

# Lay Dominican Preaching, Evangelization and Witness

On Going Formation 4-1

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Ver 6

## Lay Dominican Preaching - Dominican Laity Guide and Their Call to Preach

Associated video clips are taken from “The War Room” by Sony Pictures.

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I bought this thinking it was an action movie. It was not what I expected.

If you have been given a gift of preaching as a lay person please disregard everything I am about to talk about. This session is meant for someone just beginning to approach lay evangelization. It is also meant for the lay person with generally no formal theology training.

Not all of us have the ability or the opportunity to stand before a group and preach. Not many of us will have a radio or TV talk show. Those chances are rare but that does not mean we do not have the occasion to preach at all. On the contrary we can make a wonderful difference in many lives by preaching in a “one on one” environment.

“There is a great need for dialogue and discussion in the public square and Catholics need to be witnesses to the faith by how we live our lives or interact with our family members, friends, co-workers or strangers.” Preaching and witnessing simply takes practice. Start small and pray, and it becomes second nature. Remember, this is a one on one experience.

Father Cadoré , Master of the Order, stopped in Atlanta as part of a tour through the South to visit Dominican communities. Asked what preaching means to people who will never stand in a pulpit, he said it doesn’t automatically mean speaking. “Preaching is probably most important in listening, than speaking. To preach is to discern where the Holy Spirit of the Lord is at work. To do this is to listen,” he said. “We try to reach those who are not coming to us. To reach someone new, you have to listen to them.”

Anyone can witness to something or some idea. It becomes evangelization when the idea that is witnessed to is directed at changing another person. As Dominicans we are called to preach that is to evangelize. To pray that God uses us in that ministry is therefore not presumptuous.

This presentation, along with **YOUR** input, will be the basis for a “lay evangelization roadmap”. I cannot emphasize enough the need for your opinions of what is said here, both about what I say and what others say.

So what do we have to go on already:

1. Canon 766 Lay Preaching - If necessity requires it in certain circumstances or it seems useful in particular cases, the diocesan bishop can admit lay faithful to preach, to offer spiritual conferences or give instructions in churches, oratories or other sacred places within his diocese, when he judges it to be to the spiritual advantage of the faithful.

2. The Role of Laity in Evangelization - The Church needs the voice of the laity to speak up! Priests can't go into your office and nuns can't go into your friend's house (probably). We are the ones that must carry the Gospel into our homes, schools, jobs, and public places. The QUESTION IS HOW!
3. Catechism of the Catholic Church referencing Lumen Gentium – “All baptized and confirmed Catholics are “strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.”
4. Quote attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi – “Preach the gospel at all times, when necessary, use words.”

I have spent most of my 40 years as a Dominican in some sort of uncertainty as to lay preaching aka lay evangelization as a Dominican. We spend a lot of time talking about preaching as an apostolate, even interrogating members about it, with no real recommendations. Many times saying that something is not preaching or apostolate but simply ministry. This may be in fact true as we shall see. The approach I am describing here seems to finally address the question with a workable solution, the HOW. We seem to think that everyone can preach from a pulpit but that is obviously not true. My goal is to use this presentation and your input to create a working method for lay evangelization.

My main problem has been that most of the lay preaching I have witnessed is either outright poor or just plain wrong as in heretical. The church encourages lay preaching but does not offer much of a step by step. This is what we will address here. We will now put this issue to rest.

Our starting point is the levels of evangelization.

Each of us has a different level of persuasiveness and each person we speak to has a different level of receptiveness. So there is a direct interaction between persuasiveness and receptiveness. This is obvious even in the secular world. But It is more so evident in the spiritual realm. There are greater forces at work.

The Blessed Mother has a super high persuasiveness based on her grace so so she can call for confession and get responses

Fr Humbert, being chosen, ordained and anointed has a higher level of spiritual persuasiveness. He can preach return to God differently and at a higher level than we.

We have our our own level and the person we are speaking to has their level of grace and we don't know either level. That's why it doesn't work well in general if we stand on the street corner yelling “go to confession” But regardless, we can pray that God sends us someone at our level of persuasiveness and theirs, matching the levels of receptiveness and persuasiveness.

I am particularly interested here in the absolute **most basic level**. You can't just wing it. So we will look at specific avenues of evangelization. Everyone **MUST** start at the beginning , there will be no shortcuts.

Examples of lay preaching.

1. God Bless you:
  - a. Say “God Bless You” to people as you depart their company. You will be surprised by how many people return the blessing.
  - b. You can also say “Amen” when appropriate

- c. Try it on the phone to spam callers or at the checkout. It will take practice to start to witness.
  - d. Do not be discouraged when you begin. Pray for success.
2. Grace before meals: Start with just a **sign of the cross**
- a. Start when you are alone then progress to with the family and finally publically in restaurants.
  - b. As you get more comfortable, move on to keeping your hands folded while you say grace silently
  - c. In a family setting let everyone say the words together
  - d. Discussion: How not to put-off others while doing this. Don't use your most fervent prayer when others are still in the spiritual starting gate. You will lose them right off.
  - e. Sports players make the sign of the cross before batting, in the end zone after a touchdown,- they also point toward heaven. Discussion: this is a witness UNLESS they have previously prayed that God should send them someone to evangelize. This is the key. THE PRAYER. The progressives scream when a team prays before a game yet are relatively silent with the sign of the cross – the prayer makes the difference. This is the key to everything in this discussion. The prayer. I suggest doing the prayer vocally to yourself each time you are alone and remember it. Pray that God sends you someone to evangelize.
3. The video clip will be shown at this time – 29 minutes
4. Let's pause here (possibly next meeting) and talk about engagement – watch for it – WATCH FOR IT – BOOM – ENGAGEMENT. The person responds. If there is no response then you should move on , ok pray for the person but it is probably the wrong time or you are not right for this person. Laurie will share "Being the right person during evangelization".
5. Family Prayer:  
Especially the rosary. We are Dominicans and the rosary is our heritage. Learn the promises attached to praying the rosary. Remember especially #11 "You will receive whatever you ask through the rosary". Be able to vocalize promise #11 if the need arises. If someone confides in you that they are in trouble recommend this prayer with confidence. It has never failed.  
Discussion: Again how not to put-off others while doing this
6. Wear a visible medal – Particularly for women
- a. The medal should be particularly attractive and when asked about it be prepared to give a witness on the medal including where you got it, who it represents and the graces from wearing a medal.
  - b. Do you feel this is true of wearing a cross and a medal? Are there different responses?
7. Rosary Witness:
- a. If someone shares a sickness or particular concern - (obviously if you cannot help them directly)
  - b. ask what is the person's name this will show you really are concerned
  - c. offer to pray for them in general. Possibly "I'll pray for you" or "I'll pray for them"
  - d. give a rosary witness in an effort to get them to pray
  - e. Laurie will offer some true instances of a rosary witness in action

- f. Nurse at my Moms extended care desk
8. Pay it forward
- a. Do a good deed for someone else and then they feel inspired to do a good deed for another person and so on and so forth. In its drive-thru incarnation, this takes the form of telling the cashier that you would like to pay for the person behind you. Because the person behind you has already placed their order, the cashier can tell you what that is and charge you for it. Alternatively, you can give the cashier \$5 and they will relay that to the following customer, who will then only have to pay the difference. In both instances, the cashier or barista will ask the person if they would like to pay it forward and cover the next person's order.
  - b. In a related story, someone paid it forward for the car behind them and when that car got to the window and they were told it was paid for, they broke down in tears. It turned out that their father had just died and having that one other person pay for their order without even knowing what had been going on in their life made them just a little bit happier. The cashier sat there for about a minute and shared a little prayer with them and they were so touched that someone who they didn't even know stood there with them doing a small gesture
  - c. At Holiday time walk the supermarket with a few goods in your cart and try to check out behind someone who look like they could use help. When they are checking out ahead of you offer to buy their turkey.
  - d. Buy a gift card and hand it out.
9. Honesty: If someone gives you incorrect change, return it.
- a. Does this type of witness surprise anyone?
10. Mass
- a. Keep Sunday Holy: Don't work on Sunday (this of course excludes restaurant, healthcare work etc.)
  - b. Attend Mass more than just Sunday (does this topic belong in this lesson?)
11. Invite someone to attend Mass with you (Scott's story)
- a. This is a casual invitation, without strings or promises.
  - b. Address communion only at the appropriate time.
  - c. Offer casual to answer questions.
  - d. Be appreciative and make it sound like a good thing to do again sometime without a firm commitment
  - e. Has this worked for anyone? Is there a downside?
12. Defend the Lord's Name in the workplace
- a. I was recently told a story of someone playing Keno and a person next to them would say G\*\*Dam each time they lost. After listening repeatedly the person said "You know God can bless you also so there is no need to use His name only when you lose" The person went on to start winning
  - b. As you feel more comfortable with this, move on to saying aloud "be praised" whenever someone vocalizes the Lords name publically as a finish to negate the profanity

13. Keep Sunday Holy – do not work on Sunday and do not go shopping for anything in stores or online that you may be able to do during the week
14. Bow your head at the Name of Jesus – The holy Name of Jesus is mentioned many times during mass. It is a powerful witness to others in the pews to bow your head each time.
15. Receive Ashes on Ash Wednesday – Then go out as usual or to work.
16. Call out soft porn – especially on TV. If someone is watching a soap opera or movie which is clearly a veiled attempt by Hollywood at promoting soft porn - call it out and tell who you are with “wow this is soft porn”. Many people today have become oblivious to soft porn.
17. Observe Christmas and Easter with catholic symbols – e.g. Religious Christmas cards.
18. Place a visible yard statue on your property. If you select a Marian statue consider crowning the statue with real flowers. Sometimes at checkout with flowers someone might remark “what nice flowers” and you could say “Yes, I am making a crown of flowers for the Virgin Mary”

You may say that these are nothing. Maybe so.

You will never convert someone. They must pray themselves. Our job is to get them on the road.

Take a ways from the associated video:

1. Pray that God uses you to witness.
2. Pray that you don't have a BIG mouth
3. Pray for kindness

Further Discussions:

The Movie

At 2:02 of movie she says “this is my second favorite room” This invites the question what is your favorite room? Answer: The War Room

Ms Clara did not have to wait to be “engaged” since the business deal already engaged the other person in conversation.

Did you notice there are blank spaces on the wall of remembrance (Prayers answered)?

Attending church occasionally was directly related to the pastor preaching. This is different for Catholics with the Eucharist

Movie quote - I've been where you are and you don't have to step on the same land mines that I stepped on.

If there is one thing in your life you would like to make better, what would it be? This is a great engagement point. Laurie and I use “would you do anything you could to change it?” How bad do you want it? If you give me one hour – we say give me 15 minutes for a rosary for your life changing experience

In my opinion, I think Ms Clara IS pushing too hard, but this is a movie and it can't last days.

In protestant faiths they believe in literal Gospel (sometimes) and when Jesus says go to your room to pray in secret, some take that literally

8:16 let God do the heavy lifting

Ms Clara will respect whatever decision Elizabeth makes – that’s because she planted the seed God will do the heavy lifting

9:26 Quote - don’t let me push too hard lord, I know I have a big mouth

It’s not your job to fix the situations in life that belong to God

28:10 Evangelization for lay people is one on one

30:34 prayed that God sends someone for you to witness to

The movie refers to reparation as part of forgiveness. Is that always correct? Does that discourage confession?

You could possibly need some apologetics if you get push back but the best course is usually to remain quiet and move on ! No reason to appear foolish and unknowledgeable. Continue the conversation only if you feel confident. Otherwise comment the heavy lifting to God. And pray to try again.

You must pray to preach

Main take away points:

- Pray that God sends someone for you to evangelize. I use that word as opposed to witness
- Let God do the heavy lifting. Don’t PUSH TOO HARD. Hold back and wait for it. If a person prolongs the conversation, continue on, if not then let it go. Know when to let it go! If you badger you will gain nothing.
- Pray not to have a big mouth - this specifically includes not trying to impose your personal beliefs, no matter how personally successful for you on someone else. I exclude here those exercises given as tools of evangelization like the rosary, divine mercy etc. I will add here some personal stories of rosary witness , some stories just asking someone to pray, some asking they join you in attending mass etc.
- Be humble in failure or success. If failure use a “lessons learned” just to be sure you did not go too far. If a success thank God and pray for that person, and accept that you responded to grace.

Video Bibliography

Edit Times:

00;00;12 – 11;02;02

00;11;06 - 00;14;06

00;16;56 – 00;23;12

00;27;08 – 00;30;05

00;41;01 – 00;46;49

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Runtime 27:38