start an online platform where sisters can share news about their convent or congregation. This has to be an Intern page, the sharing of email addresses and 06-phone numbers for forming a Whatsapp group, sharing projects for interest, support and collaboration, "Dominican LinkedIn": a specialized network aimed for support and collaboration for sisters (and brothers) in a special apostolic field or mission, with a special attention for the sisters working in the academic field as researcher, scholar, publisher etc. This should be taken up by the Dominican order/DSI/DSE. Sr. Marga will look into the possibilities, Camp-firetalks online, Informal meetings where sisters can share almost everything, Meetings online. There must be volunteers to organize this on an afternoon early in October. Four Sisters can then present their

mission and work in about 10 minutes. The group can then be split into breakout rooms. Volunteers can contact Sr Magdalene, Online Book-clubs

Language

There is a special need for learning English. There is already a plan in Durham to give sisters from abroad an opportunity to improve their English here. Sisters interested in this can contact Sr Pilar.

The same offer could perhaps be made for other languages, such as French and Spanish. Communities must then be willing to open their doors to sisters from abroad, who are temporarily living in their community to learn the language.

Justice and Peace

Since the war began in Ukraine, refugees have been supported, including by the Czech sisters. The DSE also facilitates a project. Congregations interested in supporting the activities in areas such as financial, material or psychological can contact Sr Pilar.

It was also suggested that, for those who wish to do so, there should be quarterly consultations on issues within Peace and Justice. This also in support of Sr Philomena Benedict who is the new promoter for Europe.

Study House and promotor Dominican life

It was mentioned a number of times that a study house for sisters in Rome would not be a luxury. Currently, several sisters are studying in Rome while staying in different places. A study house would be beneficial for mutual contacts and for strengthening the Dominican identity among the sisters.

For the strengthening of the Dominican identity in Europe, not only among the sisters but regarding the whole Dominican family, it is proposed to create a promoter for Dominican life in Europe. However, this should emanate from the order.

The meeting was followed by a visit to Santa Sabina, where we attended the Eucharist. After a short tour of the church, we were welcomed by the magister general Br Gerard Timoner. After a small meeting in Dominicus' cell, where the magister gave us the Dominican blessing, we were given another short tour of Santa Sabina.

extra:

Workshop by sr. Ino Rincon on good communication and building community

The first part of the afternoon program was dedicated to building community. Sr. Ino Rincón provided the introduction. Thomas Aquinas talked about contemplation and truth. Truth, the concept seems to have something authoritarian in it. However, it is always down to the starting point, the perspective. It is asking the wrong question if we ask whether we have truth. Truth is not a thing, but a process, a path, a quest. There are two sides to the concept of Truth: first, as a philosophical concept. In this, truth is good, necessary and has to do with beauty. For Thomas Aquinas, this is the first aspect of Truth. Truth is also the face of God/Christ. This is the second aspect

of Truth within Christianity. Depending on the area in which we work, we will be confronted with the concept of Truth in different ways. In healthcare it may possibly mean something different, than in education, for example.

Workshop: what happens when we bring light to others, or receive light ourselves. In small groups, we received and transmitted light in different ways. The aim was to reflect what these different forms of receiving and passing on light do to you, as an individual sister. Then the exercise was processed individually again on the sheets. The general conclusion was that through this ritual of light a community can be built, across language borders.

The theme at the moment is "Expand the space of your tent." The same theme has the synodal process. Some points of Peace and Justice were explained. We also need to open and enlarge our tents now. That means opening our eyes and expanding our relationships, including with other sisters and communities. Isaiah 54: 2 is the inspiration here: Enlarge the place for your tent, stretch out the tent cloth wider, without restraint. Lengthen the ropes, secure the tent pegs.

For what we do, there is also a price, but we should not be afraid of the new. Some questions we will have to keep answering: Why do we search for truth, why do we live in a community? To answer these, we must first get to know ourselves. This must be done in an affective way. In this way, we can find what paralyzes us. We need to see and learn. For that, it is also important to face up to why you feel bad about what is different, unknown. However, it is important to be aware.

How often does it happen that something small leads to conflict. For instance, because something has always been like this, and people want to leave everything as it is. But maybe it can also be changed. The trick then is to come to a new understanding. This does require good communication. There are many ways to resolve conflicts. For this, however, the nature of the conflict must first be looked at. The conflict must be recognized and seen as an opportunity to learn something. Thereby, conflicts will always be part of our lives because we are all different.

Conflict also has to do with dominance and submission, running away from it or (learning) to deal with it, taking on the conflict.

There are three types of conflict:

1. Intrapersonal, for example when there is low self-esteem, or when expectations are not real;
2. interpersonal. This occurs when there are several people with different interests, ways etc. Communication is then very important: open, respectful, clear, unbiased, at the right time. Conflict arises on the basis of interpretation rather than factuality.
3. Structural conflict. In community where we deal with structures. This applies to all communities. Structural conflict can therefore occur everywhere.

Conflict can also occur at different levels:

1. Manifest conflict. The conflict is expressed and everyone sees the conflict.
2. Latent conflict: The conflict is there but we don't see it, we don't address it, we don't acknowledge it . It is like fishing in unclear water.

There can be different reasons for not facing and analysing problems: fear, reputation, self-image. Important questions are therefore: What is the benefit of not facing a conflict? What fears show my attitude? What am I willing to give up for a greater good, for the solution of a big problem?

Problem solving leads to happiness. There are changes everywhere. In the church too. We can't do as we used to. There are new needs and our institutions are changing rapidly. Congregations are getting smaller and smaller. However, we don't want to die but to live. So we need to be clear about what changes there are, but also what gives us opportunity to live. That may mean leaving our comfort zone. Change is not only a threat, but can actually be attractive and challenging. We are too quick to look at the other person, to take the first step.

Resistance can lead to the wrong answers:

1. Forming alliances and coalitions within the community to defend forms. This often involves going one's own ways, gossiping and condemning.
2. Reclaiming affection, by cutting yourself off from others. However, the group continues. The conflict is not resolved. This often involves going outside a lot and being busy there. Here, running away from the conflict situation.
3. Repeating the fight. It's all about who wins. This involves ironic responses to situations and the use of human resources, as well as the use of faith resources. Forgiveness allows the other person to be (re)acknowledged.
4. Resignation. There is no real peace, but silence follows. Conflicting messages are no longer spoken, but body language gives sufficient signals.
5. Scapegoat seeking.

Good answers include:

1. Engage in a real dialogue: open, clear, without judgement. That means speaking clearly and hearing attentively. That requires silence to really listen, empathy as an inner attitude and understanding that leads to change.
2. Giving feedback: directly, with respect, paying attention to the language you use and the attitude with which the language is spoken.
3. Putting the person first. Distinguish between the person and the behaviour. Everyone is a child of God.
4. Do it cooperatively, together. Christ's project is our project.

Interlude: building a tower by several volunteers -

Without speaking, cooperation leads to results. A community widens the possibilities. In doing so, communication is indispensable. The community can then act as a mirror.

What is our group? Is it just the group we live in, or is it much bigger? The community is always made up of people we share part of our lives with. But this too is a process, a path. The community, these are also the people who look forward to something together. Therefore, we should not be afraid, but we should dare to stick our necks out. The broadest community we are part of is all those people we feel connected to. So the community is more than the group of people we live with under one roof every day.

Questions asked following today:

What have you heard today?

Can this group help me further shape charisma as a preacher?

What do I see before me if I dare to dream?

Can you move forward in a project, or as part of the whole?