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Seven Dominican communities merge into one

Marnie McAllister Catholic News Service | Apr. 23, 2009

LOUISVILLE, Ky. -- Seven communities of Dominican sisters formally merged April 12 to form a new congregation called the Dominican Sisters of Peace.

The congregation will be based in Columbus, Ohio, home to the former Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs, one of the founding communities.

The sisters gathered April 14 for a ceremony in St. Louis to formalize the merger.

"There is a great sense of hope, great energy and great commitment to the mission" among the 265 sisters who gathered in St. Louis, said Sr. Joan Scanlon, who has been elected to the new congregation's leadership council. Her community was the Dominican Sisters of St. Catharine, Ky.

"It is very historic when seven congregations have ended and committed to come together," she told The Record, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Louisville. "We have hundreds of years of ministry behind us."

The new congregation is comprised of Dominican communities from five states.

In addition to the 187-year-old St. Catharine community and the Columbus Dominicans, it is made up of the Dominican Congregation of St. Rose of Lima in Oxford, Mich.; the Dominican Sisters, Congregation of Mary, and the Eucharistic Missionaries of St. Dominic, both of New Orleans; the Dominican Sisters of Great Bend, Kan.; and the Sisters of St. Dominic of Akron, Ohio.

The Dominican Sisters of Peace has about 650 sisters serving in 29 states and in Honduras, Nigeria, Peru, Tanzania and Vietnam. The congregation also has about 500 associates -- lay men and women who are partners in ministry with the sisters.

More than a third of the Dominican Sisters of Peace attended the first chapter meeting April 15-21 in St. Louis to elect leaders and articulate their mission.

Sr. Margaret Ormond, formerly of St. Mary of the Springs in Columbus, was elected prioress during an April 19 election. Other sisters were elected to serve as councilors. They will take office Aug. 8 on the feast of St. Dominic.

In the meantime, the former leaders of the founding communities have formed a transition team, said Sr. Joye Gros, who was president of the St. Catharine community during the formation of the new congregation.

She said the congregation's leadership will work in central offices located in Columbus. Campus buildings at St. Catharine College, near Springfield, Ky., will also host some offices. Each of the motherhouses belonging to the founding communities will remain in use because sisters are living there.

In determining how the new congregation will serve the church, the sisters pledged to devote themselves to

studying Scripture, promoting nonviolence and justice, and creating welcoming communities.

Sr. Scanlon said the work of the newly formed congregation will focus primarily on the Dominican charism "to preach the truth."

"The call to preach the truth and give to others the fruits of our contemplation are at the heart of our Dominican life," she said.

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