

Deepening the Dominican Spirit

A Pilgrimage to Fanjeaux,
France

An inspiring opportunity for
those involved in
Dominican-based ministries



'a new St. Dominic' made by the
Dutch painter Egbert Madderma

Introductions

- Dr. Alexandria Egler, Head of School at Dominican Academy, NY
- Dr. Kristin Melley, Executive Director, DVM
- Lisa Mitchell, Director of Associates, Grand Rapids

Sr. Jeanne Goyette,
Caldwell, NJ
(lead staff)

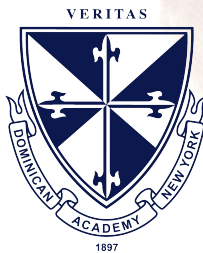


Other staff on trip:

- Sr. Mary Ellen O'Grady, Sinsinawa
- Father Richard Peddicord, OP, Head of School, Fenwick
- Suzie Wong, Friend of Dominicans of Caldwell, NJ

The Power of Pilgrimage

Alexandria M. Egler, Ph.D.
Dominican Academy, New York



What most distinguishes the sacred art of pilgrimage from a tourist trip or hiking expedition, as beneficial as these are, is the characteristic inward journey, a turning of one's heart to the Divine, with the expectation of transformation on every level of being along the way.

Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook

THE POWER OF PILGRIMAGE

So, what makes a pilgrim different from a tourist? A pilgrim walks with the Divine.

I have been told more times than I care to recall, that people, particularly students, are not interested in pilgrimages. Or they're interested as long as the religious dimension of it isn't overly pious or preachy...and there's enough time for sightseeing and shopping... pressing questions and comments that I often get are "How often/how long do we have to pray?" "I'm not good at sharing my feelings." "Not sure unfamiliar food/lodging/language is something I want to attempt." "Where will I be able to get pizza?" "Will there be a McDonald's/winebar/good restaurant nearby?" Also, "How much should I pack? What should I pack? What about WIFI? What if, what if, what if ??????" And finally, by the way, I'm not really keen on the idea of schlepping about with a bunch of people I don't know so maybe this isn't for me. All understandable concerns.

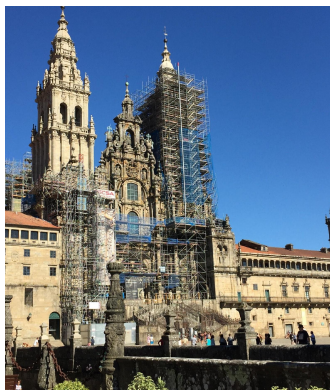
What I do try to do when inviting people into pilgrimage mode is answer all their questions/concerns as best as I am able, along with gently reminding them about trusting in the program, trusting the leaders and trusting God. By stepping into the unknown, out of our comfort zones, without all the answers to our concerns, incredible moments of grace and spiritual transformation await every pilgrim, even the most nervous and skeptical.

PILGRIMAGE: A SHARED PRACTICE AMONGST THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD



PILGRIMAGE A SHARED PRACTICE

I truly believe that within the human heart, there is a desire to set out on pilgrimage. From that desire, a power is unlocked in the journey. A pilgrimage begins the moment a person decides to embark on one. There is a sense of seeking, and discovering, that through a visit to sacred places, there will be a deepening of faith, an offer of grace, spiritual enlightenment, personal transformation, and good wine. Pilgrimage is a shared practice is just about every religion on this earth. Muslims make the *hajj* to Mecca, Jews go to Jerusalem, Hindus have the *Khumba Mela*, Buddhists have Shikoku, to name but a few. There's clearly something very powerful and meaningful in taking a walk.



WHY PILGRIMAGE?

- Thanksgiving
- Loss
- Reconciliation
- Mercy
- Connection
- RE-connection
- Discovery
- Enlightenment

Many of us have embarked on intentional pilgrimages at different points in our lives, for different reasons. Sometimes, even after a journey, we realize we made a pilgrimage! Perhaps we've had a challenge in our lives, loss of a loved one, the end of a marriage, loss of a job. Maybe we're journeying for forgiveness, or the fulfillment of a promise made, a walk for thanksgiving, reconciliation, mercy. Are we visiting a sacred place of an apparition by the Blessed Mother, a shrine to a particular saint, the Holy Land to walk where Jesus lived, preached, and died? Maybe we're just walking because we don't know what else to do at this moment in our lives. There are solo pilgrimages, organized pilgrimages with groups that can be all inclusive or as bare bones as one desires. Some of us need different things depending on where we are in our lives. There is no wrong way to make pilgrimage, there is no "cheating" in pilgrimage, there is no judgement in one's ability or need for comfort or desire to be alone or with others. Pilgrimage is an individual's journey, even when made with others. The reasons and methods are myriad, and the Holy Spirit is always a work...even in the shops and tourist spots. Pilgrimage can be challenging mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Pilgrimage means we are open to possibilities, to roadblocks (literal, spiritual and metaphorical), to discarding baggage (sometimes the airlines make that decision for us), and to learning what it is we really need in life. Pilgrimage is also a way of reconnecting with one's soul, and soles, meeting and connecting with new people, entering into new relationships, as well as finding quiet moments to be alone with God. Pilgrimage is about possible spiritual breakthroughs and discovery...which may or may not happen while on the journey. That discovery might come quietly or with a bang, in the moment or even three months later. When we are on pilgrimage, we are on God's time, we enter liminal space, and we cede control. There is no right or wrong pilgrimage if the intentions of the heart are there.



ANCIENT PRACTICE

- Middle Ages:
- Atonement for Sins
- Gain Grace
- Earn Indulgence

ANCIENT PRACTICE

Pilgrimages are as old as the world. They are nothing new. They flourished in the Middle Ages when to atone for sins, or to gain grace, earn indulgences or any reason, people would embark on (or pay someone to go for them) one of the three major pilgrimage routes to the Holy Land, Rome, or Santiago de Compostela in Northwest Spain. There are many shrines associated with saints and salvation around Europe, the Middle East, and the world. Pilgrimages seem to be making a comeback, for many reasons, not all necessarily religious.

THE POWER OF PILGRIMAGE:

FAITH
COMMUNITY
HISTORY
CHARISM
INSPIRATION



THE POWER OF PILGRIMAGE

What is the power of pilgrimage? There's a practical dimension, there's an educational purpose. Pilgrims learn about the saints and the history of the country, city, or village they are visiting. Such as the pilgrimage to Fangeaux we are discussing today. But as pilgrims pray in historic places, and see some magnificent churches, paintings, artifacts, touch the ancient stones, walk over cobbled streets, kneel on well worn marble, or climb wooded and steep paths, they are also learning about the art, architecture and natural wonder of their faith. As Catholics, as Dominicans we pray throughout the journey, in chapels, at tombs, in gardens, on the bus, and during rest time. We celebrate Mass together; we walk where Dominic walked and enjoy meals together as a newly formed community. In some ways, pilgrimage is a holy holiday that gives a new dimension and deeper depth to understanding our faith, our history, and our charism. We are inspired and educated. Our faith is made stronger through the friendships we develop and our connection to the land and spirit of Dominic and those who walked before us, and those who will follow us. These elements and experiences ring true for all pilgrims who walk the earth.

OPENNESS TO GOD'S CREATION AND REVELATION



OPENNES TO GOD'S CREATION

There's something incredibly transformative in the pilgrimage experience. We set out on the quest...sometimes with many questions, sometimes with no questions, just curiosity, even doubt, but openness to creation, community and whatever God reveals.

TRUSTING IN GOD (AND YOUR PILGRIMAGE LEADERS!!)



TRUSTING IN GOD

Even with comfortable transportation, delicious food, lovely accommodations, there is always the risk and hardship of travel. It's all about trusting in God...and the people who guide you, if you are journeying with a group. The adventure of setting out to a world that is new and strange can be daunting. I might not speak the language; I might not be familiar with the food. What if I lose the group? What if I get injured? What if I lose my documents? What if there's no WIFI? It's scary, it can be strange, but there is a sense of seeking and finding...that through visiting holy places, there will be growth in grace, in enlightenment, inspiration and transformation.

PILGRIMAGE: THE GREAT QUEST

A Hero(ine)'s Journey



PILGRIMAGE THE GREAT QUEST

Joseph Campbell spoke and wrote extensively about myths and the hero's journey. We read many stories in ancient mythologies. There are many parallels to Campbell's work with the art of pilgrimage. But we can read similar stories in our sacred scriptures, in literature (Think *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Lion*, *The Witch and the Wardrobe*) and about the saints who have come before us. The quest is at the heart of these epic tales and biographies. The hero or heroine (we all get to be the star in our personal pilgrimage journey), sets out from their ordinary comfortable, safe, secure world, into a world of adventure where hardships are faced, new alliances are made, darkness is overcome. The prize is won at the end and then the hero or heroine returns with it home for the salvation of the people. The pilgrimage is a quest, a great quest, because it is a journey with deeper purpose and meaning, even if it's not entirely clear when setting out or upon return...this is what makes it different than a vacation or traveling as a tourist. Tourists are interested in reaching the destination, often for some Instagrammable moments, rather than the depth and context of a particular place.

PILGRIMS & TOURISTS

Pilgrims invest themselves.

Pilgrims are open to letting go of control, they are in a mindset of receiving.

Pilgrims seek new insights, discoveries and transformation.

The arrival AND the journey are important for pilgrims. The pilgrim focuses on the entire experience, even recognizing that the journey does not end when the formal pilgrimage does.

- Tourists often avoid personal commitment.
- Tourists remain untouched on a deeper level by their experiences.
- Tourists are interested in arriving and moving on to each subsequent destination.



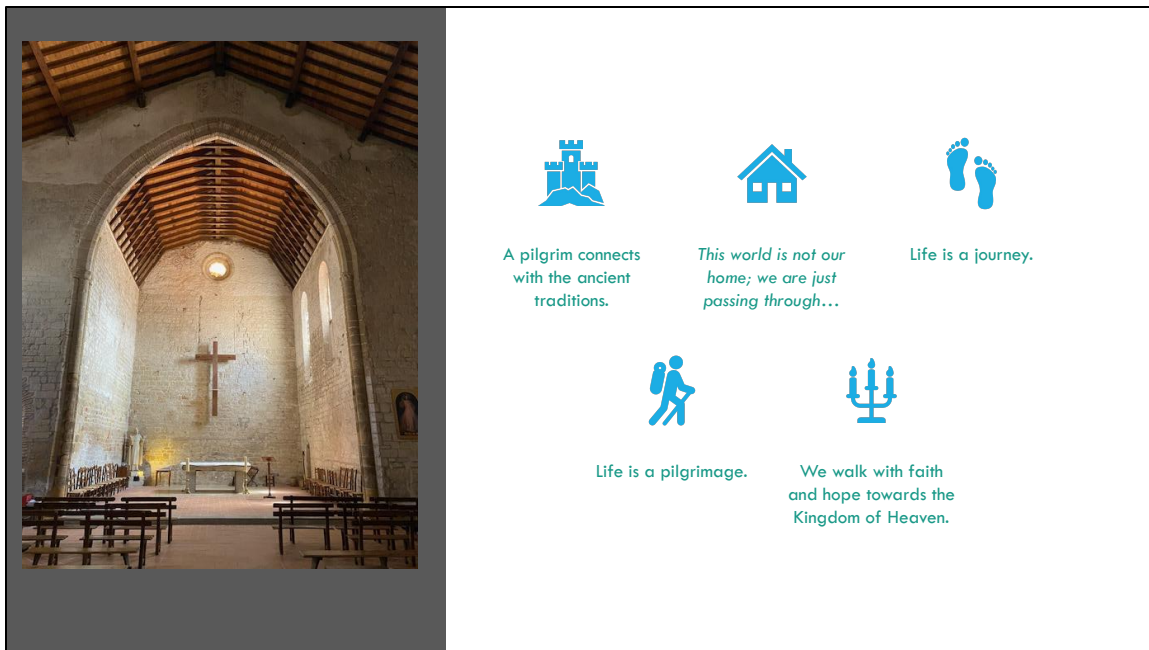
PILGRIMS AND TOURISTS

Pilgrims invest themselves; tourists often avoid personal commitment. Pilgrims are open to letting go of control and are in a mindset of receiving. Tourists are taking...pictures, souvenirs, etc. There is sometimes a sense of entitlement with tourists...not all tourists...but of late, sadly many.

Pilgrims seek new insights, discoveries, and transformation. Tourists remain untouched on a deep level by their experiences.

Arrival AND journey are important for pilgrimages. Tourists are interested in arriving and getting going..."when and where is the next stop?" The pilgrim focuses on the entire experience, even recognizing that the journey does not necessarily end when the pilgrimage formally concludes.

Community is formed for pilgrims. All come together as one, from various families, countries/states, positions, and branches of the Dominican family. Community is not necessarily something that tourists seek or form, they usually prefer to maintain their status quo.



CHAPEL in FANJEAUX

A pilgrim connects with the ancient tradition of belonging to a pilgrim people. Think about Abraham and Sarah, Moses and the Israelites...Mary and Joseph. The people of God have always been pilgrims walking into exile, returning from, seeking safety and peace. God's people have been wanderers, a family without a country, always seeking the promised land.

Threaded throughout our Judeo-Christian history from the very beginning is the idea that "this world is not our home; we are just passing through." A pilgrimage puts us in touch with our pilgrim hearts and heritage and reminds us that this is what Jesus is calling us all to do. To leave the family fishing business and follow him into the unknown with faith, love and trust.

This truth unlocks the next...if the world is not our home, and we're just passing through, then just as we set off for the Holy Land, Rome, Santiago de Compostela or Fanjeaux, we are reminded that life is a journey, life is a pilgrimage. We have a destination. And upon arrival we will be welcomed with joy into the kingdom of heaven. Our earthly pilgrimages are road tests, as we journey together through study, community, service, and prayer.

Genesis of the Fanjeaux Pilgrimage



A Visit to Rome



Sr. Ann Marie Rimmer , OP
(Caldwell)

Sr. Jeanne Goyette, OP
(Caldwell)

Sr. Lenore Toscano, OP
(Amityville)

Sr. Renee Canitrot, OP
(Amityville)



Initial Visit to Fanjeaux



First Pilgrimage



In 1993, the DLC International Meeting of Prioresses was held in Rome. The Sisters of the Incarnate Word (French Dominican sisters) asked for help staffing the Belvedere guest house in Fanjeaux, France. This is where St. Dominic lived and was inspired to found the Dominicans. In January, 1994: Caldwell sisters Jeanne Goyette, Anne Marie Rimmer and Amityville Sisters Lenore Toscano and Renee Canitrot visited to see what might be possible. They first visited the Incarnate Word Motherhouse outside of Paris and then took a train to Bram, near Fanjeaux. There was a horrible downpour of rain and Jeanne said they should look for a sign from God. Not long after they saw a magnificent and brilliant rainbow in the direction of Fanjeaux!

They spent time there discussing and exploring ideas with the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Fr. Elie Pascale, a young Dominican from the Toulouse Province. In the summer of 1994: Jeanne Goyette and Renee Canitrot came to work in Fanjeaux. Jeanne worked in Maison St. Dominique, and Renee in the Belvedere Guest House. Jeanne asked Ann Willits (Sinsinawa), Director of Parable, if they would be interested in sponsoring a retreat program there, but to no avail. Jean asked Mary O'Driscoll (Cabra) if she would be willing to give a retreat on St. Dominic in Fanjeaux and she said "yes." Thus the retreat program was born. Mary O'Driscoll continued to give conferences from 1996-2017.

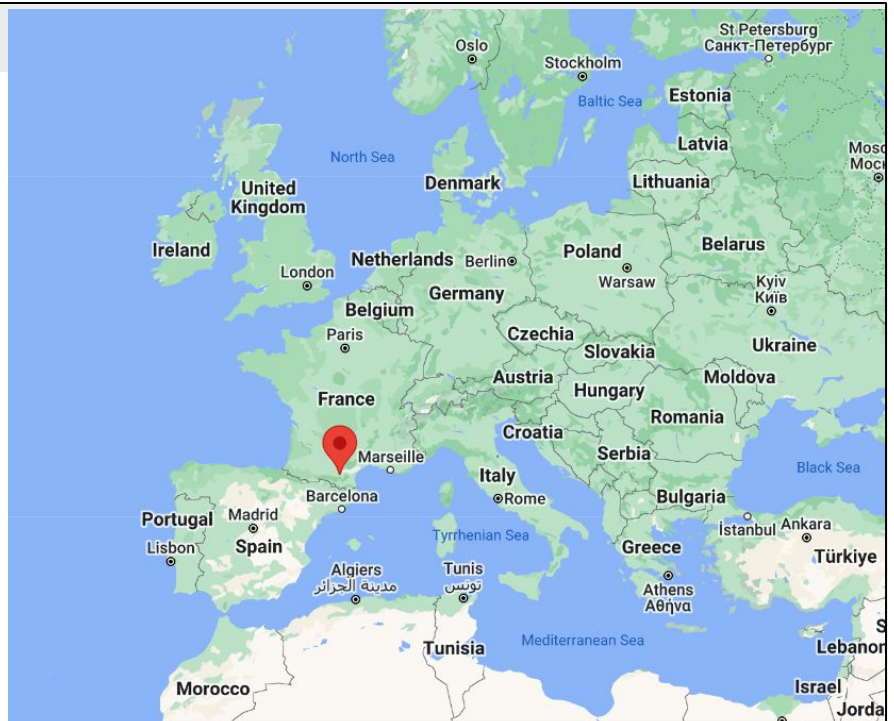
Some other members of the staff who have participated for several years include Fr. Rick Peddicord, Sr. Mary Ellen O'Grady, Sr. Patty Gallagher, and Suzanne Wong. The first retreat took place in the summer of 1996, directed by Mary O'Driscoll, and organized by Jeanne Goyette and Renee Canitrot. 14 Sisters attended. Covid prevented programs in 2020, 2021, and 2022. The year 2023 marked the 25th year for the Fanjeaux program!

Enter more fully into Dominican history by:

- Praying where Dominic lived, preached, and prayed in southern France.
- Reflecting on the Dominican spirit through the lives and teachings of Dominic, Henri Lacordaire and other significant Dominicans.
- Joining with others in reflecting, sharing, and deepening the spirit of Dominican life in the twenty-first century.
- Experiencing the history and culture of southern France.
- Partaking in conferences on the life and spirit of Dominic and other notable Dominicans, as well as prayer, seminars, group sharing and tours.



France



St. Dominic began his life and journeys in Spain, but traveled as far as northern Germany and into France and Italy over the course of his lifetime. Our pilgrimage with Sr. Jeanne and Fr. Rick and Sr. Mary Ellen O'Grady was in many ways a journey into the heart of Dominican life, as we explored not only the physical world of St. Dominic but also the interior world through reflections on many aspects of Dominican life. The thought-provoking lectures and talks gave us much to contemplate!

Places of Interest

FANJEAUX - village where Dominic lived and where his spirit is very much alive.



Population of approximately 800.

Places of Interest

ASSASSINS CROSS - believed to be the place where St. Dominic was waylaid by those plotting to kill him.



We commemorated Dominic's sense of itinerancy with a ritualized walk to Assassin's Cross. It is said that Saint Dominic was walking the path from Fanjeaux to Prouille and he was singing. Now, he had many reasons to be unhappy:

- He was walking barefoot, as he was said to have carried his shoes.
- He was left alone in Fanjeaux after his friend and partner, Diego, left. Dominic was the only Spaniard in the region and the only Catholic.
- Dominic lived among people who did not share his beliefs and his culture, and, yet, he loved these people deeply. It was said that, at night, he could be heard wailing loudly for the people, for their lack of belief, in compassion.
- He was living among some who even wanted to murder him.

In fact, some who wanted to murder him were hiding in the bushes on his trail waiting to do the very job. As Dominic approached them, the assassins heard him singing and quickly changed their minds. Even though he struggled in Fanjeaux, it is said that they couldn't murder a man so joyous. So they let him live, and he sang on.



Paul Farnell, DR

“Signadou” Sign of God



One evening in 1206, outside the north gates of the village of Fanjeaux, Dominic sat reading about St. Mary Magdalen whose feast day it was. As he reflected on the life of the saint, he was moved to ask God for guidance in what he should do. He also asked for a sign from the Blessed Virgin to help him. Just then, a globe of fire came out of the heavens, hovered a bit, and then, in a blaze of glory, settled over the forlorn and desolate church of Prouille which was nearby. He could not believe his eyes. He came back to the same spot the next evening and the sign was repeated. He returned again on the third evening and sure enough the vision appeared again. He took this as the sign he had prayed for and determined that the church at Prouille was the place God wanted him to begin his work. This vision is known as the *Seignadou*, “the sign of God” in the language of the place and time.¹

Takeaways: To recognize God’s light in everyone and continue like Dominic to have a passion for the truth – always some truth in everyone’s argument; without study preaching is babbling; live simply; take care of the beauty around you.

Places of Interest

PROUILHE - initially a refueling stop for priests combating heresy of Catharism

Home of first monastery of nuns



Dominic himself placed a special importance on the enclosure of women, yet it was not until 1294, many years after his death, that Prouille became a fully enclosed house. The monastery was so thoroughly razed during the French Revolution that only one arch keystone remains. Its triumphal rebuilding was a personal project of Henri-Dominique Lacordaire, who was the catalyst of the return of the banned Dominicans to France under the French Second Empire.

La Maison Saint Dominic



Dominic's House – b. 1171-1173; died 1221 (50 years old); southern France at this time – there were former Christians who converted to Albaghensian heresy (Cathars); they didn't want to be under the King of France; believed in a good and evil God; denied the Catholic faith and spirituality; Dominic preached the fullness of life; he preached the Gospel of love and compassion for humans; so he was in Fanjeaux – living at this house; he just talked with people and they believed his preaching; Dominic symbols and mosaic

The home contains a small room where St. Dominic is believed to have resided for much of his time in Fanjeaux. Walking through a thick wooden door no more than 5 feet high, into St. Dominic's room was truly a walk back in history. Although the room transformed into a chapel many years ago, it was easy to imagine what it must have been like while occupied by St. Dominic. A place where St. Dominic pondered his loneliness and his calling. The dark wood, tile floors, and fireplace are contrasted against the bright stained-glass panels that now cover the one window into the room from the outside. The six stained-glass panels depict important moments in St. Dominic's life during his time in Fanjeaux.

Places of Interest

TOULOUSE - city where Dominic gathered his first friars.

St. Thomas Aquinas' tomb is in the Church of the Jacobins



The city of Toulouse is France's 4th largest city. City is referred to as "La Ville Rose," the red brick city, as most of its buildings were constructed from pink hued bricks built from the clay that is found in the river that flows through the region and city, the Garonne. We began by visiting "La Basilique Saint-Sernin," the largest Romanesque pilgrimage church in Europe and built in the late 11th / early 12th centuries. The church is named for Saint Sernin, the first Bishop of Toulouse from the mid-3rd century. We learned about Saint Sernin martyrdom. (Rue du Taur). Its crypt is home to the largest collection of holy relics in Europe, with the exception of Rome. It is a major stopping place on a pilgrimage to Compostela, Spain.

We then visited Les Jacobins, the historical Church of the Dominicans. The Dominican Order when it was first formed and recognized was referred to as Jacobins, which comes from the location of their first convent in [Paris in rue Saint Jacques](#). Dating back to 1230, the church was initially half its current height and size, built to reflect St. Dominic's desires regarding a life and vow of poverty and simplicity. The church went through expansion in the 1300s, and that structure still remains. Its stained glass windows capture the sun's rays and illuminate the walls inside with brilliant rainbow colors. After the French revolution and the Dominican order being banned, Napoleon took over the church and turned it into military barracks, adding floors to create two stories with the upper for dormitories and the lower level for armory and stables. Today, the lower level walls remain scarred from the armory and horses' impact.

At the center of the church (now museum) lie the relic remains of [Dominican Saint Thomas Aquinas](#). We sat in the simple pews and gazed upon one of the most revered Dominican saints. Thomas Aquinas was born only four years after Saint Dominic's death. At the age of 19 he entered the Dominicans. His most noted work is the *Summa Theologica*, in which he posits five arguments for the existence of God.

Places of Interest

CARCASSONNE - medieval city
where Dominic preached.



Carcassonne; A medieval walled city;

The Basilica of Saints Nazarius and Celsus (French: Basilique des Saints Nazaire et Celse) is a Roman Catholic minor basilica.

It is a national monument, and is in the Gothic-Romanesque architectural tradition.

Dominic preached in this Basilica during Lent in 1213

Places of Interest

MONTESEGUR -
steep 3900 ft.
mountain refuge
and last stronghold
of the Cathars



MONTESEGUR

Originally belonging to one family, the Cathar community asked Raymond de Pereille to restore the chateaux on top of Montsegur to provide them with a safe haven on top of the rocky outcrop 3900 ft high.. It became a refuge for cathars and the lords who had been dispossessed of their land by the crusaders. At least 600 people lived on the site during this period.

In 1244 at the end of a 15 day truce, cathars were forced to choose between renouncing their faith or perish. More than 220 Cathars were burned at the stake at the historical monument.

Places of Interest

MONTESEGUR - refuge for cathars and the lords who had been dispossessed of their land by the crusaders.

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More than 220 Cathars were burned at the stake at this historical monument.



Places of Interest

SOREZE - village where Lacordaire established an international school and where he is buried



"Between the past where are memories and the future where our hopes are, there is the present where our duties are." - Lacordaire

SOREZE

Lacordaire was the leading ecclesiastical in the Roman catholic revival in France following the French Revolution. He believed that the best way to strengthen the church was to restore the orders destroyed by the revolution. Favoring the Dominicans because they (we!) were especially devoted to Preaching and Education, he joined in 1838 at the age of 36. He was head of French Dominicans for 4 years. He died at the age of 59.

We visited the Abbey school of Sorèze which Lacordaire led in the 1850's. Its history is linked to that of education in France, in Europe and in the world because of its international recruitment.. It was so powerful to see his shoes and office - to sense his presence as he walked the halls filled with students. An artist has added hand-drawn images on the walls of the building of students from the photos he found in the old school files.

Maison Seilhan



In 1215, Pierre Seilhan hosted Saint Dominic at his home and petitioned him to make it the cradle of the Order of Friar Preachers. This is a venue charged with ancient history. Backing on to the former Gallo-Roman ramparts whose vestiges are still visible, the Maison Seilhan was home to the very first members of the Order of Friar Preachers – the first Dominican order –, who slept in the dormitory located in the upper hall. Finally, the brothers set up home at the Jacobins, but they continued to use this site until the end of the XVIII Century.

Here we can admire 6 tableaux by Verotius (1754) that represent the life of St Dominic, the furniture of Fr. Henri-Dominique Lacordaire who re-established the Order of Friar Preachers in France after the Revolution and a replica of the statue of Notre-Dame du Palais. The chapel boasts a ceiling painted by a Dominican friar in honour of St Dominic.

2023 Pilgrims

Ministries represented:

- Education
- Prison
- Farm
- Counseling
- Vocations
- Canon Lawyer
- 3rd order Laity
- Associates
- Communications



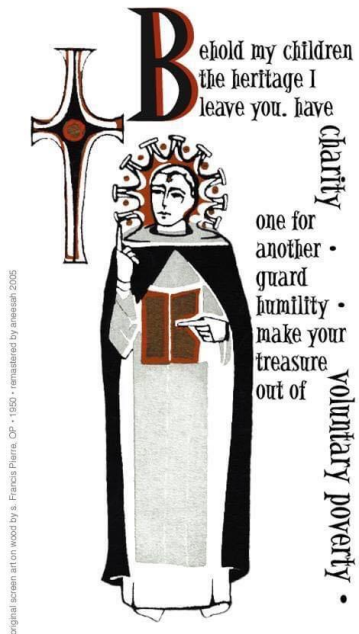


Heritage

Love

Humility

Poverty



Go Confidently

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Image by Stephanie Stauder, OP

*Go in confidence,
for God will give
you the gift
of preaching.
you will lack
for nothing.*

Deepening the Dominican Spirit – June 2023