

In the World and for the Church

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We call ourselves the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of Saint Catherine of Siena. We are a Congregation. You may ask: what is exactly a Congregation and why do we call ourselves a Congregation? First, we are a Congregation, fully living in the world where the quality of relationships makes heavy demands on its members. Secondly, we are a Congregation in full communion with the Church in our pastoral orientation. Third, we are a Congregation living an ordinary life for the common good, with different structures that comprise it and its communities in mission.

Our Apostolate. A Congregation in the light of the teachings of the Church makes an effort to

be faithful to its teaching on Christian Education. We have to date twenty educational institutions in the country. The Congregation through its school apostolate envisions our institutions to be centers of authentic Catholic education. The school communities assist in the integral formation of individuals entrusted to them, empowering them to be the fulfillment of God's mission as they leave the walls of our schools.

The Congregation also believes that "every scientific effort to prolong life and every act of love shown the sick is a preparation for the Gospel and sharing in Christ's healing ministry." Hence, two hospitals administered by the Congregation have



been fulfilling the mission of healthcare. These hospitals and our clinic ministry continue to respond to the needs of the indigent sick; they endeavor to uphold pro-life and family values as embodied in the directives for Catholic hospitals. The Congregation through the different communities and institutions has shown extra-ordinary care for the sick and elderly Sisters. Sisters have brought along their students and staff to visit the elderly sick Sisters, so that they may have a meaningful encounter with the Sisters who once were part of the various institutions of the Congregation.

One reads from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (12:4-6): "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone." In this light, the Congregation takes on different ministries as well. There are four spirituality centers which provide a venue for spiritual and moral development of the young and adults of various sectors of society, rich and poor alike.

The Congregation also looks into the need to strengthen our foreign missions. At present, we have pastoral centers in USA, Rome, Ethiopia,

Thailand, and Sri Lanka. Our missions are tested with difficulties of the structures that some of our sisters have experienced; yet, they took the challenge, bearing in mind that the Lord sends us out on mission, to the ends of the earth.

Our documents state: "With the deterioration of society's moral fabric, increasing poverty, and indifference of the people toward the Church, the Sisters must respond to the call for renewed evangelization and integral faith formation through catechesis." The Congregation has opened the Mother Francisca Catechetical and Missionary Formation Institute (MFCMFI) to poor but deserving college students who will obtain an education degree and training as a missionary-catechist. There is an on-going formation program to assure the continuity of their formation and as a source of inspiration and support for those who are currently enrolled in the program. In addition, there is a commitment to the preaching ministry of Sisters by their involvement in the catechetical ministry in the parish/public schools in whatever capacity and creative ways and means possible (cf. *Actas* 81). They should recognize as a top priority the service of the Gospel to all, especially to the poor (cf. *NCDP* 54).

Additional Involvements. The Congregation has active involvement in a Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Program of the Church, always being aware of the urgency of reaching out to the poor. This advocacy work for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation takes its flesh in the community development and outreach programs in our different institutions; it is manifested in various forms: scholarships, livelihood projects, medical and dental missions, spiritual counseling, and other activities for the poor, migrants, indigenous peoples, and the least in the community, here and abroad, in response to social, economic and political issues and concerns.

Since the Church encourages consecrated men and women to work with the laity, the Congregation has the formation program of the LMAMFES (Lay Missionary Associates of Mother

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Francisca del Espiritu Santo). Through the guidance of the Sister-Adviser, all together seek to have the active involvement in the promotion of the life, virtues and the missionary zeal of Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo de Fuentes. In proclaiming God through its different ministries, the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of Saint Catherine of Siena ensures that its lay partners are given the kind of spiritual formation that enables them to make an impact on the people they deal with.

Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo de Fuentes, our beloved Foundress, lived 300 years ago; yet, her life, virtues and legacy live on and her message resounds strongly in the Church and society through the mission of the Congregation.

The Congregation gets inspiration and guidance from Mother Francisca's life and legacy. She was able to discern with the Spirit; she has shown that no amount of obstacles, distractions, or setbacks can deter her from something she knows is the morally upright thing to do. Our society today must, like Mother Francisca, stand firm on issues that must never be given up. Our stands against divorce, same-sex marriage, abortion and contraception, justice and peace issues, and environmental degradation are non-negotiable. Mother Francisca's famous statement, "God's will cannot be resisted," should be our guiding principle individually and as a Church on issues that we



know are what our Lord would want us to stand up for. Like her, our faith and obedience to God and to the Church will help us face the challenge of the new millennium.

All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity. All are called to holiness. "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Thus, doing the will of the Father in everything, may they wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbors. This is clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints!

Yes, Mother Francisca is an example of prophetic witnessing, of Christian life in the radical living out of the Gospel values, of life-giving service to the poor, the sick and the young in education and promotion of the faith and Christian perfection. These qualities were an overflow of her life of intimacy with Jesus and her love for the Eucharist and fidelity to prayer.

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