

St. Dominic Priory – St. Louis Missouri **A Brief History**

The Dominican Friars (Order of Preachers) established St. Dominic Priory on July 1, 1981, as the house of studies (*studium*) of the Province of St. Albert the Great (Central Province) and at the same time moved their school – Aquinas Institute of Theology – to St. Louis. A “priory” is fundamentally a community of Friars who come together to pursue the end of the Order of Preachers – “preaching and the salvation of souls”; by extension the term is applied to the physical house in which the Friars reside. Although this community of Friars was established in 1981, this priory building only became the residence of these Friars on December 15, 2011. For their first thirty years in St. Louis the Dominican Friars had been the “temporary” guests of the Jesuits of St. Louis University. In time the Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Martin de Porres (Southern Province) joined in the endeavor and St. Dominic Priory became the house of studies for that Province as well.

During their thirty-year stay at Jesuit Hall, the Friars from time to time had looked into the possibility of having their own priory building which might be more conducive to their particular way of community life, but no satisfactory option was found. In January 2010, the Friars became aware that the consortium of religious Orders that had formed the Inter-community Housing Association (3407 Lafayette Avenue) to provide low-income housing for women and children had closed their operation and was desirous of selling their building, popularly known as “Pillar Place.” In November 2010, the Central and Southern Provinces formed an independent corporation to purchase, renovate, add to, and manage the building which would henceforth be known as St. Dominic Priory. Alan Nehring of NehringDesign was chosen to be the architect, Paric Corporation was retained as the General Contractor, and Symphony, LLD, was hired to be the Friars’ Owner’s Representative to supervise the project.

The original building had been constructed in 1908-1909 for Loretto Academy, a high school for girls sponsored by the Sisters of Loretto. When this school was closed in 1952, the Sisters of Loretto converted the building to a retirement center for their Sisters and it served this purpose for over thirty-five years. The building was purchased by the Inter-community Housing Association in the early 1990's and again converted to provide low-income housing; it served this purpose until 2009. The Dominican Friars renovated the original building to provide bedrooms for a possible 49 Friars, a chapel suitable for their style of community prayer, a modest library, and offices and parlor for the priory. An addition was constructed and connected to the original building to provide a kitchen and dining room on the first floor and a recreation room and chapter room on the second floor.

As the Friars of St. Dominic Priory begin the 2020-2021 school year, the community is composed of 9 senior Friars and 13 student brothers. The student brothers matriculate at Aquinas Institute of Theology (located at 23 S. Spring Street) to pursue their initial philosophical and theological studies. Some of the senior Friars are engaged in teaching and administrative ministry at Aquinas Institute of Theology, some are engaged in college campus ministry, some work in area ministries in the Saint Louis area.

The community of St. Dominic Priory welcomes you to their home. Please feel free to ask any of the Friars about their way of life or about details of the priory building. Once COVID restrictions are lifted, feel free to join the friars for prayer or Mass. Details can be found at www.friarly.org. You can also email the prior at deporresd@gmail.com.