

Blessed Mary, Mother of Dominic, Community of Cedaredge

Brothers and sisters, with great honor, I am here to present a summary of progress on our newest lay community in Cedaredge, Colorado. Cedaredge is a small town at the southern base of the Grand Mesa, and they are comprised of a group of ten Catechists, Liturgists, and Eucharistic ministers active in St. Philip Benizi Mission and St. Michael Parish, who were in search of spiritual fulfillment and purpose, a greater sense of community, and a greater understanding of God's Apostolic mission.

Their journey began in January of 2016 with a core group of four catechists inquiring and researching different third orders that they might align with spiritually. They were blessed to have two nuns from a Dominican Ordered Monastery located in Lufkin, Texas who were visiting Cedaredge on family affairs during this time of their discernment for the laity, and thus they utilized this opportunity to visit with and ask many questions to Sr. Mary Dominic and Sr. Mary Jeremiah. The sisters, faithful to St. Dominic, were apostolic in their mission, recognizing the yearning for spiritual growth and inspired the group to learn more about the Dominican Spirituality.

In June 2016, Sharon Bonebrake contacted Jo Ann Cotterman, Provincial President of the Lay Provincial Executive Council of the Province of St. Martin de Porres in New Orleans, who put the group in contact with me, to get them started. After a brief email exchange, I understood that this group was not merely looking for a prayer group, but for a mission that was aligned with the Dominican Spirituality. They faced extreme and impractical challenges in joining current chapters in Denver or Colorado Springs, both are a 6 hour drive from their location. This is why their situation was exceptional, inspiring a new approach to formation. After receiving permission from Rome to form a new community with an offsite formation director utilizing Skype as the link, I conversed with Sharon via phone and email regarding the procedure for their formation, and we formulated a plan for their monthly meetings, using Skype as their link to their formation director. Sharon spoke on behalf of the group and relayed all the email correspondence to them throughout this process. Everyone was thrilled with the news of starting our Skype sessions beginning in January 2017.

Since then, their group meets twice per month: once as a local community, to learn to pray the Liturgy of Hours, to choose prayer leaders and readers for their next Skype session, to attend to small business matters and events, discuss their current study book "Dominican Spirituality", and pray the Rosary. Their goal is to have everyone praying the Divine Office using the 4 volume set of books by the end of the year. The third Sunday of each month is their Skype sessions with their chapter moderator and formation director Dr. Sebastian Mahfood, O.P. They follow the same format for both meetings, except for an additional 30-45 minute formation session that is added at the end of their Skype meeting for their formation. This time is spent with Dr. Mahfood learning and discussing our formal Central Province Lay Dominican formation material. As of September 2017, they have completed two important milestones: their first study book, "Dominican Spirituality", by William A. Hinnebusch, O.P., and the Initiate Section of their Formation. They will be formally received into the Lay Dominican Family in October at our conference in Denver and will begin their Candidacy I Formation in November. They are all grateful and excited to continue their journey in becoming fully professed Lay Dominicans. They are equally humbled knowing they are the first group in the history of the order to be formed using Skype to bridge the distance between them and their formation leader. Through the intercession of St. Dominic, we pray in thanksgiving for this opportunity and for guidance in their continued perseverance into this uncharted territory.