

HISTORY OF THE BLESSED FRA ANGELICO CHAPTER OF THE DOMINICAN LAITY – MODESTO, CA

The Chapter was started by two Life Professed Lay Dominicans living in the Central Valley cities of Manteca and Modesto, Antonine Gratonik OPL and Sandra (Sandy) Uyeshiro OPL.

They had been traveling to Oakland for years to be part of the St. Albert the Great Chapter, but saw a need for a Chapter closer to home. At about the same time two other Lay Dominican Chapters were forming in the Central Valley of California in Sacramento and in Visalia. On June 23, 2007 an informational meeting was held to assess interest in a Chapter in Modesto. About ten new people were in attendance and it was decided that a Chapter-in-Formation would begin in September, 2007. Meetings would be on the second Saturday of each month at St. Joseph Parish in Modesto beginning with 8am Mass in the Church and then moving to the John Paul II building for social time, business meeting and formation class.

During the summer of 2007 when Antonine and Sandy attended a talk given by former Master of the Dominican Order, Timothy Radcliffe, at the San Rafael Dominican Motherhouse, they met and invited Sr. Katherine Hamilton OP to act as the Religious Assistant for the Chapter. She accepted and in Fall, 2008 was officially appointed by the Prior Provincial of the Western Province, Fr. Emmerich Vogt OP. Fr. Vincent Serpa was at that time the Promoter of the Dominican Laity for the Western Province.

A Discernment Retreat was scheduled for September 8, 2007 and was to be given by Karen Woods, then President of the Lay Provincial Council for the Lay Dominicans of the Western Province. Karen was unable to come at the last minute due to the cancellation of her plane flight so Antonine and Sandy carried out the retreat that had been planned by Karen. In October the first year of formal formation began with aspects of the Four Pillars of the Dominican Order (Prayer, Study, Apostolate and Community) being covered each month. In December an Advent Day of Reflection was given by Sr. Christine Wilcox OP of the San Rafael Dominicans. January 11-13, 2008 the first retreat was held at St. Albert's Priory in Oakland in conjunction with the Sacramento Chapter. The Retreat was given by Fr. Brendan McAnerney OP on the works of "Fra Angelico". The members of the Modesto Chapter in attendance were so impressed by Fra Angelico that the new Chapter was named in his honor and christened the "Blessed Fra Angelico Chapter". On August 9, 2008 the first Rite of Reception was held in St. Joseph Church. Karen Woods came from Tempe, AZ to officiate and Sr. Katherine was also there to help. Five members were received: Judy Chamberlain-Bauer, Rebecca Hahn, Mary McNicholas, Josephine (Jo) Merfalen and Nancy Sill.

The second year of formal formation began in September, 2008. The topics for the 2008-2009 formation year were the Beatitudes, Social Justice, and the Statutes.

In October officers were elected for the first time for a period of one year. Mary McNicholas as Moderator, Rebecca (Becky) Hahn as Secretary, Judy Chamberlain-Bauer as Treasurer, Sandy Uyeshiro as Formation Director, Antonine Gratonik as LPC representative, and Rebecca Hahn as LPC representative alternate. Officers began meeting in November as a Council a week or two before the regular meeting. In November Rebecca had to take a leave from the Chapter and stepped down from her offices. Nancy Sill agreed to become the new Secretary and Jo Merfalen the LPC representative alternate. In December the second Advent Day of Reflection was given by Sr. Patricia Bruno OP of the San Rafael Dominicans. The second annual retreat was held January 9-11 at St. Albert's Priory in conjunction with the Sacramento Chapter and was given by Fr. Brian Mullady. Receptions and Professions were held August 8, 2009 on the feast of St. Dominic with Fr. Joseph Illo, pastor of St. Joseph's parish, presiding.