We are now almost half way through the season of Lent and the daily readings call to mind a radical self-abandonment to God's providence that Consecrated Life beckons the world to. This radical self-gift keeps the individual person's thirst for holiness in focus with an all-embracing disposition of humanity's spiritual yearning for wholeness. Immediately following Ash Wednesday, the Gospel of Luke reminded us of Jesus' compelling words “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?” (Lk. 9:22-25). Consecrated life is one of the gifts of the Church that bears witness to the world, of lives completely given to the pursuit of holiness and in this way entirely dedicated to the service of others.

It is good to have key moments set aside for reflection upon what we mean to the world as seen through the “eyes” of the one who has called us into being, and how the world sees us. This Lenten Season, this year dedicated to Consecrated Life in the Church and our preparation for Jubilee celebration of the 800th year of the foundation of the Order, are especially fruitful reflection times for us. They afford us a unique opportunity to help in engaging the world in a dialogue with God that forces us to let go of our sometimes “Pharisee” outlook (Lk 5:27-32) that locks us and the world, away from the rich discourse that the Lord wishes to have with the world about His loving mercy.

As we pay attention to Pope Francis's messages to Consecrated persons and revisit the journey of our Congregations over time and our own personal journeys, may we find treasures that could be shared with others and bring us closer to experiencing God in the unconventional, on the frontiers of where life is confusing to the young, painful for the old and maybe even insignificant others. May we together, rise to the challenge of opening our hearts so widely to God that our pursuit of wholeness will cast no judgment upon others but instead genuinely share who we are, telling the Good News of God's merciful love for us to all. This is my prayer for myself and for DSI so that together, we may realize our full purpose.

With these words, I wish each one of you a fruitful Lenten Season as we journey towards Easter together.

Blessings and Peace.

Sr. Marie Therese Clement O.P
International Coordinator, DSI

MARCH, 2015

www.dsiop.org
UN COMMISSION MEETING “STATUS OF WOMEN”
Focused on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
New York, March 14th, 2015

Sr. Marjolein Bruinen (Dominicans Sisters of Bethany of Thron)

From March 9 to 20, 1,100 worldwide Organizations, represented by 8,800 members, gathered at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, to review the progress, or lack thereof, on the Status of Women after the Beijing Conference in 1995. The most important issues have been debated in 650 meetings, among which trafficking, exploitation and violence against women played a relevant role. Some progress has been achieved: improved healthcare services have led to an increase in average life expectancy from 45 to 72 years. However, the number of women who are killed because of domestic violence reached a staggering 38%.

Sister Margaret Mayce, as DSI-NGO delegate at the United Nations, has been our wonderful hostess. We stayed at the Dominican Sisters of Hope’s Mariandale Retreat House, and there Sister Margaret has been our innkeeper: in the city, where her office is located, our tour guide. She was always with us. She even waited for us to get a ground pass to get into the UN’s building (where at the door we had to place our coats –besides the great amount of snow!! - our bags and other items on the security belt to pass the security check just like at an airport).

Sisters of Mariandale and Blauvelt, where we were invited for a day, were very nice and warmly welcomed us. We were introduced to all the Sisters at the Conference held at the Mariandale Retreat house in occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life. Later, when we met they all recognized us!

The following DSI representatives attended the meeting: Sr. Emmanuela Okofor of Nigeria representing the African Continent, Sr. Maureen O’Connell of Australia, representing Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Sr. Sandra Ede of Brazil representing Latin America, Sr. Bernardine Karge of Chicago, for North America, Sr. Marjolein Bruinen of the Netherlands for Europe, Sr. Marie-Thérèse, DSI International Coordinator and Sr. Celestina, DSI Justice and Peace International Promoter.

Since not all the meetings were held at the UN’s General Assembly building (where you can run a marathon without ever passing twice from the same place) but also in other venues, we had to walk a lot. Furthermore, we had to decide the eve, which meeting we wanted to attend the following morning, because there were so many meetings that we couldn't possibly decide on the spot. In addition, there were also events held in parallel in other areas of the city and collateral events at the UN’s General Assembly Building.

At some meetings one just had to listen, others were more interactive; anyone could take the floor or write, sing, applaud and even pray. There was a lot of noise, many languages, many colored costumes and countless laptops, tablets and cell phones. On the day of our arrival, especially the sisters from Brazil and Nigeria, who had never seen snow before, took an endless number of pictures; Sister Celestina continued to repeat: “Mamma mia, how wonderful, wonderful!”.

Many young people were enthusiastically involved in all the topics. This gives us hope for the future. The sisters were very impressed by all the information they received. Many issues are the ones we experience in person, but there were also many new things we didn’t know. We learned something new every day. For example, are you aware that in the US there are some underground high-schools for migrant’s children? They do not have legal documents and for this reason they are not accepted in “normal” schools. Did you know that we all support slavery by eating chocolate or buying some brands of clothes? And are you aware that the laws of a country are
more “human” when more women are in power? We wonder: Why are there human rights and “other” rights for women? Aren’t women human beings too? It all has to do with human rights.

Throughout those days we lived in a sort of spiritual retreat: suffering together, listening to sad stories, trying to look for solutions together and rejoicing together in front of beautiful things. All that occurs on earth has an organic coherence. Nothing can be considered separated from the whole. We strongly feel that the community is very important; sticking together is the sine qua non condition to move forward.

“Women survivors” say they were able to survive thanks to external help, to the people who gave them the strength and courage to go on with their life. It is therefore important not to exclude men and youngsters. Only by also involving them we can build a better world.

In short, it has been an extraordinary and enriching experience, and we are certain to bring back home the fruits of those days and share them with the people with whom we live in our missions.

And as part of DSI we would like to tighten the network that connects us because it has become clear to all of us that we are strong and can change things only if we are together. Thank you all!

HUMAN TRAFFICKING “a crime against humanity” (Pope Francis)

Human trafficking, the modern day slavery, is happening everywhere and every moment. It is now the second most profitable crime in the world. According to Global Slavery Index 2014 there are 35.8 million people in modern slavery. Slavery was abolished 150 years ago and yet there are more people in slavery today than in any other time in human history. Trafficking robs people of their dreams. The stories of victims in the Philippines are heart-breaking and they are painful reminders of the long journey to fight human trafficking and a long way to go in building a truly just and peaceful society.

FIGHT AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

As JPIC Coordinator of the Congregation, the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena, Philippines decided that our JPIC thrust is the Anti-Human Trafficking advocacy.

The anti-human trafficking work is a gigantic task considering the massive global network and huge financial profit of the traffickers. Thus, partnership with GO, NGO and Civil Society Organization (CSO) working on the same advocacy is an indispensable need to realize this mission. I worked in multi-partnership with the Office on Women of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), Center for Migrants Concerns of the Association of the Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP), Talitha Kum Philippines and the Dominican Family. I also sit as observer of the regular meetings of the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) headed by the Secretary of the Department of Justice and the Presidential Task Force Anti-Illegal Recruitment (PTFAIR) headed by the Vice-President of the Philippines.

In most of our field work in massive information campaign I had been working closely with Visayan Forum, one of the most effective NGOs in the Philippines working to end Human Trafficking for the past 20 years. We formed the ifIGHTERS Team of the ifIGHT Movement, a movement for young people to sustain awareness and to fight human trafficking.
MISSION BRIEF

March 2015

THE FIVE Ps

The UN has come up with 4Ps to combat trafficking. We made it into five, we added Prayer as an important element for the success of our work, with St. Josephine Bakhita as our Patron Saint. The first P is Prevention, this is our main task; massive information campaign to peoples especially the young. Prevention as they say is the best cure against human trafficking. This is our challenge. In our prevention campaign we get to equip and empower our young people to learn to protect and defend themselves and their friends and families from human trafficking.

THE JOURNEY

We travel from place to place, school to school organizing forums on human trafficking. Now we have expanded our forums and seminars to include those organized by the Church, through the Parish and Diocese and the Government thru the Governor, Mayor and Barangay leaders, including the Police Force and the Local Government Units. I had been personally involved, both as organizer and resource person in the massive information campaign to more than 23,000 people in less than 2 years. The support of the School Heads, Parish Priests, Bishops, Governors, Mayors and Barangay leaders are inspiring. More and more people are getting informed, and yet I must admit, it is still a long journey. When will this modern-day slavery end, nobody knows, but we have to do something.

THE VICTIMS

Talking and listening to under-age victims tell their stories are heart breaking. Stories of how they were kidnapped and gang raped; maltreated and physically abused by their employers; sold to prostitution over and over; working for hours with minimal pay, less food and no rest; deceived by their own relatives; naked and performing sexual acts before cameras to satisfy the request of customers … and many more. The most shocking to me is to see five year old and one year old girls who were used for cybersex. They were too young and too innocent to understand what happened to them. I can only shed tears every time I see these little ones and ask, Why Lord that this should happen to your children?

THE DANGER

Traffickers are very innovative and highly organized so we have to keep ourselves updated about the latest news and strategies used by traffickers. This is like the work of a secret agent. Sometimes we get updates from the NBI especially on matters of Child Cybersex and Pornography as well as rescue and surveillance of possible suspects, although we are careful on this matter. Working in this advocacy somehow exposes us to dangers because the enemy will not simply let go of any obstacles to obtain their end, sitting. Hence, on our part, we campaign and we pray much.
About This was the topic of the IV Study Seminar, promoted by the Italian JPIC Commission of the Dominican Family that was celebrated in Saint Sixto Convent in Rome on February 14th, 2015. It started off from the topic addressed at “The Day of Solidarity” held in Florence on December 2014 that took on the great world challenge of Migration: “People on Movement- Migration”. Furthermore, since 2015 is the year dedicated to Consecrated life, the seminar reflected on the four current dimensions of our life and mission: interculturalism, internationality, inter-congregational and interreligious dialogue. These aspects are considered noteworthy and must be kept in mind in ordinary community life, besides being potential topics of study in a Seminar. They must have an impact on ordinary community life. Diversity and plurality are aspects that characterize the world in which we live and also our communities. We must acknowledge that often these aspects are sources of conflicts, especially if they aren’t taken on and integrated. All the above affects in particular formation houses, where coexist young people from different countries and cultures.

On the other hand, it is known that the above-mentioned aspects can enrich the same communities and the entire world, so characterized by intolerance, lack of respect, violence, discrimination and prejudice. However, indeed we can be what our Patriarch Dominic dreamed of: He wanted and continues to want his communities to be venues of “HOLY PREACHING”, that is: places where one can breath the Gospel and radiate it in our fraternal relationships, of equality, reciprocal respect, forgiveness and beauty reflected through the testimony of each sister and brother. But also in the relations with the lay who daily live into the world and convey with the same vigour, the richness of the Dominican Charism.

During the morning session of the Seminar, two speakers, (Fr.Bruno Secondin, Carmelite theologian and Sr. Elisa Kidané, Missionary and journalist of Columbia) offered their own reflections and experiences which stirred concerns and raised some questions. However, from different viewpoints, they also spurred participants and encouraged them to find solutions at their problems. All agreed that differences and multi-culturalism foster renewal and bring richness to relations, broaden horizons, increase knowledge, shift paradigms, and promote life open to novelty and to what is truly essential. One must, however, acknowledge that sometimes the presence of these elements in the communities generates suffering and raises walls that jeopardize mutual relationships.

In the afternoon of the same day, working groups were set up to gather feedback among the participants, inspired by morning contributions.

As scheduled, the seminar continued with a round table which provided the sisters and friars a good channel to continue and delve into a dialogue of great interest. Sr. Ruthmini Huamani, a young Peruvian, junior of the Dominican Sisters of Santa Maria del Arco spoke of her inter-cultural experience, its challenges and richness. Sr. Nzenzili Lucie Mboma, Franciscan Missionary of Mary, SEDOS Executive Director spoke about the inter-congregational aspect, based on the analysis of 50 years of Missions worldwide done by the Service of Documentation and Study. Friar Riccardo Lufrani, JPIC Promoter of the Roman Province of Santa Catalina, spoke about his experience of acquaintance and friendship with people of different beliefs from the standpoint of inter-religiosity. In my role as DSI JPIC Promoter, I described my current mission, highlighting the internationality character of Dominican Sisters International. I also spoke about some aspects that I deem important to promote wellbeing in an international community. We must be mindful of humanizing relationships. We are all different, but we share a common desire to be welcomed, loved and valued. This is why we must sometimes break old structures to make way for the Spirit, the
simplicity and authenticity of the Gospel. Let our communities show the world that fraternal life is possible!

I think the reflections and dynamics followed in the Seminar were very fruitful. We were given patterns and guidelines to continue to address with hope the new geography of religious life in Italy as well as in our Congregations present in other countries and continents. As a family, we were able to prove and perceive what is adequately shared among different experiences, ask questions, detect difficulties and be enriched with the positive elements offered by intercultural and international communities.

It was also an opportunity to bring to surface the complexity of the relationships in our houses and society, confronted with the intercultural and interreligious reality. The participants have been assigned an important task: promote a formation that prepares a person, especially the young, to share a plural world, where differences and multiculturalism are a clear reality. Likewise, awaken and turn Justice, Peace and Solidarity into a universal reality.

**DSI - Engagements Second Quarter**

**International Coordinator**

**FEBRUARY**

**Mission in Rome:** Congregational Meeting St. Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago February 14-March 7

**MARCH**

**Overseas Mission:** Annual UN “Commission on Women Status” New York, USA - March 8-15

**APRIL**

CODALC COMMISSION Bogota, Colombia - April 23-27

**International Promoter of Justice and Peace**

**FEBRUARY**

**Mission in Rome:** OP Promoters, Promoters of UISG JPIC; Refugees Group; Brazilian Religious in Rome

JPIC Dominican Family, National Commission of JPIC

**MARCH**

Ecclesial Net Pan Amazonic

UISG JPIC Promoters

**Overseas Mission:** UN Commission on the Status of Women - New York, March 06-20

Meeting of North American Promoters of JPIC (Friars & Sisters) – Chicago, March 22-27

**APRIL**

Justice and Peace Workshop: Dili, East Timor - 6-27 April
MISSION BRIEF
March 2015

GENERAL INFORMATION:

USMI HOSPITALITY IN ROME

Living with a peaceful inner harmony allows for a better experience of study, prayer and union with God which is essential to Service the Church. The many nuns coming to Rome for their spiritual formation each year, from many numerous different Congregations, either invited by their own Dioceses or by their Congregations are well aware of this. Many of these sisters come from developing countries and do not have in Rome a community to welcome them. Over the years, many of them faced practical and vocational difficulties during their stay experiencing spiritual, moral and material difficulties without anyone to turn to.

Finally in 2002, a Dominican sister, Sr. Josephina Carapan, having learnt about some of these hardship situations, took action and gave them proper attention since: “those who are united by the common commitment to follow Christ and are inspired by the same Spirit, must express in a visible manner the fullness of the Gospel of love, just like the branches of the one Vine... as well show an exemplary sense of fraternity which will serve to encourage other ecclesiastical entities in the daily task of bearing witness to the Gospel.” (Consecrated Life, 1996, n°52).

USMI, the Union of Italian Major Superiors, body of Pontifical law and reference point for 600 Congregations of women present in Italy, set up the project “USMI Ti Accoglie”, coordinated by Sister Josephine herself, whose main objective is to materially and spiritually support religious women coming from all over the world, who do not have a permanent community in Rome.

By providing the care of specific needs, welcoming different ethnical and cultural realities and listening based on interpersonal relations, the project is intended to meet possible needs that these young women may encounter in order to enable the full development of their religious vocation according to the specific Charism their Congregation. Actions are taken at different levels: personal and psychological accompaniment, guidelines to red tape procedures to access fundamental human rights; legal and medical consultancy; courses of Italian language to facilitate communication and study; guidelines for a pastoral and/or work insertion; spiritual retreats and pilgrimages; summer volunteer work opportunities.

With such a broad range of activities, coordinated by different operational teams and by the generous collaboration of the Religious Institutes present in the Dioceses of Rome, in its 13-year activity “USMI Ti Accoglie” has encountered and helped thousands of sisters from 67 different nationalities; 46 received healthcare services, 157 attended a course of Italian, 931 have worked as summer volunteers, 572 sisters participated in the 20 spiritual exercises course organized, 1,244 have attended fraternity days and 168 trips-pilgrimages.

Many are the testimonies of the sisters who have been helped. I was welcomed with open arms and heart in the community found for me by “USMI Ti Accoglie”. I met true witnesses of consecration and dedication to the Lord through their service of the brothers. This encouraged me to live with more joy and authenticity my consecrated life.” Another one tells her experience: “I was depressed. I didn’t know what to do, I felt sick due to the many problems I had with my Congregation… I went to “USMI Ti Accoglie” to talk to a sister I knew: I just wanted someone to listen to me, but I just managed to cry. The sister hugged and calmed me down and in the two following years, I received spiritual, moral and psychological help that supported my vocation to continue in my consecrated life. I have been able to recover the meaning of my life”.

Many challenges have been overcome through the love of God. And the future holds new challenges and new fields of action. The project has new objectives underway; open the doors wider to the sisters of Chinese nationality to favor a deeper knowledge of the Universal Church; enlarge and strengthen the collaboration network with Religious Institutes, in particular those who cooperate as volunteers; increase economic resources to offer basic healthcare services, to foreign sisters yet deprived of such fundamental right. Try to increasingly fully accomplish the spiritual promise expected from the center of Christianity by sisters coming to Rome to study;

http://www.vicariatusurbis.org/USMI_Diocesana/USMI_Ti_Accoglie.asp