



Frequently Asked Questions

Created for National Catholic Sisters Week

Q. What exactly is National Catholic Sisters Week?

A. [National Catholic Sisters Week](#), which began in 2014, is an annual celebration highlighting the contributions of women religious through local events offered throughout the nation. The week is held every year March 8-14, in the middle of National Women's History Month.

Q. I always get the Adrian Dominican Sisters confused with Siena Heights. Aren't they the same thing?

A. No, but they are related as "mother" and "daughter" institutions. The Adrian Dominican Sisters are a Congregation of 650 vowed women religious – active Catholic Sisters – who are based in Adrian, Michigan. Along with other independent congregations of Dominican Sisters, we trace our roots to St. Dominic, a Friar from the 13th Century who founded the Order of Preachers (OP) – also called the Dominicans – to preach the Good News of God's love for all of creation.

Since we first came to Adrian, Michigan more than 125 years ago, we have started schools, hospitals, and other organizations through which we carry out the work of Christ. We established St. Joseph College in 1919, where we could prepare women to be teachers. The college was renamed Siena Heights College in 1939, became co-educational in 1969, and, with the addition of a school of professional studies, became Siena Heights University in 1998. We continue to sponsor [Siena Heights University](#), but we are separate and independent entities.

Q. Don't the Adrian Dominican Sisters share the same buildings as Siena Heights University?

A. No, although our two campuses are next to one another and we recently donated the former St. Joseph Academy building to SHU. The rest of the Adrian Dominican Sisters'

campus serves as the “world headquarters” for our 650 Sisters and 200 Associates who minister throughout the United States and in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Norway and the Philippines. Our campus includes offices for Sisters and co-workers (approximately 300 employees); two chapels; independent, assisted-living, and nursing residences for some 250 elderly Sisters; a five-story conference and retreat facility (Weber Center, with gift shop), and a literacy center (Adrian Rea Literacy Center).

Q. I don't see too many Dominican Sisters – or Sisters of any kind – teaching in the classrooms of Catholic schools any more. Where exactly do you serve?

A. A number of our Sisters still serve in education – as teachers, principals, or administrators – both in elementary schools and high schools, as well as in colleges and in universities. Others teach in parish-based religious education programs. We have also established seven literacy centers in Adrian, Chicago, Detroit, and South Florida, continuing our tradition of education in areas that are especially relevant today.

In addition, our Sisters minister in hospitals and other health-care agencies as doctors, nurses, or chaplains; and in parishes, diocesan offices, peace and justice advocacy, ecology, spirituality centers, social services, and the arts. We serve in 24 states and in the nations of the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Mexico, and Norway.

Q. I hear the terms “sisters” and “nuns” used at different times. Is there a difference?

A. Yes, although many use the terms interchangeably. Nuns are cloistered women, who live apart from the world. Their primary ministry is to pray for the needs of the world, though they might also create and sell items such as fudge to support themselves. Sisters are women who minister with and to the people of the world, living together in communities when possible. The Dominican family includes both nuns and Sisters.

Q. You used to wear habits (special dress) so that we could tell who you were. Why don't you still wear them?

A. Although any Sister has the right to wear a habit, most Adrian Dominican Sisters phased out of wearing habits after our Chapter of Renewal in 1968. Originally, habits were the simple dress of women of the day. In response to the Second Vatican Council, Catholic Sisters began to see themselves not as separated from the world, but as a part

of the world, seeking to transform it to Jesus' vision. Wearing the dress of women of *our times* is a way to signify that.

Q. Why have you stopped mowing part of the lawn around your Motherhouse?

A. We have designated 9.5 acres of our grounds as a [permaculture](#) site. Permaculture – a contraction of “permanent” and “agriculture” – is an agricultural process and philosophy of working with, rather than against, nature, and of respecting and making best use of nature’s abundance. Our permaculture site includes a large asparagus bed, three berms (raised beds) of assorted berries, and a food forest of fruit and nut tree seedlings. The 20 beds in our Charlotte’s Web Community Garden are designated for use by residents of the Adrian area, as well as our Sisters, Associates, and Co-workers. The Permaculture site is an expression of our Earth care. Learn more by viewing videos on the Facebook page “[Permaculture – Adrian Dominican Sisters.](#)”

Q. How can I get involved with the ministries of the Adrian Dominican Sisters?

A. There are a number of ways:

- If you’re a single Catholic woman between the ages of 20 and 45, we would encourage you to consider whether God might be calling you to religious life – to life as an Adrian Dominican Sister. If you’re interested and feel the call, contact Sister Sara Fairbanks, Vocation Director, at 517-266-3537; toll free 866-774-0005; or email her at sfairbanks@adriandominicans.org.
- If you are over 18 and believe in our Dominican mission and vision, you can partner with us through a non-vowed commitment as an [Associate](#). Associates can be men or women, single, married, or divorced. While maintaining their own lifestyle and remaining financially independent, Associates participate in various spiritual, social, and ministerial experiences with the Sisters, as well as attending Congregational events. If you are interested, please contact Mary Lach, Director of Associate Life, at 517-266-3531 or email her at associates@adriandominicans.org.
- The Adrian Dominican Sisters Congregation is one of the largest [employers](#) in Lenawee County in the areas of health care, maintenance, food service, office administration, spiritual life, environmental services, etc. To explore a possible career with the Congregation, visit our [employment page](#) and contact Erin Dress,

Director of Human Resources, at 517-266-4102 or email her at edress@adriandominicans.org.

- If you would like to participate in our mission and ministries through a monetary donation, please contact Amy Palmer, Development Director, at 517-266-3480 or email her at apalmer@adriandominicans.org.
- If you are interested in attending one of our retreats, days of reflection, or other spiritual programs, contact **Weber Retreat and Conference Center** at 517-266-4000 or check out their website, webercenter.org.
- If you are interested in learning more about permaculture or obtaining a plot in the Charlotte's Web Community Garden in the spring, please contact Elaine Johnson (ejohnson@adriandominicans.org) or Sister Carol Coston (ccoston@adriandominicans.org) in the **Permaculture Office**, 517-266-3599.
- If you would like to donate some of your time helping people in need, you might consider volunteering as a tutor with the **Adrian Rea Literacy Center** here on campus. If you are interested in this important ministry, please contact the [literacy center](http://literacycenter.org) at 517-264-7320 (español: 517-264-7327) or email info@adrianrealiteracy.org.
- Finally, visit us on social media! See news articles and information on our website, view our "Sister's Story" video interviews, enjoy our daily written reflections, tune in to our Evensong for Peace services via live stream (Tuesdays, 4:45 ET), and follow us on Twitter and Pinterest!

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Adrian-Dominican-Sisters/134760341266

Twitter @DominicanAdrian: www.twitter.com/DominicanAdrian

YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/adriandominicansiste

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