

Mount de Sales' Dominican Sisters Are An Inspiration

The Dominican Sisters, as I wrote in my Dec. 8 story for The Catholic Review, are one of the big reasons Mount de Sales Academy in Catonsville has become one of the most successful schools in the Baltimore area. The school, under the Dominicans, has invested in its Catholic identity and the school is now at capacity and responding to the demand by expanding on campus. With so many Catholic schools trying to succeed during this economic downturn, Mount de Sales is showing how it's done. One of the amazing things about the Dominicans is how they create an atmosphere that is relaxed, in a rigorous academic setting. With their habits, the sisters look "old school," but they're largely a young order, at least at Mount de Sales, that makes real connections with the girls who attend the school. When I first saw some of the sisters a few years ago, I wondered how they could ever successfully connect with young people. Habits seem like something of a bygone era, but the Dominicans are so deceptively cool. I've been fortunate enough to see them at work through various archdiocesan events and at something like World Youth Day. The Mount de Sales contingent stayed in the same Madrid hotel as the Archdiocese of Baltimore's this past August. Take a listen to some student reflections from that trip. Last March I attended a vocations event in Anne Arundel County, attending by some 40 teens. Priest, seminarians and the Dominicans. During a 40-minute question and answer session, the Dominicans blew away all preconceived notions I had of them. They were contemporary, cool and open about their life journeys. Take Sister Peter Marie Chrismer for example. She shared what she wanted to be with the young people in this brief clip from her presentation.

She's not alone. Five other Dominican Sisters are there on campus, sharing similar journeys. They were once dreamers, like so many of the teens they teach. In fact, the sisters give off the impression they're living a dream now. The sisters are very approachable, authentically love their vocation and don't apologize for it. This is their calling and the girls of Mount de Sales are better for it. So is the Archdiocese of Baltimore.