**Sixth Dominican Spirituality Workshop of the Central-Eastern European Region (DSE-CE)**

It was with a lot of joy that I looked back on the past 14 years on our way to Badin, Slovakia, the venue of the sixth Dominican spirituality workshop of our region. In July, 2001, three congregations of our region met for the first Spiritual Workshop in Kőszeg, Hungary: the sisters from Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. In our region the sisters were lacking Dominican formation due to the lasting communist rule in our countries that one way or another had banned religious orders, and DSI offered the possibility to invite Dominican sisters and brothers from other parts of the world to share with us all we missed out on the Dominican tradition and formation. Thus started the first workshop – it was an important event, during which we also realised that we have common roots/ beginning precisely in Kőszeg, and lasting friendships were born among the members of the three congregations present. These congregations have taken turns in the past 14 years to organise a spirituality workshop every 3-4 years, and the workshops gradually grew into including not only other congregations from the region, but also inviting sisters from all over Europe to share in our experience of being one family (this time there were 65 of us, from 11 different countries). During these years we have grown both in our Dominican identity (personally and congregationally) and theological formation, and finally the time has come, when we ourselves can offer to share our insights and the fruits of our studies. This summer has been the first workshop, where a sister of our own was one of the lecturers, Sr. Hedvig Deák OP, the prioress general of the Hungarian Dominican sisters, our other lecturer being Fr. Vivian Boland OP, vicar general of the Master of the Order, who both made this week memorable for us, and gave us food for thought till our next meeting.

 In accordance with the year of religious, our topic was „Theology and mission of religious life”, as seen from two special perspectives: an anthropological perspective offered by Fr. Vivian on religious and dominican life, and a theological focus by Sr. Hedvig on the evangelical counsels according to St. Thomas Aquinas. The lectures were followed by group-discussions, thus giving our time together a real workshop-like quality, with an opportunity to share our questions, experiences, practical insights on questions prepared by our lecturers, and also to share our faith not only during discussions or coffee breaks, but most importantly during our common liturgy. As already accustomed, we prayed the office of hours in all the languages represented, everybody reciting of singing some part of the office in their mothertongue, praising God for the richness of the Church and of the Order represented in these small matters, as well.

Here are some of the highlights from sisters: „Far from everyday duties, our mind fully concentrating on theological and philosophical questions (as well as on the Babel of languages), enjoying a special kind of Dominican community... A very nice part of our lives – thank you our Lord, thank you sisters, brothers, sponsors!” (sr. M. Krista OP, Czech Repubic) „Meeting sisters from Central Europe was a great enrichment for me. The content of the lectures was excellent!” (sr. M. Jean-Baptiste OP, France) „This was a wonderful meeting of Dominican Sisters. It is great to see so vibrant a community of sisters who share the same misssion and the same passion for the Word of God. These days we witnessed a holy preaching indeed. It was a week of mutual sharing and enrichment.” (sr. M. Barbara OP, Croatia) „I have been in this part of Europe for the first time and it is for me a great encouragement to see, how the Dominican life is flourishing in spite of the difficulties that were caused by communism. It is beautiful to meet sisters from different countries and to experience their enthusiasm and openness. I realize that we are all in the same boat, on the one journey of growth and search for truth.” (sr. Jamila OP, Pakistan/Slovenia) „It was enriching for me to be here and to experience enthusiasm of the life in dominican spirituality. As a junior sister I discovered anew the beauty and uniqueness of my vocation and consecration. This meeting has reassured me that the Dominican Family consists of sisters and brothers, with whom I want to walk towards the one goal, which is Christ.” (sr. M. Sabína OP, Slovakia) „This was my second time attending the workshop, and it has widened my perspective on religious life. As a postulant everything was very new three years ago, now I have been here as a junior sister, and felt more free, more connected to the Order, and beside all the novelties brought by our common study these days, I also felt a new and deeper connection to my sisters from other congregations. I have come to know anew the international face of the Dominican Order.” (Sr. Angelika OP, Hungary).

Our sisters in Slovakia made a perfect job in organising the event, not only in providing the best coffee, fruits and cookies for the breaks, or offering in the evenings wonderful opportunities in trying out different crafts, or in taking us on a wonderful outing the last day, but also in finding the best venue possible in the St. Francis Xavier seminary in Badin - a beautiful, quiet and prayerful place, where our dominican sisters and some of the seminarians welcomed us. We are grateful to them all – for the service, for the wonderful meals, for the help with the translation equipments, for their kindness and generosity in every way.

For those, who wish to partake in some of the richness of this workshop, we made the lectures available in written format on the webpage of our region (http://dsece.weebly.com/workshop-2015.html), and you can also browse through all the photos the sisters took and shared in the Gallery. The next workshop will be held in Hungary, in the summer of 2018, which will also be the 150th jubilee of the Dominican Sisters of St. Margaret of Hungary, giving us all the possibility to celebrate together with our hosts.

A special thanks to Sr. Marie Therese Clement OP, the international coordinator of DSI, and Sr. Else-Britt Nelsen OP, the DSE coordinator for gracing our workshop with their presence. It was a pleasure having you with us!

Sr. Lucia Petres OP

DSE-CE regional coordinator