

**"Formation Program For The Lay Dominicans Of The Dominican Black Abbey, Kilkenny"**

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## **THE FORMATION PROGRAM AT A GLANCE**

The areas of study are suggestions for Chapters to follow and should not be considered as a prescription, as the abilities and interests of the all can vary according to for example age, and educational background. It is thought that a simple overview be given of each of the topics for beginners and the program used in successive years, being spiralled to suit the needs of each particular Chapter.

Throughout the program there is a correlation between Dominican Laity today drawing riches from the history of the Order and strength from the spirit of the Dominican Family in Community.

## **THE FORMATION OF DOMINICAN LAITY**

### ***INTRODUCTION***

The members of Lay Chapters of St. Dominic are adult men and women. Their progress in the Christian life will depend, under grace, principally upon themselves - on the quality of their Christian insights and the fidelity of their practice of the Christian virtues. By joining the Dominican Order, however, they have freely elected to follow a particular way of living the Christian life. They will need, therefore, to be instructed in the methods and approaches which, over the centuries, have become traditional in the Order. Hence, they will need the help of those whose whole life is lived according to the spirit of the Order, viz., the Friars and Sisters, especially those who are appointed to Lay Chapters as Chaplains and as Religious Assistants. Dominican Laity are not Religious. They are lay people. Their spirituality is not to be a watered down version of monastic or conventional spirituality. It is to be a 'lay spirituality' which will enable them as lay people to Christianise the temporal institutions of marriage, the family, business, political and social life, and the life of the professions and trades from within. In the work of forming them as Dominicans, therefore, not only Dominican priests and religious, but Dominican lay people, too must take a large part. So, particularly in the case of Probationers, the lay Director of Formation will play an important part.

### ***STAGES OF FORMATION***

#### ***1. Probation***

- i. This period lasts for at least 1 year but usually 2 years (i.e., usually 6 - 12 months before Reception, and 6 - 12 months after) following which the temporary profession for three years is made this temporary profession may be repeated.
- ii. The formation of Probationers is the joint responsibility of the Chaplain or Religious Assistant and the Director of Formation.
- iii. a segment of the general regular meeting should be devoted to Probationers needs.
- iv. During the probationary period intending members should be instructed in -
  - a) The Rule and the Provincial Directory (or Constitutions) by the Director of Formation.
  - b) The government and life of the Chapter, by the Director of Formation.
  - c) The history and spirit of the Dominican Order, by the Chaplain or Religious Assistant.
  - d) Basic principles of spirituality, by the Chaplain or Religious Assistant.
  - v. A suitable reading guide and books should be made available to new members.
  - vi. The probationers should be introduced to the apostolate of the Chapter and given a part to play in it.

## **2. Temporary Profession**

- i. There need be no separate meeting or part of a meeting for those Members who have made temporary profession who are now members of the Dominican Order and are subject to the promise they have made.
- ii. They should be present at the regular general meeting.
- iii. Special reading guides and books should be made available to them.
- iv. Temporary profession is normally made for three years following which final profession may be made on application to and in agreement with the Chapter.

## **3. Final profession**

in the Fraternities of Saint Dominic is a lifelong commitment, but it is made only after five years of preparation and discernment. Final Profession confirms the individual's vocation in the Order of Preachers. The Rule of the Fraternities of Saint Dominic (1987) states that one may advance to Final Profession when: A. The period of temporary profession, at least three years, has preceded the request, B. The On-Going Formation materials have been part of the lessons for advancement, C. An evaluation and approval on the part of the Formation Council is given, D. The candidate has reached his/her twenty-first birthday, and E. The Chapter Council, after meeting and discussing the candidate's qualifications for advancement, gives consent. Members make Final Profession to the Master of the Order, at present, **Fr. Bruno Cadoré**, O.P., and as such accept the serious canonical obligations of being a **Lay** Dominican. During the Rite of Final or Perpetual Profession the candidate promises "to live according to the Rule of the Fraternities of Saint Dominic for my whole life."

## **4. After Final Profession**

- i. The continuing work of instruction and inspiration of each Lay Dominican is the special task of the Spiritual Promoter and Religious Assistant.
- ii. A regular homily or spiritual instruction should be given at each fortnightly meeting by the Spiritual Promoter or Religious Assistant, and should deal systematically with all the elements of the Christian life.
- iii. At each meeting, a part of the Rule and of the formation manual should be read, discussed and commented upon.
- iv. Some regular plan of studies should be followed and some topic discussed at each of the regular meetings. The task of preparing and leading such discussions should be shared by all professed members.



## Chapter 1

### ***THE DOMINICAN LAITY***

#### ***A definition of Dominican Laity - their aim and call to the Order***

The Dominican Laity is the lay dimension of the Dominican Order. The Dominican Order is a family of Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and Laity founded by Saint Dominic de Guzman in 1215. In 1285 a Rule for the Laity was adopted and approved by Pope Honorius IV. Every person is unique. Each person has special talents to be used for the glory of God. “The lay-person is called by God to burn with the Spirit of Christ and to exercise his apostolate in the world as a kind of leaven” (*Vat. II Layman’s Apostolate*).

Only God knows the reason why people are given different tasks, different callings and different graces. It is how a person uses these graces that is important. More is required of some than others, so we find that some are called by God to live their lives through the parameters of the Dominican Order in order to reach the perfection God intended for them.

Canon law states:

“Secular Tertiaries are those faithful who, living in the world under the direction of a religious Order and according to its spirit, strive to attain to Christian perfection in the secular life through following rules approved for them by the Holy See” (*Can. 702*) In this way the Church places the lay dimensions of an Order above Sodalities, Confraternities and other organizations within the Church, which perform works of charity. Dominican Laity share in the prayers, merits and graces of the Order as they become a full member of the Order living out their Dominican vocation, whilst still maintaining their normal secular life. When they join the Dominican Order, they undertake to follow the Rule and spirit of the Dominican Order, for the rest of their lives. When Christ lived on earth He chose His apostles who would carry His message of the Gospel to all lands. The Lay Dominican is also given a mission from Christ. By being drawn to an Apostolic Order, which has the mission of preaching the Gospel, God has asked us to carry the Truths of the Faith by word and by example into the world where he lives and works.

Dominican Laity are called to follow a vocation within the Dominican Order, learning a deeper commitment to prayer and contemplation, following the message of the Gospel and living in the spirit of the Beatitudes. They do not however, have to change their life-style. They live their normal life, whether married or single, carry out their ordinary work, but there is the added dimension of living within the spirit of the Order. They make Profession to the Master of the Order through the President of the Chapter and commit themselves to a life of more prayer, study and awareness of the need to witness the message of the Gospel in their own sphere of work and leisure. Moral standards in society and customs of today are widely presented by the media, they are often opposed to the message of the Gospel, but the Constitutions of the Dominican Order have not changed from what St. Dominic originally intended that they should convey when he founded the Order. The ideals which Dominic set before his followers are still the ideals practiced by the Order today.

#### ***History and Origins of Third Orders***

The origin of the Dominican Laity stemmed from the Order founded by Dominic de Guzman in 1215. His first foundation was at Prouille, where a group of women wished to pray and work with him. Whilst the women lived together forming an early community, Dominic also banded together a group of lay men and women. They were called the Militia of Jesus Christ and were later known as the Third Order of Penance. In later centuries, they were called the Third Order of St. Dominic. Today they are known as Dominican Laity.

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In the early years, when known as the Militia of Jesus Christ, one of their main aims was to protect the Fathers and their property from the violence which occurred against any religious establishments at that time. They looked to the Fathers for spiritual guidance.

The first known rule for lay people was drawn up by Father Munio di Zamora, the seventh successor of St. Dominic and Master of the Order in 1285. Dominican Laity form a true part of the Order. They have their own Rule, are under jurisdiction of the Fathers and assist the other members of the Dominican family where possible. Since their inauguration, Chapters of Dominican Laity have changed in character. Prior to the Vatican Councils, Chapters were concentrating on prayer and penance. This was very good and suitable to that particular time.

It is still important that the individual be given every assistance to grow in perfection and deepen their spirituality, but since the Vatican II Council, the role of the Laity has taken a different direction. They have been called to take a more active participation in the mission of the Church. The Order, strongly supporting the mind of the Church, requires its Lay Chapters to actively work with the doctrinal mission of the Order in a contemporary world. The Religious Orders which have Lay members are Carmelites, Franciscans, Benedictines and Dominicans, each order following its own particular spirit.

### ***The Advantages of Belonging to a Chapter***

A Chapter of the Dominican Laity is an authentic Dominican community drawn together by love of St. Dominic and the spiritual life. Divine charity is the bond between all Dominicans on earth, in purgatory and in Heaven. It is the Communion of Saints in operation. When a Chapter meets, it is a family which meets. By belonging to the Dominican Order, Dominican Laity share in the prayers, merits and graces of the whole Order. He adopts for his future life the rule and spirit of the Dominican Order. When Christ lived on earth, He chose His apostles, who would carry His message of the Gospel to all lands. The Lay Dominican is also given his mission from Christ. By being drawn to an Apostolic Order, Christ has asked Dominican Laity to carry the Truths of the Faith by word and by example of prayer and penance, by his staunch loyalty to the teachings of the Church and by his ready acceptance of changes in the Church today can give help and encouragement to the weak and perhaps careless Catholic. To the critical Catholic, whom we sometimes hear speaking against the changes in the implementation of our Faith, Dominican Laity can show their belief in the Holy Spirit guiding the Church now, just as is shown in the history of the Church through the centuries. The Lay Dominican must therefore be an active member of society. St. Thomas Aquinas defines “*devotion as the prompt readiness to rise to the service of God.*”

In a society that shows a lack of reverence for God, life and fellow-men, the Dominican Laity must be ready to defend the Law of God. They must speak out against the lack of morality shown in the media and in standards which a lack of basic morality has imposed on people today. The Dominican life is an apostolic life, so the Lay Dominican must be apostolic. Constant reference is made in the Rule for the Dominican Laity to fulfil their vocation by being messengers of the Faith. It is not possible for the Laity to be actively apostolic unless the union with God is close, constant and personal. Prayer and contemplation are at the very heart of the Dominican Vocation. Being a member of a Lay community will help a person to achieve a closer union with God and grow in the spirit of prayer and also to increase a desire to take part in the apostolic mission of the Order because we learn from each other.





## Chapter 2

### *FORMATION*

The training period for the Dominican Laity follows a general pattern for persons interested in following the Dominican Rule, but as each person is unique and should receive individual development the time taken for initial formation may vary but is normally around 6 months. A person is admitted (Received) to the Order after regular attendance at Chapter meetings. The discerning Postulant will write a letter to request admission to the Chapter see appendix 2. The Chapter Council votes on the whether the Postulant is to be Received into the Order when they consider that the person requesting admission has an initial understanding of the aims and spirit of the Dominican Order. Once Received into the Order, they then share in all the prayers and spiritual benefits of the Order. For the next 6-12 months they gain a deeper understanding of what is involved in being a Lay Dominican before making their temporary promise. Generally, when a person is Baptised, they are young and the sponsor answers for their commitment to Christianity. Catholics mostly receive the Sacrament of Confirmation whilst at school and although sacramental grace is present, as a person, they are not always conscious of an earnest striving to fulfil their Christian commitment. When we look at the obligations of the Lay Dominican, it is a God-given challenge to live a more spiritual life and to follow the Rule and way of life as a Lay member of the Dominican Order. “They (Dominican Laity) are characterized by a particular spirituality and by dedication to the service of God and neighbour in the Church and in as much as they are members of the Order, participate in its apostolic mission through prayer, study and preaching in accordance with the state of the Laity”.  
*(Fundamental Constitution of Lay Dominicans No. 4)*

The training period involves a temporary Profession for a period of 3 years. After a 3 year period, a person is then eligible to make final Profession. Undertaking a temporary Profession for 3 years indicates the serious thought required before making final Profession. This allows time to study the spirituality and apostolic mission of the Order so that there is a full realisation of the commitment made for life. It is said that a vocation to a Religious Order is a call from God. When such a call is given to lay persons to remain in their present state of living and work whilst becoming a member of the Dominican Order, decisions have to be made, thoughtfully, about their spiritual life. Reception into the Dominican Laity is the beginning of a trial period to live as a Lay Dominican. It is a time to learn about the Dominican Order, its spirit and its worth, and to decide if this is the commitment a person wishes to make. What is this commitment which is undertaken? Firstly, it is to seek to know what God wants and to try to do it. This is personal holiness and wholeness. Secondly, it is to try to bring others to know and love God. To achieve the first commitment of personal holiness there must be a strengthening of one’s prayer life. Both deep private prayer and liturgical prayer must become a part of each day. Time must be allocated for prayer. Habits must be formed so that contemplation and prayer form part of the day. Because of the variety of life styles amongst the Laity there will be wide differences in time allocation for prayer and reading, but the intention to follow the commitment made must be earnest and sincere. The day of Reception is a day to prepare for in a special way. Firstly by prayer and secondly by becoming familiar with the spirit of the Dominican Order, its prayer and its works. Reading about the life of St. Dominic and about other Dominican Saints will help the person new to Dominican life to understand the kind of person that Dominican Laity can produce when the life is lived faithfully to the Rule. An earnest Christian is always thinking of growing closer to Jesus Christ. For the Lay Dominican, their first concern will be to grow thus in personal holiness, increasing their love for God and neighbour. This development in their spiritual life will be helped by learning more

about the truths of our faith tradition. This added knowledge will help the Lay Dominican to work more effectively as a member of Christ's Church. By becoming a Lay member of the Dominican Order the person has undertaken a guided course in spirituality which will lead to personal holiness and this knowledge gained can also be communicated to others thus fulfilling the work of the Order.

In the Dominican Laity a promise, not a vow, is made to "live according to the Rule of the Dominican Laity for a specific period or for life". The person who is being Professed should become familiar with the rule and have a complete understanding of the promise that they are making. People should not feel afraid to present themselves for Profession because they do not think that they have reached a particular stage. If they desire to become closer to God, they should continue as Lay Dominicans leaving themselves open to the grace of God, who gives them what they need, knowing that if He has drawn them to the Order, He will give them the grace to continue. Profession is only the beginning of the journey in Dominican life, and as more is learnt, the more do we see the need to grow in the love of God, hence it is good to renew the earlier promise made to God. The Lay Dominican may be the only contact some people have with God, or means of learning about Him. Hence when they respond generously to the graces given, they carry out the work of the Order.

Dominican Laity should be active members of their own parish. The needs of society can be found in one's own parish. Unemployment, poverty, sickness, loneliness and problems with youth are some of the hardships suffered by people in every parish. The Dominican Tertiary can bring the comfort of the message of salvation as well as temporal help to those in need in their own locality. Care groups and renewal small groups in parishes can be excellent activities for Dominican Laity to exercise their apostolate.

*Formation for Dominican Laity*

*M. Thomson*



### Chapter 3

#### *THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ORDER*

##### *St. Dominic and the Early History of the Order*

Caleruega was a small village in Spain and on the high plateau was the castle of Felix Ruiz de Guzman. It was here in 1170 that Dominic de Guzman was born. His mother was Jane of Aza, also the daughter of noble parents. Before the birth of Dominic, his mother dreamt that she bore a dog, and that it broke away from her with a burning torch in its mouth and then set the world on fire. His Godmother told of a dream she had, where the child appeared with forehead lit by a radiant star, the light of which lit the world. At the age of seven, Dominic went to study with his uncle, who was a priest. When fourteen years old he went to the University at Palencia in Spain and studied for ten years. He was then ordained and became a Canon at the Cathedral of Osma. For nine years he worked quietly, devoting himself to a life of prayer and penance. In 1203, King Alphonso IX of Castile wished to arrange a marriage for his son, Ferdinand, with a northern princess so Bishop Don Diego and Dominic set out as ambassadors to arrange the marriage. Dominic came in contact with the Albigensian heresy. Dominic yearned to preach the truth of Christ to the heretics. At first he was refused permission to do so, but eventually he renounced his office of sub-prior of Osma and adopted the simple title of Brother Dominic. He then led an extremely austere life, devoting himself to preaching the word of God and attacked the heretics with words and by example. He dressed poorly, went barefoot and begged bread from door to door, leaving all in the hands of providence. People were stirred by his preaching and followed him. Soon a band of followers became his constant companions and in 1215 Dominic received the vows of his first brethren at a house in Toulouse, given to him by a man called Peter Seila.

##### Founding of the Order of Preachers

Dominic acutely aware of the religious ignorance and the loose morality of the people and the clergy, he saw the necessity of well-trained holy men to combat the heresies of his day. In 1215, he and his companions were confirmed by Bishop Fulk of Toulouse as diocesan preachers leading an apostolic way of life. Shortly thereafter, Peter of Seila joined Dominic and made vows of religion to him. Peter also made his properties available and the group took up residence in one of them forming a fixed community for the first time.

Dominic set out for Rome where he requested and ultimately obtained permission to establish an Order of Preachers. A Bull was issued by Pope Honorius III to that effect on December 22, 1216. These mendicant preachers would model their lives after the apostles in order to be more effective in combating the Albigensian heresy and in winning souls for God. The houses he founded were used as places of prayer and study. (Dorcy, 36-63)

##### Dispersal of the Brethren

Not long after establishing the order, Dominic announced that the brethren were to be dispersed throughout Europe. His companions and friends tried to dissuade him from such an action. However, he countered their objections with: "seed when scattered fructifies, when hoarded, rots." Some of the brethren were sent to Paris, which was at that time the centre of the intellectual and theological life of Europe. Dominic knew that if the work of preaching was to be successful, it would need to be undertaken by men who were well versed in the study of scripture and the traditions of the Church. These men must also lead an upright and holy life. These friars were to study, preach and found houses. Other brethren were sent to Spain. In the

true spirit of the Gospel, the men were sent out in pairs, traveling by foot, and "neither accepting nor carrying gold, silver, money or gifts, except for food and books."(Dorcy,53-56)

Dominic was now the founder of a new order which was called the Dominicans and they were known as the Friar Preachers. The Dominicans were known as Mendicants because they had to beg for their daily bread. As an order based on the Rule of St. Augustine they prayed the Divine Office, led a life of poverty and practiced penance. Dominic insisted that study was to be an essential part of their life, as they could not combat heresy and ignorance without a strong religious knowledge.

Dominic led a life of intense prayer. He spoke only of God and to God. He gave his days in charity to his companions and his nights to God. He did not sleep in a bed, but spent whole nights before the altar, praying for sinners. In an account in the Dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena, God the Father says;

*“Dominic, my adopted Son, had focused all his mind and all his efforts to saving souls from snares of error and vice; that was the chief object which led him to found and teach his order. Therefore I tell you, in all his actions he may be compared to my Begotten Son.”*

On one occasion, St. Peter and St. Paul appeared to him, handed him a pilgrim staff and book, saying *“Go and preach, because you have been chosen by God for this work.”* He sent his Friars to many countries and also to the great universities in Europe and many thousands were converted as a result of the preaching of Dominic and his Friars. St. Dominic and St. Francis met in the winter of 1221 in Rome. They became good friends. They both founded Mendicant Orders at about the same time. Both Orders stressed poverty as the basis of their lifestyle, but Dominic made a study and learning obligatory for his Friars. The Order had been founded only six years when Dominic, worn by his continuous fasting and long journeys, arrived in Bologna sick with fever. He died in 1221. He was canonised on 3 July, 1234. St. Dominic’s final message to the members of his Order is still fresh and true for Dominicans today –

***“Persevere in serving the Lord with fervour and apply yourselves to extend the Order. Behold, my children what I leave you as a heritage: Have charity, guard humility and make your treasure out of voluntary poverty”.***



### ***The Badges and Mottoes of the Order***

Dominic de Guzman was the son of a nobleman, Don Felix de Guzman, therefore the badges of the Order have a military history. A badge is a distinctive emblem showing membership of an association, therefore it is not surprising that Dominicans wear a distinguishing mark showing that they belong to the Order founded by Dominic. The Shield is divided into eight gyrons, all meeting at the centre or fesse point. A gyron in heraldry is an ordinary of two lines drawn from the sides of the shield either to the centre or to the top. The Dominican's shield is black and white because the armorial colours were the same in Dominic's family. Drawn into the shield we see a cross which is called '*croix Fleur-de-lysee*'. This flowering cross represents the lily as a symbol of purity. Blessed Jane of Aza, Dominic's mother, wore a cross similar to this, so the cross was added to the Guzman shield.

### **The Dominican Shield**



There are eight triangles on the *Dominican Shield*--four white and four black. The triangles symbolize the unity of a community made up of many different people who nonetheless work side-by-side in order to promote the well-being of all. The cross, superimposed over and unifying the triangles, represents victory, duty and self-sacrifice; it features *fleur-de-lis* at each end, a traditional symbol of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The black triangles symbolize wisdom, silence, fortitude and penance. The white triangles symbolize peace, purity, charity and sincerity. Sometimes the shield is also surrounded by six or eight stars; they are the symbol of St. Dominic de Guzman (1170-1221), the founder of the Dominican Order.

### **VERITAS**



The shield in this form signifies that the Dominican Order was founded to defend the Faith, the weapon used in defence of the truths of Christ's teaching. Above the shield a star was placed and this reminds us of the bright star which was seen shining on St. Dominic's forehead during his Baptism. Around the badge are placed the words

***“Laudare - Benedicare - Praedicare” meaning to Praise, to Bless, to Preach.***

This is one of the mottoes of the Order. A motto is an appropriate sentiment expressing the aspirations of a group and the three mottoes of the Dominican Order express the maxims adopted by the Order for a rule for life..

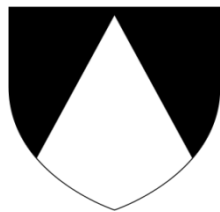
**VERITAS** - meaning Truth: The work of the Dominican is a study of the Truth of Christ and to preach the Gospel of Christ.

**CONTEMPLARI ET CONTEMPLATA ALIIS TRADERE –**

to contemplate and to give to others the fruits of contemplation. These three mottoes of the Order express the true work of the Order – to learn the truth which Christ puts before us and to make known these truths to those who need to hear them when the opportunity arises. The Order was founded to defend the Church and to fight the heresy that existed then. When we look at our world today we can see that heresy and evil exist in many more surreptitious ways than in the thirteenth century. Dominican Laity must pray and find ways to carry on the work that Dominic began. If you wear the badge of the Order be an earnest worker for the salvation of souls.

**THE ARMS OF THE DOMINICAN ORDER**

The use of personal emblems dates from the very early times. Amongst Religious Orders, however, emblems and coats-of-arms first became important in the 15th century - two centuries after the foundation of the Dominican Order. In the early 15th century, the Dominican Order adopted a very simple heraldic device: black sections on a white shield, representing the black cloak over a white tunic. Black symbolises penance, White is a symbol of joy Late in the 15th century a completely different shield was devised for the Master General of the Dominican Order. The Master General was the head man for the whole Order and in those days all official documents were signed with an official seal which obviously had to be different from the ordinary every day badge used by everyone else. Inspiration for the Master General's Coat-of-Arms came from the past - from St. Dominic's noble parentage. From his father's side came the black and white Guzman shield, divided into 8 sections The armorial colours of the Guzmans, St. Dominic's paternal ancestor's, were "argent" (silver, or white) and "sable" (black). St. Dominic's father was Don Felix de Guzman. From his mother's side came the cross Jane of Aza's family belonged to the Knights of Calatrava, who wore a cross of this description. The cross "fleury" has ends that flower out to a lily shape. It symbolises sacrifice flowering into joy. The Master General's Coat-of-Arms was not complete. A star and a scroll were yet to be added. An 8-pointed star bears a marked resemblance to the face of the compass which points to all quarters of the globe. A star is also a symbol of light. The words on the scroll are - LAUDARE to praise BENEDICERE to bless PRAEDICARE to preach. In later centuries, this badge came to be used by the whole Order - not just by the Master General.



*Basic version of coat of arms of the Dominican Order (or Order of Preachers): 'sable, a pile inverted'*



## Chapter 4

### SPIRIT AND AIMS OF ST. DOMINIC

#### *AIMS OF ST. DOMINIC*

***a. To establish a group of preachers who would be well prepared through prayer and study to preach effectively in order to confront error and ignorance.***

"Dominic realized that only a religious order could give the church the continuous supply of trained preachers it needed". He had observed that the Albigensian leaders were educated men who were well versed in scriptures. This combined with their austere lifestyle made them convincing preachers. Dominic saw the necessity for the friars to systematically study the scriptures. He constantly urged them to study the Old and New Testaments. He always carried Matthew's Gospel and Paul's Epistles with him. To insure adequate theological training for his friars, he founded houses in the university cities. He also sought to enrol university students in the Order.

***b. The salvation of all souls by preaching the word of God***

Dominic founded the Order of Preachers for the salvation of souls. This apostolate is the only aim of the order. He possessed an unquenchable thirst for souls. His inability at Languedoc to successfully convert the Albigensians back to God made him all the more determined to conquer the world for Him. When he sent the brethren out to preach, he used Jesus' own words "Go therefore into the whole world preach the Gospel to every creature." Christ had died on the cross to redeem man. This redemption being accomplished, Dominic burned like a flame to bring to God all for whom his Son had died. This apostolic work had its beginnings in Dominic's heart. It was nourished by his prayer, study and contemplation. "To sum up: the two characteristics which mark St. Dominic's apostolate concern its quality and extension. Thanks to him, the apostolate has again become what it was to St. Paul; dogma quickened to life and action; divine truth, loved and taught for its own sake; contemplation and mystical life overflowing into wondrous activity; supernatural revelation ordering toward its end all branches of natural knowledge; the unity and happiness of mankind bound up with the unity of the church."

#### *SPIRIT OF SAINT DOMINIC*

***a. Intense love for God and a burning desire to know more about Him***

The spirit of Dominic was modelled on the spirit of Christ. He was a man of prayer and penance. As a canon it was said of him "day and night he frequented the church, ceaselessly devoted to prayer, scarcely venturing beyond the cloister walls, the more to find leisure for his lone thoughts with God." This spirit of prayer and penance persisted throughout his life. His great love for God is exemplified in his spirit of poverty and penance as described by Augusta Drane:

" It was this same spirit of poverty that induced him never to have any cell or bed of his own. He slept in the church. If he came home late at night drenched with rain, he would send his companions to dry and refresh themselves, but himself would go as he was to the church. There his nights were passed in prayer, or, if overcome with fatigue, he would sleep leaning against the altar steps, or lie down on the hard stone floor. If, when he travelled, they stopped where

there was no church, he slept anywhere, on the floor, on a bench, or sitting in his chair and always dressed in his habit as during the day. Thrice every night he disciplined himself to blood; the first time for himself, the second for sinners, the third for the souls in purgatory. After compline, when others were dismissed to rest, he remained behind, visiting each altar in turn, praying for his order and for the world. Sometimes his tears and prayers were so loud as to awaken those who slept near. He was accustomed to pray in the garden in imitation of Christ with his face to the ground, and in this posture he remain a long time repeating passages from the psalms with many tears..."

Dominic took every opportunity to speak about God and exhorted his brethren to 'talk always about or to God'.

***b. Ardent desire to imitate the life of the Apostles***

Dominic believed that the Gospels themselves offered the best plan of action for a preaching mission. Since preaching was an apostolic ministry, it was necessary to live like the apostles, VITA APOSTOLICA. This included life with the community based on Acts 4:32-35. (read cited text) However, the greater emphasis was placed on what the apostles actually did itinerant mendicant preaching as described in Matthew 10. (read cited text). He successfully combined mendicant poverty and preaching with the monastic life.

***c. Salvation of mankind while maintaining a strong unity with the established church.***

The apostolic form of preaching was not new with Dominic. It was the inspiration behind several reform movements. The poor Catholics and the Humiliate were two of these movements that found a place within the catholic church. Other groups- the Cathars, Albigensians and the Waldensians - drifted into heresy. The apostolic ideal was also behind some developments in regular religious life. Dominic's achievement was that he established apostolic mendicant preaching as an official mandate of the church, sanctioned and authorized by the pope. From the beginning, Dominic sought episcopal approval. Bishop Fulk of Toulouse established Dominic and his companions as a preaching brotherhood for his diocese. When Dominic petitioned Pope Innocent III for papal confirmation, it was not granted immediately. The fourth Lateran Council ordained that no new foundations were to be established unless they were a part of an already approved rule. Dominic obediently followed the Pope's suggestion that he gain the consent of his brethren to accept a common rule already in existence. They chose the rule of St. Augustine.

***Review Questions***

1. If this is your first introduction to St. Dominic, what has impressed you most about him?
2. Why do you think St. Dominic founded the Order of Preachers?
3. Would you like to acquire the "spirit" of St. Dominic?

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Rubba, O.P., John C. THE DOMINICANS A brief History (Combined Volume) pg. 1-11  
Tugwell, O.P., Simon SAINT DOMINIC AND THE ORDER OF PREACHERS London, Ludo Press, 1981

***SUGGESTED READING MATERIAL***

Tugwell, O.P., Simon SAINT DOMINIC AND THE ORDER OF PREACHERS  
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Rubba, O.P., John THE DOMINICANS A Brief History (Combined Volume)





## Chapter 5

### DOMINICANS: PEOPLE OF THE WORD

Dominic is our model and spiritual father, in his life we can see he acted out the concepts and commitments we are discussing. Dominic was committed to:

The Word of God, met in Prayer

The Word of God, contemplated in Study

The Word of God, expressed in Community

The Word of God, shared in the Apostolate

Another important idea was mentioned in the last session: membership in the Dominican family is not something added on to your commitment to Christ. If you have a Dominican vocation, it is the way you express your commitment more fully, a way you realise your spiritual potential more easily, it is your way of hearing the Gospel.

As we start let's begin where all things begin: in God. God, our Creator, Triune God, revealed Himself to us through His actions and Words in the Old Testament. He gave his prophets words of truth to speak, words about himself, His covenant with his chosen people, and about how to live a life pleasing to Him. Later, in the fullness of time He gave us His son, the Word Incarnate, the Word made flesh, Jesus, visible image of the invisible God. In his Word, in Jesus, we see the fullness of revelation possible for us in this life. In Jesus, We see God in His goodness, love, pity, healing power, attractiveness, wisdom, gentleness, strength, in His faithfulness despite our breaking the covenant, His faithfulness even unto death - that we caused him to die.

Jesus is the Word of God that Dominic loved and proclaimed. Jesus's life shaped Dominic's life and the life of Dominicans through the centuries. All Christians love Jesus. Dominicans love Him as the Word of God, the Word, revelation of God. Dominican spirituality is Christ centred, honouring the revelation of God in Jesus by Whom we come to know God better and by knowing Him, we come to love Him better in an ever enriching cycle.

Our devotion to Jesus, Word of God, shows itself in four ways: in prayer, study, community and apostolate.

a) In prayer, we see a long tradition of devotion to the Eucharistic Liturgy, to the Liturgy of the Hours (the Divine Office), and to private prayer, especially contemplative prayer. There's a saying that most Christians live in the world and go to church, whereas by prayer and commitment, we can live in church - and go to the world, bringing it, in our own ways and with our own capabilities, the fruit of our contemplation, the fruit of our prayer. St. Catherine of Siena talked about having a "cell of self-knowledge" in which she dwelt, so that even in the midst of bustling activities, she never lost her awareness of God-with-her. It was said of Dominic that he spoke only of God or to Him. Our sense of personal prayer is more like St. Catherine's - the Laywoman - than Dominic the friar-preacher. But the ideal is that prayer moulds all our actions. The Liturgy of the Hours was once just prayed by friars and nuns while lay-folk prayed the Little Office or the Rosary.

But the Liturgy of the Hours - The Divine Office - is now available to all Christian people. This prayer, established by the Church to "sanctify the day" frames each day's separate time segments with prayer. Said in community, said with bodily gestures, said in alternating choirs, all aspects speak about Dominican characteristics: · Said in community - for lay people, who

usually pray alone at home, the community of the Divine Office is the whole Body of Christ, especially those who also pray the office. Lay Dominicans often use their Chapter meetings as opportunities when they can pray the Office together. · Said with bodily gestures - to remind us of the dignity of the body and the basic goodness of all God's creation. · Said in alternating choirs - to show how fundamental prayer is, how close to the rhythms of creation, night/day, ebb tide/high tide, planting/harvesting, contemplation/action. But beyond even the majesty of the Liturgy of the Hours with its scriptural readings, hymns, prayers, and silences is the Eucharistic Liturgy. Here we celebrate the Word in Scripture and the Word made flesh, we meet Him, unite with Him in His life giving Sacrifice, we attend His banquet table that foreshadows the joys of heaven.

In all of these prayer experiences, we experience prayer as conversation - words in dialogue, prayer as an intimate exchange of that which is deepest within us. God expresses His deepest self, His Word, imaged in His Son Jesus, and we strive to be equally self revealing, self giving. In prayer we honour and experience the Trinity, but especially the Son, the Incarnate Word, the Word spoken in Scriptures, the Word broken as bread in the Eucharist.

b) In study too, Dominicans encounter the Word. Dominic was a scholar, devoted to study. But Jordan of Saxony, the second Master General of the order, says of him: "When he felt that he had sufficiently learned the arts, he stopped studying them, as if he were reluctant to spend any longer time in these less fruitful studies, and turned to the study of theology." A recent Constitutions of the Friars said, "...our study ought to aim principally at this: that we might be useful to the souls of our neighbours..."

For Dominicans, all study must lead to God, but the leading to God can be either direct or indirect, depending upon the temperament and vocation of the person. St. Thomas Aquinas' writings were all of a philosophical or theological nature. But his teacher, St. Albert the Great, wrote voluminously about natural phenomenon, of observations of animals and plants; he was interested and involved in all the natural sciences known to the scholars of his day.

*(In Chapter 12, we will discuss the tradition of study known as "Lectio Divina" roughly translated "spiritual reading," in more detail).*

What is characteristic of Dominicans is that we reflect on things, we reflect on the world around us, we keep informed on the teachings of the Church and Pope. We know the opinions of wise and good leaders of the Church and civic governments and groups. We do all this so we can make informed judgements on issues of our day, and can contribute to moral decisions of others, as appropriate to our circumstances and graces from God.

We see human beings as made in God's image to reflect His wisdom and goodness. We strive to be worthy of His gifts of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom by a life of reflection and study, a life of prayer and silences, a life of action and "connectedness" with the world around us. We are not dreamers. We follow Jesus who went about doing good, spreading the Word of the kingdom.[Eccles. 39:1-15]

c) In community - for lay Dominicans the primary community is usually the family, Here we meet, help, and are helped by our families, friends, fellow Dominicans - and by God whom we see in our neighbour. In our contacts we express and experience the fruits of our way of life. Jordan of Saxony wrote, "Thomas the Apostle, because he was not with the other apostles, did not merit to see the Lord, and are you better than Thomas?" A Dominican's commitment to

prayer and study does not lead to isolation at all, but enriches us to share more with our neighbour.

d) In the apostolate, the habits of prayer, study and community are expressed and honed. That is, our activities in the apostolate flow from and express our ideas, attitudes, insights (etc.!) acquired by the prayer, study, and community experiences that precede it. St Thomas' famous definition of our life applies here: "To contemplate and give to others the fruits of our contemplation."

In the apostolate also, our habits are tested, honed, perhaps reshaped in response to the needs we discover in others or in ourselves! We don't live in ivory towers, remote from the hurly-burly world. We stay in community, in solidarity, with our families, friends, co-workers - and with all people. Dominic used to pray often, "O Lord, what will become of sinners?" He translated that concern into an apostolate of the Word - bringing God's Truth to people, helping them discern His ways, so they could follow Him with informed choices and wholeheartedly. Dominicans today show their love and concern in many other ways. Their apostolates are as varied as the needs of God's people. Dominican friars, sisters and lay people often are found in the teaching professions; many serve as missionaries in foreign lands; some Dominicans work with the sick. The friars have often been outstanding spiritual directors; some have contributed to the arts. Modern Dominicans, clerical and lay, make significant contributions to their communities, mostly without publicity.

In all this activity - prayer, study, community and apostolate - the centre and focus is the Word of God in all its multiform yet simple presence, infinitely engaging and attractive, opening infinite possibilities of new expressions in today's world. Dominic and the Dominican way encourages you and every individual to unite with the Word in prayer, study, community and action so that each of you reaches your full potential in God. Whether you find that potential as a member of the Dominican family or not, it is our prayer that you continue to explore God's will for you, and that you can discern more and more clearly what God wants for you in your spiritual walk with Him. Our efforts in this series of talks is not to "sell" the Dominican way. It is to explain it so you can discern about it and see if you feel drawn to follow Jesus as a lay Dominican.

e) In closing, let me say again that this chapter of the manual shows what we strive for, not what we have achieved! As a postulant, you need to discern if the Dominican way attracts you, not if you already live this way. We are all "a people on pilgrimage", not yet arrived. You will find Dominicans are in all stages of "arriving". Most Dominicans feel we've only begun to live the life, no matter how many years we're in. What's important is that is that this is how we want to live, how we want to follow Jesus.



***Review Questions***

"Let's see what's been said. How did you understand - How did you feel about -" or questions such as: 'Someone once said Christians should pray with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. Do you agree?

Can you see how Dominicans can be described as "people of the Word?" What is your relationship to the Word of God? How does God speak to you? in the Bible, in prayer?

***Summary***

What we want to share with you in this session is our understanding of a Dominican vocation, so you begin to test it in your own life. We see a Dominican vocation first of all as a response - a response to God's grace, to His initiative and His invitation. Dominicans hear the Gospel and carry it out with a spirituality uniquely their own, yet within the catholic tradition. Certain truths about God touch Dominicans deeply and they want to KNOW God more and to love Him more, and love to know Him better. Dominicans see Jesus as the Word of God made flesh, Jesus as the Truth, and that all truth honours God.

As Dominic responded to the Word of God and to the needs of his time by a life of prayer, study, and apostolic zeal, founding a community to preach the Word out of his love and concern for sinners, so Dominicans down through the centuries have responded to the specific, "incarnated" needs of their times. They follow a long tradition, but they make personal the message of Jesus in their own lives. They act from within themselves, so they are creative and flexible in responding to "the signs of our times." The following of Jesus and Dominic remains a fresh adventure.

***References and suggested further reading***

Simon Tugwell O.P.  
Dominican Spirituality

William Hinnebusch, O.P.  
Life of Saint Dominic

Bede Jarrett, O.P.

Also, from Vatican II, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: (1) Chapter 5, The Call of the Whole Church to Holiness (showing the fullness of the call we hear, which we express in our Dominican vocation), and (2) Chapter 6, Religious (insofar as we are members of a religious family)



## Chapter 6

### *LIVING IN THE SPIRIT OF THE BEATITUDES IN THE WORLD TODAY*

#### *The Example of St. Dominic*

Lay Dominicans are encouraged in their rule to live ‘according to the spirit of the Beatitudes’. The spirit with which the founder of an order lives is the spirit which pervades the order. Dominic had a vision of sending his followers throughout the countries to preach the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In an age when the nobility, to which Dominic had belonged, lived a life of luxury and pleasure, Dominic chose to live as the Apostles had done in simplicity and poverty. Travelling on foot, without shoes, accepting all the discomfort and hardship of long journeys to carry the message of the Gospel, he expected his companions to follow his example with the same enthusiasm. His body was weakened and emaciated through a lifetime of self-imposed penances and lack of rest and food, all of which he offered for the conversion of sinners. He prayed continuously, night and day, spending the nights in darkness before the altar when he was near a church. Dominic spent all his days preaching. His love and care for his companions and all the people that he met was extraordinary. He worked continuously to bring them closer to God. When death was near for Dominic, he gave a message to his Friars: “Be eager in your service of God, strengthen and expand this new-born Order; increase your love of God and your keen observance of the Rule; grow in holiness.” Later, again he said: “These things, I give you my children that you may possess them as a heritage; have charity among you, preserve chastity, guard humility and embrace the holy state of voluntary poverty.” He also warned his Order, forbidding them to acquire worldly riches and possessions. These messages that Dominic gave to the members of his Order were in essence the same instructions that Christ gave to his followers in the Sermon on the Mount, namely the Beatitudes. To the Dominican Laity, living in an affluent world in the twenty-first century this may seem unrealistic. Materialism is an accepted and growing thing in the present day world. Luxury items are common place. How does one live in the Spirit of the Beatitudes in the midst of such an affluent society. One cannot alter one’s lifestyle or one’s place in society. This is the special niche for that person, but it does mean that the Dominican Lay person must draw apart in mind and heart. Their approach to living will be to put prayer as their first priority in their lives. Remember how St. Catherine of Siena built an interior cell within her own self to be with God and avoid the distractions of the world.

This inward contemplation, of turning to God throughout the day and at night when awake, will help develop a poverty of spirit. To live in the spirit of the evangelical counsels, a person must be conscious of exercising discipline and self-control with their life. They must be aware of their gifts for helping others but use these gifts in humility, mindful that they are given these gifts from God to be used to bring people closer to God. In the Beatitudes we are also taught to be content with what we have. Much of the unhappiness in the world today stems from people’s discontent. Christ said: “Do not be anxious about tomorrow” and “Your Father in Heaven knows what you need”. Exercise moderation in all things and be contented with what you have, even if it means some work or hardship. Remember we are expected to be practising penance.

Be happy. Our holy father, St. Dominic, was always joyful and sang hymns to Our Lady as he walked from town to town. Do not look back in your life with sadness, but only remember the happy events. Use each day to the fullest. We cannot be sure of tomorrow. Be aware of your talents and use them to help others. Work with others with patience and gentleness - not

everyone has the same abilities. Be humble in all you do, thinking all the while of the greatness and goodness of God.

Set aside time for prayer, even if it means losing some sleep. Take time even a short time each day, to do some spiritual reading for it feeds the mind. Do not neglect the Scriptures for they contain all the truths taught by Jesus. “The spiritual man is one who, whether he eats or drinks or whatever else he does, does all for the glory of God.” ( *1 Cor. 10:31*). For Dominican Laity, living in the spirit of the Beatitudes means following one’s natural lifestyle, with honesty, for truth is the keynote of the Dominican. It means living with sincerity and treating everyone with charity.

Dominican Laity should be serious in their search for perfection. Simply desiring to live in perfection of the love of God is not enough. There needs to be a programme of self-discipline and a conscious effort made each day for there to be a steady growth in spiritual life. The efforts made must be active not passive. A true humility is needed before God. Formation is a continuous process for growth in perfection and trust and faith in God are necessary so that He will lead the person to Himself. Humility will help each one to be the perfect person that God intended them to be.

A person will become closer to God by practising Penance. In a world that seeks comfort and pleasure, the thoughts about Penance seem entirely foreign, but the best way to achieve self-discipline is by practising Penance. “Penance is a joyful thing when preached by Brother Dominic”. St. Dominic practised Penance to make reparation for sinners so that they could be saved.<sup>1</sup>

Dominican Laity are left free to practise Penance as it suits them. It is an obligation of their commitment that they pray, practise penance and preach the Gospel. Jesus said to his disciples “If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget himself, carry his cross and follow me”. (*Matt. 16:24*) Many of the trials sent by God each day can be an effective way of carrying our daily cross. A positive attitude coping with illness, anti-Christian society and daily difficulties in our work can increase our union with Christ. Everyone finds it difficult to practise Penance. St. Dominic, who was a master of extraordinary penances promised to help his brethren. Ask him to help you practise Penance. He cannot refuse you because you are a part of his family.



## Chapter 7

### APOSTOLATE AND THE LAY DOMINICAN

#### **STATEMENT OF GOALS:**

1. To give to others the fruits of our contemplation. "Contemplata aliis tradere." This is the motto of the Order of Preachers.
2. Proposes to demonstrate how our life of study and prayer fuse in the work of the apostolate.
3. Our apostolate is a call to help others find truth which thereby makes it a spiritual work of mercy.
4. Apostolate plays an important role in revealing to us the formation of Christian character.

#### **Chapter Outline**

##### I. Origins:

1. Divine Mandate.
2. Personal Prayer.

##### II. Characteristics of Apostolate:

1. Selfish love.
2. Responds to need.
3. Balanced activity.
4. Awareness of being an instrument of grace. (Humility and Docility)
5. Ability to listen.

##### III. Fruits of the Apostolate.

#### **I. ORIGINS:**

##### **1. Divine Mandate.**

The commandment "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind... and you shall love your neighbour as yourself" [Mt.22:37-39], is given to us all. The reward is promised to us all, too! "Come, you have my Father's blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me, in prison you came to visit me. Then the just will ask Him: Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or see you thirsty and give you drink? When did we visit you when you were ill or in prison?" Christ's answer to those present and with whom He was speaking is His answer to us present at this reading and gives all an awareness of being an instrument of grace: "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my brothers, you did it for me."

This is the commandment of the love of God come full circle. God is unwilling to separate our love for Him and our love of neighbour - they are parent and child! The fulfilment of God's will in our life and the care of our neighbour are one. Jesus shows us the way when He dies out of faithful love for us and in loving dedication to the will of God the Father who ordained it.

## **2. *Personal Prayer.***

The active life of the apostolate rests on contemplation. This is the prerequisite. Prayer must always precede and feed the active life of the apostolate. Christ spent 30 years in the hidden contemplative life before He began His ministry. St. Dominic spent 10 years in contemplative silence at Osma before he was called to an active ministry. Catherine of Siena spent 3 years in the solitude of contemplation before she began one of the most colourful apostolate in Dominican history. Prayer undergirds and gives vigour to the apostolate, thereby making it a divine ministry and saving it from sterile activism. "If I speak with the tongue of men and angels, but am without love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal." Love of God is the motive force in all a Dominican does.

## **II. *CHARACTERISTICS OF APOSTOLATE.***

### **1. *Selfless love.***

In the DIALOGUE of St. Catherine of Siena, Christ says to Catherine: "You cannot give me the kind of love I ask of you. This is why I have put you among your neighbours; so that you can do for them what you cannot do for me - that is love them without any concern for thanks and without looking for any profit for yourself. And whatever you do for them I will consider done for me." And then Christ gives us a test with which to test the quality of selflessness of our love. "So your love should be sincere; you should love your neighbours with the same love with which you love me. Do you know how you can tell when your spiritual love is not perfect? If you are distressed when it seems that those you love are not returning your love or not loving you as much as you think you love them." The love of neighbour is to be without any interest.

### **2. *Responds to need.***

Jordan of Saxony wrote of Dominic: "God gave him the singular grace of weeping for sinners. He carried their miseries in the sanctuary of his compassionate heart and poured forth his burning love in floods of tears. Spending the whole night in prayer, he was accustomed to pray to his Father over and over again in secret. His frequent and special prayer to God for the gift of true charity capable of labouring for and winning the salvation of all people, since he deemed that he would be a true member of Christ only when he could devote himself entirely to gaining souls, like the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of all, who offered himself completely for our salvation." In addition, Dominic walked the length and breadth of Europe compassionately searching for these people he prayed for. Dominic's gifts were given for others, to build up the Church. This is the test of love's authenticity. Dominic readily demonstrates to us again and again that the gift is not a gift that is hoarded, stingily measured or kept in selfish reserve. Dominic is not shy.

Catherine, too! Her zeal for her Father's house seems fathomless! Sprung from her little room after 3 years of solitary prayer, she poured forth the fruit of her prayers on the whole of her world family, neighbours, and finally Pope, Church and the whole country. Without stint. Without prejudice. She did it in spite of misunderstandings, jealousy, pressures (there is always this pressure to be "conventional" in one's behaviour which Catherine was not exactly), and the mean opinions of her detractors.

### **3. *Balanced activity.***

The love of God and our neighbour in God has an order. It is expressed first through and in the family, as the first sin occurred in the family. All of us, priest, brother, nun, sister and laity,



single or married, - come from a family. In the family, the husband is Christ to his wife and the wife is Christ to her husband. Each of them is Christ to their children. The children each take this out with them to their circles. We find Christ in and through our parents, grandparents and other relatives. Gradually, as the children grow and circumstances ease, we move outward to all those in need around us.

***4. Awareness of being an instrument of grace.***

(Humility and Docility.) For most of us the apostolate can be, in most cases is, selected according to the temperament of the individual lay person. In some cases the soul of the apostolate must be in the core of the work we do to earn our daily bread! So that if I am a meat cutter, it is not just MEAT I cut, but it is meat for each and every Christ who will take it home that day and prepare it for himself or for herself and the family. The apostolate is relational and I am always reaching out to that other. There are many avenues to walk when searching for an apostolate. It may be found in community worker in parish work. It may be found in a soup-kitchen or in teaching CCD.

***5. Ability to listen.***

Above all we are alert to more than surface appearances and material need. We are looking for what it is God is showing us, listening for what He is saying to us. The one who comes to us hungry may be hungry for peaceful acceptance or basic kindness. In this case, to offer him or her suggestions or criticisms, no matter how well intentioned our proposed "solutions," would be to further distance the one distressed from the response that is really necessary to heal. We need to listen to hear what God is saying about this person to us. We need to put our self aside. Sometimes the one who is hungry and naked needs to be fed, warmed and dressed by gentle affirmation. Indeed the joyful outlook of a Dominican can be just the right encouragement to keep someone from the temptation of despair, help another remain sober and reasonable, or to stick with a marriage or religious vocation in time of stress - and we may, probably won't, even know it! The love that smiles in DOMINICAN eyes may give someone the courage to believe they can begin over, take advice, admit error, keep trying, make the best of little, subdue an unruly temper, shoulder a deserved blame, or possibly, recognize the silver lining in their life. In this respect, the apostolate is Everyman, Everywoman, for who knows how we effect those around us a thousand and one times a week with no more than a glance!

If our apostolate is teaching, writing or lecturing, the importance of adequate preparation in study, reflective thinking and prayer can be seen. We must first conform our own thinking and actions to the teaching of the Church. We need to personally assimilate the truths the Church teaches in order to sufficiently communicate them to others. We may find the meaning of apostolate in a long term commitment to helping a refugee family get settled in this country. Or maybe it will be a short-term commitment helping someone to convalesce from surgery or illness. Maybe it will be a sometime thing such as keeping a protective watch over the children of working parents who live nearby. Perhaps we don't know what our apostolate is. Perhaps we're not sure. Maybe we're not sure about giving of self. Maybe we're not where we can help most. Maybe we're not certain "how" to fit apostolate into our life. We need to pray over it and then pray again. Honestly. If nothing comes, we can make a gentle search for our milieu and if finding nothing again, then continue to wait in patient openness to God who knows of our groping. It may come to us what we are called to do. But we may need to pray and search again, shortly.

### ***III. FRUITS OF THE APOSTOLATE***

The Gospel of St. John tells us: "I am the vine and my Father is the gardener. Every barren branch of mine he cuts away; and every fruiting branch he cleans, to make it more fruitful still. You have already been cleansed by the word that I spoke to you. Dwell in me, as I in you. No branch can bear fruit, unless you remain united with me. I am the vine and you are the branches. He who dwells in me, as I dwell in him, bears much fruit..." [15:1-5]

What is this fruitfulness Jesus speaks of? In Galatians 5 the fruit of the Spirit is clearly defined and as we learned it before Confirmation: love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance and faith. Those who are striving to breathe the same air with Christ bear this fruit. In the end, it is not what we do but how we do it and what we are. The fruits of the Spirit do not concern service, but character. We may not be called to explode on the scene with volumes of ardent teaching about this loveable God of ours as did the great St. Thomas Aquinas. We may not be called to be a firebrand like Savonarola or have the charism of St. Vincent Ferrer. But we are called to "dwell in Christ" in a kind of fusion of presence that He invites and initiates, living in one another (we in Christ) through prayer and the way we relate to those around us. We are called to be peaceful. Gentle. Good. Meek. Temperate. And joyful! Most of all, a Dominican doesn't take himself/herself so seriously that he/she can't be JOYFUL. Dominicans are a joyful people! It is this fruit which God uses to draw others to Himself.

### ***SUMMARY***

Dominican Laity share in the religious and apostolic life of the Order of Preachers. Our Rule tells us: "The object of the Dominican Laity is the sanctification of its members and the salvation of souls." Dominican Laity are called to give hands, hearts and minds to many forms of charitable works and works of Mercy. We are called to help combat moral ills and to offer compassionate assistance to those who are physically ill as well where we can. But most of all our life of study and prayer fuse in the work of the apostolate where we have the most powerful weapon against ignorance, our worst enemy, in proclaiming the Truth. This is very much a spiritual work of mercy.

Wherever we are found, assisting in parish or soup kitchen, our mandate is the Gospel, in the command of Christ and in the example of our holy Father St. Dominic. We do not neglect any of our home duties to take on an outside apostolate, but we do not rest content by simply doing our duty at home. We are habitually alert for the work God may send each day, fielding the apostolate wherever it is found winging in at us, because apostolate is, above all else, an attitude, a way of being in Love.

### ***Review Questions***

Do I see the relationship in an act of selflessness in apostolate?

Do I see how my circumstances can be areas for my apostolate?

Have I overlooked some of the smaller but more immediate apostolates locally available because they are less glamorous, less attractive or rewarding than what I had in mind?

Do I see how works of mercy and charitable works deepen my faith experience and challenge or expand inner attitudes?

In this presentation, what strikes me as new or different from what I've been doing?

### ***RESOURCES:***

1. Dominican Spirituality, William A. Hinnebusch, O.P.

2. Renewal, William A. Hinnebusch, O.P., pp. 15-17, 19, 20, 33-37.

3. A Word from the Lord: A Word for the World! Mission and Ministry. Sr. Ann Willits, O.P.,



## Chapter 8

### STUDY AND THE LAY DOMINICAN

#### **STATEMENT OF GOALS:**

1. To present the purpose of study in the life of the Dominican Laity and propose that the whole cloth out of which truth is woven and the substance of our being may become one.
2. Study is not study for study's sake, as an end in itself, but this study we do is to be a lived reality, enfleshed.
3. Study is a way of life for the Dominican; in separate from prayer and apostolate, the three fuse in mutual support. Ideally, study, prayer, and apostolate merge to form a whole new way of living and experiencing who I am and who God is. By applying our "minds" to reality we seek truth and dispose ourselves to receive it. And by applying our "hearts" to this known truth, we seek not just to live it but to become it. Truth becomes incarnate. But the two rest on study. Learning comes before everything - including holiness and experience. It is impossible to fulfil the contemplative and apostolic ends of the Order without study.
4. To show that the element of study is deeply rooted in St. Dominic and the founding of the Order.

#### **Chapter Outline**

- I. Study as Based on Ordinary Human Experience.
- II. Study as a Response to God's Revealed Truth.
- III. Study: Dominic's Pursuit of Truth.
- IV. Study: Our Pursuit of Truth.

"From the visible things around us we learn of the invisible things of God."

[Heb-11:3, Rom.1:20]

#### ***I. Study as Based on Ordinary Human Experience.***

Learning so pervades our lives that learning could be called a synonym for living. Human learning includes so many things - problem solving, concept formation, conditioning, stimulus response, learning through association and, of course, there is always the motivation for learning to take into account! Learning increases our potential. We read a map, find a certain place is due south, and try to use that information to get there. What we learn from reading the map gives us the potential to get there. Whatever we study, however we learn, this knowledge produces, or has the potential to produce in us, habits and skills and contributes to the development of attitudes and emotions, rules of conduct and rules of thought. For instance:

Math teaches a logical thought process. English teaches us to have a command of our own native tongue. History, oldest of the social sciences, helps us to know and appreciate all that has happened in the past. Parents and family roots are of interest because we love them -they are part of our personal, intimate history. (The favourite question of a grandchild to a grandparent, for instance, is: what was it like in the old days?)

The beloved. This person couldn't BE loved until he/she had been introduced. Then we want to know all about this person. What was he like as a boy or what was she like as a girl? What

were parents, brother and sisters like? What were his/her hobbies, interests, etc.? In the natural order we can see that love very easily follows knowledge.

The more intense the love is, the greater the desire for knowledge. Conversely, the greater the desire for knowledge, the more intense the love. It expands itself!

## ***II. Study as a Response to God's Revealed Truth.***

This is much more true in the spiritual realm where it is God who takes over. He is the sacred Teacher who disposes our hearts to desire to know Him more by inducing us to love Him more. He gives the necessary reinforcement as His love motivates and draws us to search for Him. It is He who enlightens the mind and moves the will thereby helping us to move toward Him. The study of God has an inner momentum in it that carries us beyond the search for information about Him or the desire to learn something about Him. This inner momentum carries us, or has the potential to carry us, into prayer and into the presence of God.

There is probably nothing that so disposes us to love anyone as much as the experience of His love for us. A compelling first glimpse of God's love for us can be seen in Scripture at the Nativity – God disarms us and charms us as a little baby, uniting His divinity with our humanity. He becomes Everyman's baby, Everywoman's baby. He is my child and He is your child. He is my Saviour and He is your Saviour.

Another place we begin to discover God's love (and the possibilities in that love for us,) is in the delightful relationships He has had with men, women and children who are His special friends. The Church helpfully highlights some of these people for us by calling them Blessed and Saints. One of these Saints has said "God never comes marching into your life without bringing all His family and friends with Him." This brings additional blessings. Their views excite us. Their lives inspire us. Their heroism and accomplishments are not only our history and our legacy, but point to possibilities beyond mediocrity or "half-growth" in our relationship, our filiation, as children of God. Their personal experiences of God lift our vision above the level of a monotonous, mechanically lived Faith to confront a hidden dynamism that does not and cannot exist with what is static, "fixed" or "secure."

For us as Dominicans, St. Dominic is friend par excellence. He is our spiritual mentor, a wise and trusted advisor, a good and holy friend and Father. He saw that sound knowledge was an essential tool toward the end of the Order. And so, after assembling the first candidates to the Order and setting up a program of prayer and common life, he devoted himself to a program of studies. The importance of study to Dominic's thinking is so great that he has even made room for it by granting a dispensation in the rule: "Because our Order has been specifically instituted for preaching and the salvation of our neighbour, our study should tend chiefly, earnestly, and, above everything, to all that can be of use to souls." While the primary thrust of the Fathers is precisely the preaching of Truth and refuting heresy so that they are educated thoroughly and have the formal grounding necessary for one who is the designated guardian of the riches of the Faith, Dominican Laity are also called, each in his/her own way, to the quest for the Truth.

As Dominicans, we begin by patterning our lives on the life of St. Dominic, not in the sense of mimicking, but by giving our own unique expression to the Dominican way of life. Throughout the entire history of the Order we can see the spirit and tradition of study shown in different ways. It is shown one way in St. Elmo, the famous seafarer's patron who is actually a Dominican Blessed by the name of Peter Gonzales! It is shown in the illiterate Catherine of

Siena, who is also a Doctor of the Church. Bl. Albert of Bergamo, a simple and pious farmer and very much hen-pecked (he is the patron saint of henpecked husbands), certainly never realized study in the same way as Albert the Great, who lived at about the same time. These people of various nationalities who come from several walks of life all have this common: a single-minded attentiveness to God that sought habitually to watch for and learn what it was God might want of them.

### ***III. Study: Dominic's Pursuit of Truth.***

The devil always appears under the guise of good. In the very beginning his lie to man and woman in the garden was a promise of good: "... your eyes will be opened" and "you will be like gods, knowing good and evil." The heresies and errors of Dominic's day contained similar half-truths and deceptions. Various pious groups rose from time to time to defend the truth, and though they were often good and holy people, faithful in reception of the sacraments and in keeping precept and commandment, generally they failed badly because of a lack of sound knowledge.

It is important to remember that during the period in history when Dominic lived education was a privilege. However, even the aristocracy weren't always educated. There was a much greater emphasis on the spoken word and much less on the written. It was 200 years after Dominic died that Gutenberg invented printing with moveable type which became the first means of mass communication. Printing put more knowledge in the hands of more people faster and cheaper than ever before. As a result, reading and writing spread widely and rapidly. But by and large, most of the people who studied in university centres during Dominic's time, late in the 12th century and early in the 13th century, were clerics, doctors and lawyers. So it was that Dominic cleverly saw that it was important to begin in centres of learning when he founded the Order. He knew you had to remove the "cause" of error to remove error itself and the error stemmed from the university centres. In order to refute scepticism and rout deceit, Dominic's arguments had to be more learned and more reasonable than his opponents.

### ***IV. Study: Our Pursuit of Truth.***

Not everything that men and women are known to devote themselves to mentally represents an improvement in behaviour. There is still a tilt in the moral order because the problem of half-truths, manipulations of the truth, and slick substitutes for the truth continue to exist. Some examples of this are:

- A . Half -truths of Communism and Marxism.
- B . Half -truths of Modernism and Secular Humanism.
- C . Half -truths of Abortion advocates.
- D . Half -truths espoused in some theological circles.
- E . Half -truths of the Press.

This is only a partial list. Since the world appears to have no great bias in favour of truth, now more than ever before is the age of Dominic. We are told that in order for a religious order to continue to exist and not die out, it must adapt itself to the needs of the age. The need for which the Order of Preachers was originally founded still exists.

Dominican Laity share the same vision as the Dominican Priests who are the Preachers of the Order of Preachers, though we can't realize it in the same way. We come from all walks of life, are many ages, nationalities and temperaments. Some of us were relatively spiritually mature when we were called. Some not so much so. Our educational backgrounds are different, too.

We are not drawn strictly from nor do we become an intellectual elite and we do not have a monopoly on the truth.

Dominican Laity should, however, be better "informed" than the average lay person.

As a result - the plus! - we have resources available to us that others may not have for reflective reading, thoughtful pondering, to try on, or to help us argue publicly with "conviction", if it should come to that.

Because ... if we don't KNOW IT, LOVE IT, FEEL IT, how can we share it with others.

### ***Review Questions***

Can study as an aspect of Dominican life further my relationship with God and help deepen it?

Can membership in the Dominican Laity further my relationship with God. How can I countermand the lack of truth experienced in life today (as related to human rights, hunger, poverty, abortion, the new morality, etc.)? Does this presentation change your idea of study?

### ***SUMMARY:***

Study for the Dominican is a spiritual quest into all the realities of our life experience. It is the gospel reaching into my life, into my heart as well as my head. It is more than credits and/or degrees, but is much like the words of the poet who wrote: "Feeling out of sight for the ends of being and ideal grace." Study facilitates this groping toward fullness of living, of loving, of growing, of BEING.

Truth demands personal search and sometimes it demands personal risk. Sometimes it is just that we risk finding out we are wrong in holding some opinion. Sometimes the risk is in taking truth to the limit, stubbornly standing by it, and being condemned. For most of us truth and our study is a quiet personal journey.

### ***RESOURCES:***

#### 1. Dominican Spirituality

Wm. A. Hinnebusch, O.P., (The Doctrinal Approach/Study and contemplation, pp.16-18; The Source of Dominican Spirituality, p.24; Dominican Life is Doctrinal, all of chp.6.)

2. Early Dominicans, Selected Writings; The Classics of Western Spirituality, pp.61, 75, 107, 294, 466-467.

#### 3. Renewal

Wm. A. Hinnebusch, O.P., Dominicana (chp.7), St. Dominic and the Dominican Educational Apostolate, by Sr. Mary Halpin, O.P., especially pp.76-77.

### ***PRAYER***

Always at the conclusion of any Chapter an essential part of Dominican life.

**O God,**  
*it is you who move over the abyss  
of nothingness to make it  
move and breathe and live.  
You give a spark of your clarity  
to all things.*

*All things receive their truth and worth from you.  
You guide the spirit of man and woman  
beyond self to the deep mystery of your love.  
Open my heart to this mystery.  
Guard it, too, from the seduction that may arise.  
Make my conscience secure in your truth  
that at all times it may call the good  
and know that evil is evil.  
Enlighten my mind and dispose my heart  
to know and desire that which leads to you,  
and keep me from all that leads to error and deceit. Amen.*



## Chapter 9

### *THE DOMINICAN FAMILY - THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY*



#### *Chapter Goals*

- I. To see the source and ultimate expression of community in the life of the Trinity, the life of Jesus with his apostles, and the life of the early Christian church. To see how Dominic took this aspect of Gospel and made it an important and basic ingredient in the life of the Order.
- II. To study the various expressions of community as lived out by the diverse branches of the Order.

#### *Chapter Outline*

- I. Introduction to Community
  - A. Basic Source - Life of the Trinity
    1. Man as Image of God
    2. Man's Need for Community
  - B. Apostolic Community - Life of Jesus
    1. Family Life
    2. Apostolic Life
  - C. Early Christian Community
    1. Prayer, Praise, Instruction
    2. Apostolic Mission
  - D. Dominican Community
    1. Gospel Foundation
    2. Basic to Apostolic Mission



## II. Expressions of Dominican Community in Diverse Branches of Order\*

### A. Elements Common to All

1. Prayer, Study, Community, Apostolate
2. Obedience

### B. Means by Which Each Branch Expresses the Dominican Charism

1. Nuns
2. Friars
3. Laity
4. Sisters

### *I. Introduction To Community*

The Dominican Order is a family of Fathers, Brothers, Nuns, Sisters and Laity, all of whom acknowledge the Master of the Order as the successor of Dominic, the founder of the Order. There is unity in the Dominican family, because there is one Master, a common aim and ideal for all members who have the same privileges and obligations. It is only the lifestyle for members that is different. There is a variety of work undertaken by all members of the Order but all are united with the same vision that they are working for the Order and the Church. When they pray they are united as a family under their founder and father, St. Dominic, so that the Dominican praying alone has his prayers strengthened by those of the whole Order and each one's individual prayers strengthen the Order as a whole and so help its work in the Apostolate.

The Apostolic work of the Order could not progress and could not lead souls to the truth without the prayers of all its Dominican members. The present day Chapters have a greater autonomy than they had in the earlier history of the Dominican Laity. The Chapter Council and President organise the affairs of the local Chapter within the framework of the Constitutions for the Dominican Laity.

The attendance at the community meeting of the Chapter is very important for all members. The actual living of the Lay Dominican each day can be lonely when often one is working with those who do not have the same vision and it is possible to feel alone on the spiritual journey. The Chapter meeting is a time for Dominican Laity to renew their enthusiasm, enliven their faith and draw strength and purpose from their companions who have the same love and vision.

The continuous formation of the members of the Dominican Laity is accomplished in various ways, each element being important and influential. We are formed by the example of those around us and by history and tradition. The lives of St. Dominic and St. Catherine of Siena and the lives of the Fathers and Sisters of the Order all show a way of life and portray a quality of life that must influence a person who is seriously pursuing the Dominican way of life.

The various ways in which we are formed are:

- **By Example**  
The lives of Dominican Saints, the present day members of the Order and the Dominican writers, both past and present, show a mode of life to inspire and guide those desirous of living a full Dominican life.
- **By Association**

The Chapter's members and associated groups and the practices of the Chapter's meetings influence the person who is learning about Dominican life.

- **By Study**

A reading programme is a learning process in which some people find the most helpful avenue for knowledge about the Order but it is not the only way of learning. There are some for whom a reading programme is a great chore and their process of learning is accomplished better by example and association.

- **The Grace of God**

To live life as a Dominican is an invitation from God to seek perfection following the particular Rule of the Order. Each individual is unique and it is God, Himself, who sets the path for each soul. The response that each one gives to this invitation is a formation in itself. Remember how Our Lord taught St. Catherine to read the Psalms when she was unable to read, so that she was able to read and pray the Psalms herself. Many times we find that the guidance given to us is from God, through various experiences of life and through trials that are sent to us.

- **By Prayer**

Once a person realises that they have placed their life and their will in the hands of God, their prayers will be a formation towards a realisation of the vocation that must be doctrinal, social and apostolic.

- **Observance of Customs of Prayer and Meditation**

It is a fact that over the years the Fathers and Sisters have given constant teaching and example to the Laity and have taught them the observance of the Rule regarding Prayer and Contemplation. It is by following these observances that the Laity will learn to live in the Spirit of the Beatitudes and so grow in Dominican spirituality. We learn from each other, we encourage each other, and we help each other, therefore the building of community is very important to the growth of the individual.

The Chapter meeting should not be missed unless it is for illness or something very important. A normal social occasion is not an excuse for missing a meeting. Chapter Council should set dates for meetings early in the year so that Chapter Brothers and Sisters will be able to avoid their social engagements encroaching on their meeting times.

### ***A. Basic Source***

We should begin our study of community at its basic source, God.

The life of the three Divine Persons is a communal one; a sharing in the same Divine Nature and Attributes. This life is a life of love.[1] Made in God's image and likeness, man reflects the need for community in his own life. The Church tells us in the Decree on the Church in the Modern World: -"God did not create man in isolation, but for the formation of social unity. From the beginning of salvation history He has chosen men not just as individuals but as members of a certain community."[2] And in the Decree on the Church we read"...it has pleased God to make men holy and save them, not merely as individuals, without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness."[3]

Jesus' prayer for us is for an intimate share in God's communal life, which sharing is in itself witness to both Father and Son. "Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe that it was you who sent me" Jn. 17:21.

"With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realize that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me" Jn. 17:1.3.

### ***B. Apostolic Community***

Jesus began his life on earth in the community of the Holy Family. Family-community is something each of us understands, for most of us, it is our mode of life, the way in which we fulfil our Christian commitment.[4] At the beginning of His ministry, Christ drew to Himself men of his choice, inviting them to: "Come and follow me," their response was to "leave all things." Here we have the beginning of the apostolic community Mt. 4:18-20. Many places in the Gospel allude to the communal life of Jesus and His followers, but none so specifically as those which refer to Judas as being in charge of their "common fund" Jr. 12:6, Jn. 13:29.

### ***C. Christian Community***

The first Christians understood the importance of community. For those who followed Jesus, the words: "Where two or three meet in My name, I shall be there with them" were a living reality, Mt. 18:20.[5] They acknowledged their need to draw strength from one another in prayer, praise, study of the Word entrusted to them by the Apostles,[6] and in the "breaking of the bread" Acts 2:42- 47. As Christ had predicted in His priestly prayer, the oneness of the community with Him and with one another led to the constant witnessing of the Father's love in the gift of the Son to men, a witnessing which bore fruit in conversions Acts 5:12-14.

"The primitive Church provided an example of community life when the multitude of believers were of one heart and one mind (cf. Acts 4:32), and found nourishment in the teaching of the gospel and in the sacred liturgy, especially the Eucharist. Let such a life continue in prayerfulness and a sharing of the same spirit (cf. Acts 2:42). As Christ's members living fraternally together, let them excel one another in showing respect (cf. Rom 12:10), and let each carry the other's burdens (cf. Gal. 6:2). For thanks to God's love poured into hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5), a religious community is a true family gathered together in the Lord's name and rejoicing in His presence (cf. Mt. 18:20). For love is the fulfilment of the law (cf. Rom. 13:10) and the bond of perfection (cf. Col. 3:14); where it exists we know we have been taken from death to life (cf. 1- Jn. 3:14). In fact, brotherly unity shows that Christ has come,(cf. Jn. 13:35; 17:21); from it results great apostolic influence."[7]

### ***D. Dominican Community***

"Dominican life is an expression of Gospel lived in community."[8] St. Dominic based his Order on the apostolic life of the Gospel. It is not surprising therefore, that "from the very first days of the Order St. Dominic asked his brethren for promises of community and obedience to himself."[9] Neither is it surprising that he chose for it the Rule of St. Augustine which begins: "Before all things, most dear brothers, we must love God and after Him our neighbour, for these are the principal commands which have been given to us. The following things then, we direct you who live in the monastery to observe: First, that you dwell together in unity in the house and be of one mind and one heart in God, remembering this is the end for which you have come here."

Fr. Hinnebusch says: "Dominic became an apostle by keeping the Rule of St. Augustine and the constitutions of the Canons of Osma. The Rule of St. Augustine patterned on the life of the apostles, powerfully develops the apostolic spirit of those who keep it. The community life prescribed by Augustine wonderfully prepares the soul to work for souls."[10] Our apostolate flows naturally from our commitment to community. "The Dominican charism of preaching is continuously nourished by the Word shared in community. Thus, in the proclamation of the Word of God the Dominican Family expresses a unity centred on the Word of God and seeks to give common witness to the good news."[11] One of the ways our apostolate is a response to community is by the love we share with our fellow Dominicans, a love which overflows into the world. Love of God manifested in love of neighbour.

## II. Expressions Of Community In Diverse Branches Of Dominican Order

### *A. Elements Common to All*

Perhaps the best expression of the elements common to all branches of the Order is to be found in the Preface of the Basic Constitutions for Lay Dominicans proposed by the National Council in 1982.

"The Dominican Order as St. Dominic founded it was a microcosm of the total Church of his time. It encompassed men and women of the several branches of the Order, according to the expectations of the medieval period. Governed creatively in a participative spirit, it nevertheless involved clearly defined roles.

Today, as in times past, the whole Dominican Family shares actively in its charism of Dominic, in his love of the Word of God understood in all of its radical originality. We face this Word together in our common life; we study it we celebrate it liturgically and bear witness to it." [12] Prayer, study, common life and apostolate, all are elements shared in equally by the three branches of the Order while at the same time being expressed diversely according to the particular vocation of each.

Before exploring the diverse expressions of Dominican charism, we must first acknowledge that element of Dominican life and spirituality which is at the heart of our vocation and which highlights and binds together every facet of it, namely obedience.

Obedience is the soul of Dominican life, the keystone of Dominican existence. [13] As we pray, study, celebrate and preach the Word, we are drawn ever deeper into the mission of the Word: "Behold, I come to do your will, O God." [14] Our brother Thomas Aquinas teaches us that the gift of our wills in obedience is the greatest gift we can offer God, for it is the gift of the whole person. Through obedience we are conformed to Christ. [15]

The Fathers' Constitution sums it up beautifully: "Since obedience binds us to Christ and to the Church, all the work and hardship that follows from it is like a continuation of Christ's self-giving and takes on a sacrificial meaning for our own benefit and that of the Church in whose fulfilment the whole work of creation will be completed. [16] The Dominican Order has emphasized the importance of obedience from its very inception by the custom of mentioning in profession only the vow or promise of obedience, again echoing Thomas' teaching that the vow of obedience is inclusive of poverty and chastity but not vice versa. [17] In the first part of this study we saw how Dominic linked together community and obedience. [18] Let's look briefly at how obedience touches communal prayer, study and apostolate.

"If a community is to remain faithful to its spirit and mission, it needs a principle of unity obtainable by obedience." Coming together to pray the Office or celebrate the Eucharist can be truly a "sacrifice of praise." We may feel drawn to private prayer or long for quiet resting in the Lord, but obedience to the Rule calls us to make our prayer a "pure sacrifice," a true act of worship by our self-denial and unity with others.

The sacrifice of obedience is often involved in putting aside other things to join in meetings, lessons, workshops, study days and also in the very personal sharing of our insights, thoughts and special graces for the benefit of others.

Since our apostolate, sharing of the Word praised, studied and lived, should begin within the community, there are many opportunities for the giving of ourselves in obedience. Acceptance of the responsibilities for the government of the chapter, the support of the chapter and individual apostolates and the general "bearing of each other's burdens" will strengthen our spirit of obedience and indicate the depth of our commitment to Christ.

***B. Means by Which Each Branch Expresses Own Charism***

Having touched upon the elements common to the three branches of the Order, we will now see briefly how each expresses its own charism. The cloistered nuns, traditionally referred to as Second Order, were established at Prouille by St. Dominic in 1206, to be followed in 1216 by the founding of the Friars Preachers, commonly called First Order. It was not until 1285 that the lay branch or Third Order was established with the promulgation of the Rule written by Munio de Zamora, Master of the Order, bringing together into a more solid and evangelical structure the many lay people (penitents) who had attached themselves to the Preachers.

The many Congregations of Dominican Sisters we see today were founded - much later by individuals who adopted the Rule and Spirituality of the, Order as their own while remaining outside its scope of government. Each Congregation of Sisters makes its vow of obedience to their particular Superior or Mother General whereas the Friars, Nuns and Laity promise obedience to the Master of the Dominican Order.

Friars	-	Obedience to: Master of Order
Laity	-	Obedience to: Master of Order
Nuns	-	Obedience to: Master of Order
Sisters	-	Obedience to: Superior of Particular Congregation

The Order, studying the concept of "Dominican Family" and striving to bring about its realization, discourages the designation of First, Second and Third Orders, preferring us to remember that even as we are one in Christ, so by the special grace of our calling, we are one in Dominic. Each branch expresses its living of and obedience to the Word in a different way. According to their Constitution, it is the mission of the Friars Preachers in the service of the Church to preach Jesus Christ to all peoples. They do this by the spoken and written word, by teaching and other forms of ministry.

The Nuns "... strive after Christian perfection; and by means of that perfection implore for the labours of their brethren abundant fruit in holiness." [21] By prayer, sacrifice and witness to the Death and Resurrection of Christ in their own lives, they fulfil the same dual purpose of the Order, personal sanctification and the salvation of souls. Congregations of Dominican Sisters share the special charism of preaching and accomplish it through the apostolates of Teaching, Nursing, Counselling, giving retreats and other ministries.

For Lay Dominicans, the Order's charism is expressed and fulfilled within the fabric of society. Our Dominican vocation is not an adding onto but an intensifying of our baptismal commitment.

We promise to live the spirit of the evangelical counsels; listening and being responsive to the Word in Scripture, in every event of our lives and by joyfully obeying the directives of Church and Order. We live chastely within the framework of our state in life, reflecting the great love of Christ for His Church, and we are ever mindful of the Order's apostolic poverty which we express in the simplicity and generosity of our lives. [22] By our fidelity to prayer, especially

Eucharistic and liturgical prayer, we continually bring the world to Christ, and through our apostolates and the witness of daily living, we bring Christ to the world. "To be a Dominican is to preach prophetically, to speak God's word in season and out of season. To be a Dominican is to share this vision and this ministry with brothers and sisters, priests, religious and lay who have chosen this particular way of being Christ." [23]

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14. Heb. 10:7
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19. *Constitutions and Ordinations of the Brethren of the Order of Preachers*, Ch. I, Art. 2, No. 1
20. Jordan of Saxony, *Letter of Easter 1233* "Dear brethren, have a constant mutual charity among yourselves, for it cannot be that Jesus will appear to those who have cut themselves off from community: Thomas, for not being with the others when Jesus came, did not merit to see Him. Do you think you are better than Thomas?"
21. W. Hinnebusch, O.P., *Dominican Spirituality*, pp. 2-3
22. Cf. *General Principles of Lay Dominican Life*, National Council, I.D.I. March - April 1984, n. 4
23. S. Landregan, T.O.P., *A Layman's Share in Dominican Life and Mission*, Parable 1977

***Review Questions***

***I. Introduction to Community***

- A. What are some of the ways we feel the need for community in our lives?
- B. What elements express St. Dominic's building of the Order's community life upon the foundation of Gospel or Apostolic community?

***II. Expressions of Dominican Community***

- A. In what ways are community and obedience basic to the fulfilment of the Order's mission?
- B. As Laity we share the same charism and goals of the Order with Dominican Friars, Nuns and Sisters. Should we feel a family identity, a certain oneness with them?



***The Dominican Black Abbey and Priory Kilkenny***



## Chapter 10

### *THE LAY DOMINICAN AS A CONTEMPLATIVE IN MODERN SOCIETY*

The sounds of progress in modern society are very hard to drown out and we need periodically to move away to a quiet place to recharge and refresh our faith in and love of God. Jesus moved away from the crowds going onto a mountain, out on the lake and into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray to His Father in Heaven. “Learn of Me” he said, so in our search for God, we must move to a quiet place to become recollected.

Dominicans are contemplatives. The majority of Lay Dominicans are busy people working in a society that is moving with an ever increasing pace. To build an interior life with God, there is not always the physical possibility of moving away to a quiet place. St. Catherine escaped from the distraction by mentally escaping to an ‘interior cell’ to be with God. Our search for God is endless; as St. Augustine says “Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.” God has placed us in this world, in this present age, amongst all the distractions of modern day living. Our search for God must continue in spite of the distraction of today’s world. God, who formed us, wills that we should search for Him and long for Him throughout our lives and we will not be fully content until we reach the Kingdom of God. God has placed us where we are and He is there with us. This knowledge should help us to look inward and rest in God in the midst of a noisy world.

Contemplation is reflection, that is, thinking deeply. Contemplation of God is thinking about God and the things pertaining to His gifts to mankind. Silence and solitude are essential for true contemplation. The Scriptures and the Psalms of the Office are the rich sources of contemplation. It is from these riches of Scripture that contemplation will lead to direct prayer with God. Contemplation will encourage detachment and to be truly united to God there must be a sense of detachment from worldly pursuits. This is a difficult achievement for people who are busy working in modern society. There is a lot of activity, noise and distraction to be in daily combat with, but a person who has a hunger to be united to God, to be absorbed in God, will set a timetable to work from, so that there will be habits formed which will allow part of each day to be given to reflection and prayer.

Prayer is the most important part of the Dominican vocation. Mass, the Sacraments, Morning and Evening Prayer and the Rosary will increase union with Christ. St. Dominic would always carry with him on his journeys, the Gospel of St. Matthew and the letters of St. Paul. Whenever they paused to rest on the journey he would read, meditate and pray and he would always ask his companions to join him and think about the Lord.

The difficulties that Lay Dominicans face when endeavouring to follow a contemplative vocation are many. Noise is everywhere. Streets are filled with the jangle of traffic. Offices and factories abound with the noise of machines. Homes are beset by the radio and the television, so that to be a contemplative in a Lay life requires a well-ordered timetable to each day and the discipline of being able to keep to a routine. A Lay Dominican does not have the help of a community to assist with keeping to a life of prayer and contemplation so this is why self-discipline is so important. A person is simply dependent on themselves and sometimes this can be lonely. Some spiritual reading each day, if only for a short period, is necessary for the Tertiary to achieve a contemplative spirit.



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Dominican Laity cannot be slaves to the fashions and customs of today, but must learn the truth of Christ from the Scriptures and be able to present this truth to others.

The words of the Psalms used in the Office, the gift of the Eucharist and the mysteries of the Rosary are all part of the contemplative's day. We are told Mary pondered over the words of the Angel and the words of Simeon. We, too, must ponder over these things which tell of the beauty and truth of God. In contemplation we encounter God, and so are led into deep, private prayer with God. Without this true union with God, the Dominican cannot help others to learn about God, for no-one can give what they do not have.



## Chapter 11

### DOMINICANS AS PEOPLE OF PRAYER

#### ***I. Contemplation as a necessity in the Dominican Vocation.***

In this section we are going to reflect back on meeting number one in order to recall that the Spirit and Aims of Holy Father Dominic were radically forged in the fires of contemplation during his stay at the Cathedral at Osma. By examining the testimonies of the witnesses at his beatification hearings, it will become evident that the power of Dominic's preaching lay not in human wisdom, but rather in the contemplative prayer which prepared him for the preaching apostolate.

Also, we shall examine a statement by St. Thomas Aquinas in which the contemplation of Sacred Truth is perceived as necessary for any person who would respond to God's call by living out the spirituality of the preacher. It is this Thomistic statement that virtually characterizes what we mean by Dominican Spirituality: Just as it is better to enlighten, than merely to shine, so it is better to give to others the fruits of one's contemplation, than merely to contemplate."(II-II !. 188, A.6,c.) In Dominican life, contemplation and action are not competing rivals, they are rather mutually complimentary facets of participating in the preaching apostolate of the church. While lay people are not at this time explicitly called to the task of canonical preaching, there are many apostolates which fall within the orbit of holy preaching and it is precisely these apostolates which require contemplative formation.

#### ***II. The relationship between personal private prayer and common liturgical prayer.***

Every person who seeks to respond to God's call in a Dominican fashion, must understand that this vocation requires a delicate balance between personal private prayer and common liturgical prayer. By personal private prayer we mean that intimate, spontaneous interpersonal communication which characterizes the deepest of our human friendships. It is the time faithfully made between friends for mutual exploration, sometimes playfully and sometimes perhaps more seriously. It is in these special times that we gain a greater knowledge about the Other and, therefore, make it possible to grow deeper in love with this Person. By expressing our own deepest feelings in our own words, in our own thoughts, we in turn make ourselves vulnerable to this perspective Friend. It is precisely this vulnerability which creates the atmosphere for trust and love in those special times of personal prayer.

Yet Our Lord doesn't relate to us merely as individuals. He sees us also as part of His own larger Mystical Body, the Church. When we come before Him as Church, as opposed to individuals, we use the words and thoughts of the church to express our love, praise and thanksgiving to Him. This communal celebration of God's mighty deeds is what we refer to as liturgical prayer. By meeting together at regular intervals during the day, we form a liturgy of the hours of the day. This is what we mean by common liturgical prayer.

#### ***III. Prayer as related to study in the Dominican life.***

In the next chapter meeting, the topic of study as crucial to Dominican life will be discussed. Therefore, in this presentation, we shall begin to build a bridge between Dominican prayer and Dominican study which you will be exploring in the next meeting. As private and liturgical prayer are balanced in the Dominican lifestyle, they begin to form within each of us a deep contemplative dimension. This contemplative dimension is so deep and so radical

that it is not enough to say that our prayer is contemplative. Contemplative should be an adjective that characterizes our whole way of being, our entire lifestyle. If during our prayer times we encounter the Divine Person of the Word as He is in Himself, then in our study times we need to mull over this same Word in all the different media in which that Word is manifest in the world, so that we might enter into the celebration of God's Holy Word with a greater knowledge, a deeper reverence and humility. In this way we can see that our way of life of study must vitally inform our life of prayer and conversely, our prayer will begin to effect mutuality between our intellectual effort and our affective needs.

### ***Dominicans As People Of Prayer***

It is the purpose of this Chapter to demonstrate that prayer is not an optional element of Dominican lifestyle, it is rather the absolutely essential foundation of Dominican life. If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders labour; if the Lord does not watch over the city, in vain does the watchman keep vigil."(Psalm 127) From our previous session on the spirit and aims of St. Dominic, we became aware that Dominic was himself a great contemplative person who had much experience in the ways of the Spirit. As a young man of 25 years, Dominic served, at the request of Bishop Martin Bazan, in the diocesan cathedral at Osma. Here, for seven years uninterrupted years Dominic lived as a Canon Regular under the Rule of St. Augustine and advanced quickly along the way of perfection, growing continually toward contemplative union with God and deepening his own personal spirituality. As a contemplative at Osma, Dominic responded to the self-revealing God of love by listening to His Word in the quiet of contemplation, by liturgically celebrating His Word in worship and Sacrament, by existentially manifesting His Word in his life, and finally by unceasingly proclaiming His word 'from ]the housetops', insisting upon it both in season and out of season. We begin our reflections on the relationship between Dominican prayer and study by having recourse to the venerable Dumb Ox of our hallowed tradition - our own brother Thomas Aquinas. He states in the Summa Theologica:

*"Just as it is better to enlighten than to shine, so it is better to give to others the fruits of one's contemplation than merely to contemplate."* (II-II Q. 188, A.6,c)

In these few words, Thomas seems to capture what he discerned as the inner dynamism motivating the spirituality of the preacher which he saw lived out so beautifully in the life of Holy Father Dominic. Thomas understood that Dominic's personal response to God's universal call to holiness was the undertaking of the spirituality of the preacher through his prayer, study and apostolate. Thomas knew that if Dominican spirituality is characterized by prayer, study and apostolate, that these could not be seen as separated activities. Rather he understood them to be drawn up in a higher unity under the single name of Veritas. That is to say that truth in all its sacred simplicity, is the common ground that gives birth to these diverse and yet delicately balanced elements which together constitute the Dominican response to God's call to holiness. Because the inner dynamism of this Dominican response is: "to contemplate and share the fruits of contemplation with the brethren", it would stand to reason that any attempt to lead people in the way of Dominican spirituality must teach them how to become contemplative in their own particular styles of living. And further, it is not enough to say that they might develop contemplative prayer lives, for prayer, study and apostolate are radically interrelated in the common ground of Sacred Truth. It would be more precise to say that we must develop in Lay Dominicans a contemplative dimension to such a degree that their way of being at prayer, study and in the apostolate is precisely as a contemplative person. In saying this much, we are powerfully suggesting that our Formation program should be seen as the Holy Spirit's personal

invitation to each and every one of us to symbolically express our Dominican commitments by forming in us a radically contemplative dimension that permeates every aspect of our lives precisely as Lay Dominicans.

While this contemplative dimension should radically inform our study and apostolate, the dimension itself is formed and nurtured pre-eminently in one's own life of prayer. There is perhaps no better example of this than the life of our own Holy Father Dominic. Commenting on one of the beatification proceedings for Dominic in Bologna, Fr. Vicaire notices that many of the comments were directed not to Dominic's fervour and generosity as preacher but rather to the memories of the depth, extent and radiance of his prayer. Even Jordan of Saxony stressed:

"There was a continuity of contemplative prayer which from the Osma years onwards united the soul of Dominic inseparably to Christ Our Redeemer. In the state of union, he obtained a special grace of prayer for sinners, the poor and the oppressed, and he came to realize that he would not be a real member of Christ until he could dedicate himself totally with all the energies at his command, to the work of bringing back souls just as Our Lord Jesus, the Saviour of all, consecrated Himself wholly to our salvation. Thus the call to be a missionary took life from the union of his soul with God. The fervour of contemplative prayer gave that heroic call its precise direction and sanctified it."

Of Dominic's personal prayer, Fr. Vicaire states:

"Acts of reparation for sin, of supplication for sinners come from such a fire of love that his cries would often break the silence of the night. One moment he would be asking God to help the whole Church or the Order in the great needs of his time, while in another moment he would be praying for one of his preachers or novices or for a special penitent. The ardent love of people which added warmth of sincerity to his preaching had already been enkindled during his intercessory prayer. For Dominic it was of a primary importance in his proclamation of the Word of God that he should pray first for the people to whom he was about to preach. Prior to his preaching of the Word, Dominic would contemplate the words of Sacred Scripture and at prayer he could be seen extending his two hands before his face, as if he were reading from a book. This is the point from which his contemplation in living faith spread its own wings and rose far above the earth. It was contemplation centred on the Redeemer.

These contemplative moments of the prayer of Dominic are the high points of the movement of his spirit, in which he passed from a reading of the Scriptures deepened by theological reflection, to meditation, and breaking into interior converse and coming to rest in contemplative communion with Our Lord. In him, this reached such a degree of divine intimacy that those who lived with him were convinced that he was then receiving directly from the Spirit, revelations and compelling inspirations for decisive action. This sense of the divine marked his words with that inspired certitude, which convinced others and compelled them to follow him." In view of this awesome fervour for both liturgical and personal prayer, is it any wonder that Dominic added to the Constitutions the following prescription for the prospective preacher:

"Let the brothers present themselves everywhere as men who are looking after their own salvation and the salvation of others... as men of the Gospel who follow in the footsteps of their Saviour, who speak with God or of God, within themselves or with their neighbour."

Vicaire notes that these words reveal the hidden meaning of Dominic's life as well as ours - they reveal the special grace which God gave to Dominic. But if we really understand them and live by them, they teach us that the act of living out our faith in prayer and the act of communicating the Divine Word, are but two moments which spring from the common ground of Veritas. They are identified by the Object which is common to them, God Himself. For those who would seek to follow Dominic, contemplative prayer is the secret of synthesizing one's spiritual life. And so should we have any wonder that St. Thomas described the dynamism of the spirituality of the preacher as contemplation and sharing contemplation with our neighbours? For those who feel themselves called today to live out spirituality in following our Father Dominic contemplation is not an option but a necessity. For who can dare to preach Truth, before he or she has contemplated such Truth in his or her own heart? Who can dare to preach the Truth if he or she has not laboured to seek out the various ways the Word of God has communicated Himself to us in all the various media of our lives?

Now having stated the necessity of contemplation in the Lay Dominican vocation, we need to discuss precisely what forms this contemplation takes in the prayer lives of individual persons. Traditionally, the church has demonstrated that this contemplation is expressed as both personal private prayer and common liturgical prayer. While these two types of prayer are necessary for proper balances in the Dominican vocation, each must be understood in its own integrity and on its own terms. If we are going to proclaim the Word of God effectively, that is to speak God's word as Isaiah and Paul, it is not enough to know about God; I must know God Himself. We may have the recall of the lengthiest of Scripture passages and be able to quote Aquinas from memory. But nothing short of personal knowledge of God will suffice for the person who is called to that special ministry of sharing God's Holy Word. Consider the words of Jesuit Father Walter Berghart:

"Can you say you've truly encountered the living and true God? Can you say that you truly know God himself, not simply human words that describe Him? If you cannot, I dare not conclude that you are an unproductive preacher; for the same God that is able from these stones to raise up children of Abraham can use the most serene of sermons to move the obdurate heart. But I do say that if you know only a theology of God, and not the God of Theology, you will not be the preacher that our world so desperately needs."(Berghart, 34)

Surely this is not hard to understand. Even in the human situation, when a man falls in love with a woman, each spend time with the other in order to increase their knowledge and love of the beloved. It is this interpersonal playful exchange that fosters the intimacy and devotion in loving relationships. If personal private inter-communion is the very stuff of friendship, should we be surprised that God calls us to be His friends by intimately sharing with us His own triune existence in moments of personal prayer?

If we are faithful to making time for this private, personal prayer on a daily basis, Our Lord will be able to accomplish His special work in us. Fidelity to private prayer will enable us to bring Him to others who so desperately need His healing touch.

If we allow Him to touch us in His Living Word, then we can say that we have heard Him with our own ears and have seen Him with our own eyes. It is only this intimate personal experience of the Risen Lord that will enable us to accomplish His task of proclaiming the Good News to every creature. It is this intimate personal experience of God which constitutes that deep

contemplative dimension of Dominican spirituality and enables us to understand that Truth is a Person who calls us to knowledge and love. However, if our prayer only takes the form of personal private prayer by ourselves, it will lack:

"the communal and very important ecclesial quality which it is meant to derive from the Liturgy."

If private prayer is utterly divorced from common liturgical prayer, it is in danger of becoming locked into a narrow and idiosyncratic view of the Christian mysteries and the Christian life, which may prove detrimental to oneself and those to whom one proclaims God's Holy Word. Therefore it is necessary to make sure that we balance our personal private prayer with a vital participation in the common liturgical prayer of the Church. Now before going on I feel it is important to once again clarify our distinction between personal private prayer and common liturgical prayer. As we noted earlier the existential expression of Dominican Spirituality for lay people will be markedly different from that experience of our religious counterparts. For the latter, the environment to pray in common is pre-established by the very nature of living in common, i.e., in monasteries and convents. This is a sharp contrast to the experience of each and every one of us as lay persons because we live separated by perhaps great distances and varying schedules that make daily common prayer interaction problematic if not impossible. Therefore, in juxtaposing private personal prayer with common liturgical prayer, I mean to say that common liturgical prayer is the praying of the Divine Office, or the prayer of the Church, which is also known as the Liturgy of the Hours. This form of common prayer, the prayer of the Church, "has been a constant in the Dominican tradition and is based upon the principal that all Dominicans pray together." While there are many forms and expressions of common prayer, in the Dominican context these words signify pre-eminently liturgical prayer in the name of the whole Christian community." Therefore even though we may be praying the Liturgy of the Hours in physical solitude, in a way that approximates our private personal prayer, it is radically different from private personal prayer because in liturgical prayer we do not present ourselves as individuals before the Lord, but rather we come as His Mystical Body and it is as such that we pray.

"This ecclesial vision of prayer was at the heart of the Mission of Dominic, one which he entrusted to his followers in the solemn celebration of the Divine Office, that prayer which we commonly name today the Liturgy of the Hours."

In praying the Liturgy of the Hours we pray as members of the Church who overcome their forgetfulness by remembering their rootedness in God and in the mystery of His Word, Jesus Christ. It is in overcoming this forgetfulness that: "the Christ event comes alive for us here and now." While the Eucharist is the centre and culmination of the whole life of the Christian community and functions as the primary action of remembering God's saving work, "the Eucharist itself is continued and extended to the various parts and moments of our lives and the rhythms of our daily and hourly remembrance as we celebrate the Word of God in the Liturgy of the Hours. If our rule of life calls us to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, it is because central to the heart of the Dominican vocation is the celebration of God's Holy Word made flesh.

"In the Liturgy of the Hours we are daily challenged by the Word made Flesh, the Word Incarnate among us. We assemble to hear that Word. Everything we do in our morning and evening prayer leads to a response to that proclamation. The Word of God is a two edged sword which calls us to remember who we are. It calls us to be who we are and demands our total conversion."

In celebrating the Word of God made flesh which is our heritage as Dominicans, we dynamically express our remembrance, our praise, our thanksgiving and our petition. Within these four dynamic moments of our common liturgical prayer, we tangibly express ourselves not only as the Mystical Body of Christ, but also as the family of our Holy Father Dominic. By keeping this proper balance between private personal prayer and common liturgical prayer, we create within ourselves a tension through which the Holy Spirit is able to form in us that deep contemplative dimension which enables us not only to experience the Presence of the Living God but to inform and be informed by our lives of study as well. Earlier in this presentation we suggested that an authentic Dominican response to God's call to holiness is characterized by prayer, study and apostolate. But in the remarks we have just made we have tried to demonstrate that there is a value to keeping a happy tension between personal private prayer and common liturgical prayer. Nevertheless, this is not to say that our prayer is a separate reality from what we do in our study. On the contrary, this deep contemplative dimension formed within the context of tension between private and liturgical prayer needs to be in dialogue with the other aspects of the Dominican response, namely study and apostolate. As concerns our study, we know that Dominic elevated it to the level of religious observance so that:

"All Dominicans would probe the Word deeply, mull over it in all the different media in which the Word is manifest in our world so that we might enter into the celebration of God's Word with knowledge, reverence and humility."

In this way we can see that our life of study must vitally inform our life of prayer and conversely our prayer will begin to effect mutuality between our intellectual efforts and our affective needs. If we are going to be mediums for God's grace according to the charism of preaching His Holy Word in the secular arena, then let our prayer and study be characterized by a loving attention, reverence and devotion.

### ***Review Questions***

1. What do we mean when we say that Dominic was a contemplative person who experienced contemplative prayer and what elements in his life point to the historical reality of these experiences?
2. If Dominicans are truly people of the Word, how would you say that the celebration of the Word in communal prayer is different from or related to our own personal experience of private prayer? In other words, when you are praying for example your Rosary, do you understand how that is different from praying the Divine Office; and why this difference needs to be understood in Dominican life?
3. Given the fact that we are called to proclaim God's Holy Word wherever there is an opportunity, why do you think it is necessary for us to continue a program of study? And furthermore, how would you say this study is nurtured by your prayer life and conversely, how does your prayer life get affected through your study?

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## **The Practice Of Lectio Divina**

### *Tradition of Lectio Divina*

An introduction to the tradition of **lectio divina** which formed the basis of St. Dominic's spiritual formation as a canon at Osma and which became part of the spirituality of the Order. Also, to explain **lectio divina** in such a way that the ordinary lay Dominican might see in it a technique of reading and praying the scriptures daily in a way compatible with any walk of life in the modern world.

### **Lectio Divina**

Lectio Divina is a Latin phrase which in its literal translation means Sacred Reading. The word sacred means, in this context, primarily the sacred scriptures, but can also apply to the writings of the Fathers of the Church and some would even extend it to the writings of other more contemporary theologians and spiritual writers. In its classical usage, sacred means scripture and the writings of the Fathers. The word **reading** in this context must be understood in the sense of the word in the ancient and early medieval world, i.e., a text which was read aloud and heard. The two senses involved were that of speech and hearing. This is important to understand because in the more modern sense the word reading refers to silent activity which is carried on with the eyes looking at a page of text. In the more ancient sense, reading was verbal and was heard with the ears. One could, therefore, either be looking at a page of text or speaking it from memory.

Taken together the words **sacred reading** in the tradition of Christian spirituality refer to the prayerful, meditative reading of the sacred text. It is a simple concept really. One must be quiet and have the scriptures before one. After quieting oneself down exteriorly and interiorly, one simply begins to read the sacred text. When something strikes you, one simply lingers over that line or phrase or word and repeats it over and over again, ideally committing it to memory. When one becomes distracted with some other thoughts, simply by returning to the sacred text prayer moves on again until something strikes us and we linger and pause again over it. The image used by some ancient authors to explain **lectio divina** is that of the normal process of eating food. Just as you take a bite of your food and chew it so that it will come apart and make it possible for you to swallow it and thereby be nourished by it, so with the word of God: You must chew it so that you can swallow it and be sustained by it. As you chew, your mind thinks about it, ruminates on the text, not in any formal intellectual way, but simply by being open to the meaning of the text and being open to what God may wish to say to you in this particular word at this particular moment.

When one "does" **lectio divina** for 20 or 30 minutes (the early monks and nuns spent several hours each day "doing" lectio) and one goes about the ordinary demands of daily life, the conviction and hope of the one so praying is that these sacred words will come back to one from time to time and become the basis for a life of greater remembrance of God through the



ordinary working day.

It was this idea of prayer which was the basis of St. Dominic's training and which he communicated to his followers and which the laity learned at the instruction of the brethren in the early days of the order. The nuns too were thoroughly trained in this practice of prayer. Other forms of prayer: the divine office, devotions, mental prayer, were all related to **lectio**, in that concentration on the Word of God in the sacred text was the crucial element for all forms of Dominican prayer, for Dominicans have been from the beginning, a people of the Word. **Lectio Divina** is simply one form of praying that word.

***Review Questions:***

1. Do you ever, as a Dominican, ever try to "pray" the scriptures in a way similar to what has been described as **lectio divina**?
2. Do you think that St. Dominic's ability to always speak "with God or of God" may have been connected with this ancient way of praying the scriptures? He was a busy man, often on the move. What are the other influences which you see in his life which may have formed his spirituality?
3. Do you think that **lectio divina** even in some modified form could be compatible with the active life of a modern person today? Discuss why or why not.

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## Chapter 12

### LAY DOMINICAN COMMUNITY IN PRACTICE

In previous chapters we learned about the Spirit and Aims of St. Dominic and that Prayer and Study go hand in hand. We also learned that the active life of the apostolate rests on contemplation. We saw the theological background of community and how St. Dominic used this and made it an important part of the life of the Order.

The goal of this chapter is to familiarize the inquiry-stage Postulant with the concept of community as it is lived by the Lay Dominican. A brief explanation of what a Lay Dominican Chapter is and why the Chapter meeting is an essential part of Lay Dominican life will be included. The benefits and responsibilities of membership in the Lay Branch of the Dominican Family and the interaction of the various branches of the Family will be studied as well.

In the preamble of the General Principles of Lay Dominican Life drawn up by the National Council of Lay Dominicans in 1982 it states, "Today, as in times past, the whole Dominican Family shares actively in the charism of Dominic, in his love of the Word of God, understood in all of its radical originality. We face this Word together in our common life, we study it, celebrate liturgically, and bear witness to it." [1]

Common life is a term that may seem strange to some people, but it is a very important part of Dominican life. The Rule of St. Augustine, which is the Rule of the Dominican Order states, "Call not anything your own, but let all things be held in common among you." The practical application of this statement is very different for the friar or religious and for us as lay men and women. For us, our chapter is our community. This chapter is a community of people drawn together in love and finds its roots and its reason for being in the Gospel and in Dominic's response to the Gospel.

Our Dominican-ness is not something we can put on and take off at will. It is rather a way of being a Christian; a way that permeates everything we do, whether it be prayer, study, recreation, or apostolic work. I think for too long many of us did not give much thought to what it meant to be a Dominican, but rather thought of ourselves as members of the Dominican Order, with all of the concomitant privileges and obligations. Today we are called to live our Dominican vocation, not in the quiet of a cloister or our own homes, but in the hustle and bustle of the work-a-day world. What is community? How do we live it? What makes Lay Dominican community life unique? These are some questions a person interested in joining the Lay Dominicans might ask. As has been mentioned previously, all of us live in community with other people - whether it be our own family, our parish community or our Dominican Family community - and we are called to reach out to them, to support them and to do for them.

Here we are primarily concerned with the concept of Lay Dominican Community or Chapter as it is more commonly called. The Constitutions of the Friars define Lay Dominican Chapters as "associations of lay people who joined together by a special gift of God in the Apostolic Spirit of St. Dominic, aim to achieve their salvation and that of others by profession of the evangelical life according to the form of living in the world adapted by the Order and formally approved for their states of life." [2] This definition shows what we are supposed to be, as seen by the Friars. Right now we are more concerned with **how** we are to be Dominican -how

we as members of a Lay Dominican Chapter are to live out our vocation. I think in order to really delve into this question of "How we are going to live out this life", we have to take a look at some of the basics. In previous sessions we looked at Dominican life as being a holistic response to the Gospel, and the last presentation focused on the theology of community and the fact that this community and our commitment to community is the source from which our apostolate flows. In this session we are looking at the Lay Dominican Chapter as a Community. How does it help us live our life? We can look at the chapter and realize that it has a certain structure. "It is an association ... ", as the Constitutions of the Fathers said, "... of Lay people who are joined together ... " Yes, it is an association of people, yet it also has an identity which is separate from that of the people that make it up. For the most part, it existed before the members who currently belong to it, and it will probably exist after they are gone. Therefore, it is an institution that has a definite structure. It is related to other chapters within a geographic area in a region, and in association with other regions into a province and in association with other provinces on a national level and also it is related to the Order as a whole. There is democratic representation on each of these levels, so that all members are represented.

The Chapter meeting, usually held once a month, is one way that the spirit of community can be expressed. But our sense of community, and our actual living out of that community can't only be limited to that meeting. We have to be willing and ready to share the gifts and talents we have received with the other members of the Chapter. We have to be willing to do this even if it requires sacrifices at times for the good of the Chapter and of the Order. Our brothers and sisters within the Chapter have a right to expect that we will help them when they are in need, whether this help be material or spiritual help or just listening to them if they need to talk, or actually trying to give some kind of direction in an area where we may be more knowledgeable than they are. It might also mean at times giving financial help, and possibly at some sacrifice. We also have an obligation to the Order as a whole to put our gifts and talents at their disposal. There is a quote from the Dialogues of St. Catherine where God the Father tells Catherine "...you cannot give me the kind of love I ask of you. This is why I have put you among your neighbours; so that you can do for them what you cannot do for me - that is, love them without any concern for thanks and without looking for any profit for yourself. And whatever you do for them I will consider done for me. (Mt. 25:40) My Truth demonstrated this when Paul was persecuting me and he said "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4) For he considered Paul's persecution of my faithful ones as persecution of me. So your love should be sincere. You should love your neighbours with the same love with which you love Me."[3]

I think this holds true for us and we have to be able to show this love for one another. I think the longer we are in the Order the more we come to realize that Community is important. **We need each other.** And we have to be free enough to express this need and to know that there will be a loving response from the members of our Chapter. Also, along with this response, I think we have to come to the realization that, as members of the Chapter, each of us have a responsibility to the Chapter as a whole and to each and every member of the Chapter individually, and that when we absent ourselves from a meeting, this absence is felt by all the members of the Chapter. Therefore, we should make every effort to attend the monthly Chapter meeting. If we let all sorts of other things take precedence over this meeting, where is our commitment to the Chapter and to the Order? We also, by virtue of our community life, have a freedom to help others. This is not something which is imposed on us from above, but rather is an outgrowth of our community life and our prayer life. This freedom to help others may flower in the many and varied ministries in which Lay Dominicans are engaged. There will always be a tension between the needs/desires of the individual members and the Chapter as a

whole; between personal freedom and community spirit. This is something that we have to recognize and accept and work with to bring about the greater good for all.

Up to now in this presentation I have spoken about the Chapter as a structure, and the relationship of one member to another. Now I would like to talk about the Chapter as the centre for development of the spiritual life within each member.

Just as we come together as a group to pray, to share with one another what has been going on in our lives, so also an integral part of this chapter meeting is some form of study and/or instruction. For example: Scripture Study or a session on Liturgy of the Hours, or the Documents of Vatican II or the Life of St. Dominic. Instruction can also be given by the Moderator or Director of the Chapter on some aspect of Dominican life.

The Documents of Vatican II place great emphasis on the role of the laity in the Church and the influence the laity can have in their workplace. "Following Jesus who was poor, they are neither depressed by the lack of temporal goods nor puffed up by their abundance. Imitating Christ who was humble, they have no obsession for empty honours (cf Gal. 5:26) but seek to please God rather than men, ever ready to leave all things for Christ's sake (Luke 14:26) and to suffer persecution for justice' sake (cf Mt. 5:10). For they remember the words of the Lord, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Mt. 16:24) Promoting Christian friendship among themselves, they help one another in any 'kind of necessity.[4]

"Since in our times variations of materialism are rampant everywhere even among Catholics, the laity should not only learn doctrine more carefully, especially those main points which are the subjects of controversy, but all should also provide the witness of an evangelical life in contrast to all forms of materialism."[5]

I think these quotations point out something we have heard many times, yet I don't think we really believe it. We have to become more aware of the fact that by our example we can make a difference in our sphere of influence and that we have to use this power for the good of our neighbours and the good of the Church.

We have spoken of the Chapter as the centre for our spiritual development as Lay Dominicans. Another important aspect of our development as Dominicans is our appreciation of the benefits and obligations of being a member of the Dominican Family. We are given certain aids to help us grow in holiness. We listen to the Word of God in our reading of Sacred Scripture and we celebrate this Word in the Liturgy. We try to foster a deeper devotion to Mary as the Mother of the Word Incarnate and our Mother also. Since we are all members of one Family, we prayerfully remember the deceased members in our daily prayer, and in a special way on the Anniversaries.

Since the terminology First, Second and Third Orders is no longer used, and in order to promote the concept of the Dominican Family, there have been set up Dominican Family Days where **all** members of the Family can come together to celebrate their unity and diversity. We should make every effort to support and attend this type of function, so as to get to know members in the other branches of our diverse and varied Family.

### ***Conclusion***

As you can see from the foregoing, the Lay Dominican Chapter meeting is both a place where we can get to know the other members of Dominic's family and a way to grow in holiness by sharing prayer, Eucharist and the Word.

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  3. Noffke, Suzanne, O.P., Catherine of Siena: The Dialogue, #64, p. 121.
  4. Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Chapter 1, #4, p. 494.
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### ***Review Questions***

1. Why is it important to belong to a Chapter?
2. What benefits can you draw from Chapter life.
3. How does one show love for one another within the Chapter?
4. Do you see your Chapter building Community? How do you think you can help?

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## Chapter 13

### **LITURGICAL PRAYER**

Prayer is essential to the life of the Dominican. In the fundamental Constitution for Lay Dominicans (Montreal 1985) - (10e) states that

*‘progress in the fulfilment of their inseparably contemplative and apostolic vocation, the Laity of St. Dominic have recourse to the source of liturgical prayer in union with all the Dominican family, also private prayer, meditation and the Rosary.’* Later in Item (13) of the Constitution it states

*‘one of the principle sources of Dominican formation is liturgical prayer.’*

When a Chapter of the Dominican Laity meets it is a community meeting as a part of the Dominican Order. To be united with the whole of the Dominican family a form of Morning or Evening prayer is said at each meeting. The Chapter, by participating in part of the Divine Office, becomes united with the Church and with the whole of the Dominican Order, each person being a link in the Order presenting praise and petition to God. The Morning and Evening prayer is composed of Hymns, Psalms and Antiphons. The history of the psalms dates back to the time before the birth of Christ. They were the poems, songs and hymns of Israel. The prophets used them to express all the emotions of man in praising and petitioning God. The Psalms were shouts which expressed the joy, the love, worship, suffering, injury, faith and hope of the people of Israel. We inherited the Psalms from the Hebrew people. The Psalms are the prayers of the Chosen people. They have been used in three periods of time. Firstly, they were the songs of Israel, composed by the prophets who told the story of the people. Then they were used by our Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles and now in this age they have been adapted for use by the people of God. From the many Psalms used before the time of Christ there was a final collection of Psalms chosen during the fourth century one hundred and fifty Psalms were divided in five books according to the type of Psalm they were in the expression of their sentiment. More than half of the Psalms chosen were attributed to King David.

The Psalms still offer to mankind the deepest, richest, source of prayer. Our Lord used the Psalms as His prayer to the Father. In the Gospel of Luke 24:44 our Lord said:

*“ This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about Me in the law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms has to be fulfilled’.*

Throughout the New Testament we see that Christ constantly referred to the Psalms and used the hymns of praise and thanksgiving in prayer to the Father.

The early Church then followed this example of prayer, so that today the prayers of the present Liturgy used in the Mass and Divine Office are an adaptation of these ancient Psalms used by our ancestors in Faith. Mass and Morning and Evening Prayer each day are a source of richness in the spiritual life of the Tertiary. The Lay Dominican saying the Morning and Evening Prayer alone is in union with all Dominicans throughout the world, praising and thanking God and praying for the salvation of souls. The Hymns, Psalms and Antiphons and the Divine Office were dearly loved by St. Dominic and he constantly encouraged his Friars to pray the prayer of the Church devoutly. St. Catherine of Siena could neither read nor write. She longed to read the Psalms so that she could recite the Office. In spite of efforts to learn to read, she was unsuccessful until she begged our Lord to teach her to read if he wished her to recite the Office. Through Divine help her knowledge of the art of reading was acquired and from that time she read fluently and recited the Psalms, sometimes our Lord walking beside her as she recited them.

For the Dominican Laity to begin using Morning and Evening prayer of the Church, the language and thoughts contained in the Psalms will perhaps appear difficult. Prayer is a very personal experience with God and touches some of the deepest emotions and yearnings of a person. The formality of the Hymns, Psalms and Antiphons may, at first, present difficulties to the Tertiary who is new to Dominican life, but perseverance will be rewarding, for with some practice the beauty of these ancient words will become a rope to which one will be glad to hold each day and unite the person with the Order and the Church in praise of God.

One of the essentials that we have learnt from the prophets is the reverence which they had for the Laws of God and the adoration of His Majesty, God, when speaking to St. Catherine of Siena, through the means of the Dialogue said:

*“ I provided for you in the Law of Moses in the Old Testament, and in the holy prophets. Before the coming of My only begotten Son, the Jewish people were never without a Prophet to strengthen and lead them so that they knew that God would make them free men ”.*

The Prophet was the instrument of God to pass God’s message to mankind before the coming of the Word, Jesus Christ. The four Prophets (called major because of the length of their writings) were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. Twelve shorter books in the Bible were attributed to the minor Prophets - Amos, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Naham, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, Obadiah, Malachi, Joel and Jonah. With the coming of the Word there was a new law to replace the law of the Old Testament. Through the centuries the Church has drawn upon the inspired word of God to inspire the people of God to praise God and to give homage to Him. We are indeed **‘A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God’**.

In the words of St. Paul (*Coloss. 3:16-17*). “Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him”. When you as Dominican Laity pray the Psalms, you are voicing the Prayer of the Church, but the real heart of the prayer will be lost unless you make the words of the Psalms echo from your heart. The quality of prayer is more important than the quantity. God looks at the intentions within the mind and heart of the person. Try to keep your time for prayer free from distractions.

## **STRUCTURE OF MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER**

### **Morning Prayer Evening Prayer**

#### **Introduction**

V. Lord, open our lips V. O God, come to our aid

R. And we shall praise your name. R. O Lord, make haste to help us

#### **Invitatory Psalm and Antiphon**

#### **Invitatory Psalm and Antiphon**

#### **Hymn**

#### **Psalmody**

#### **Antiphon 1 Antiphon 1**

A Morning Psalm A Psalm

Antiphon repeated Antiphon repeated

(silent prayer) (silent prayer)

#### **Antiphon 2 Antiphon 2**

Old Testament Canticle A Psalm

Antiphon repeated

(silent prayer) **Antiphon 3**

A Psalm of praise New Testament Cantic

Antiphon repeated Antiphon repeated

(silent prayer)

**Scripture Reading**

**(Silent prayer)**

**Short Responsorial**

**Gospel Cantic**

Benedictus antiphon Magnificat Antiphon

Cantic of Zachariah/Cantic of Mary

Antiphon repeated

**Intercessions**

Invocations of praise Prayers of Intercession

(final prayer always for faithful departed)

**(Silent prayer), The Lord's Prayer**

**Concluding Prayer**

**Blessing**





## Chapter 14

### A STUDY OF THE RULE OF THE DOMINICAN LAITY

The Rule is the guide for Dominican Laity to achieve the fulfilment of their life within the Order. By following a Rule, the Dominican Laity have a clear understanding of how to attain their goals. When a person seeks admission to an Order they will have some thoughts of what they expect from their life within the Order. They would not, for instance, expect their thoughts and actions to remain the same as before their entrance into the Order. There must be a change in their aims, a new vision, a more definite purpose to their spiritual life and a desire to link their actions with the apostolic mission of the Order for they have undertaken a new way of life.

It is necessary to make a study of the Rule and what it entails. Since the Fundamental Constitutions are drawn for all Dominican Laity throughout the world, the wording of the Rule is of a general nature. It remains for each province to interpret the needs of its people and to align them to suit the Spirit of the Rule.

Dominican Laity are making a commitment to a life of prayer. This will need a re-arrangement of their day to accommodate the time for prayer. Each person is dependent on their own efforts, helped by the grace of God to deepen their own spirituality.

The Dominican Laity make a commitment to the mission of the Order. The Dominican is challenged to work for the salvation of souls by preaching the truth of Jesus Christ.

Study is a necessary part of the Dominican's life. It has always been characteristic of the Order to follow the ideal, "to contemplate and to give to others the fruits of contemplation".

A background of prayer and study for the active work of preaching was Dominic's vision for his Order to spread the news of the Gospel. The four priorities of the Order, enunciated at Quezon City and reaffirmed by Father Damien Byrne, OP, Master of the Order, contain the "whole tradition of the Order, not something developed at Quezon City, valid for all branches of the Family but not in the same way". The four priorities are:

1. Our theological and intellectual heritage.
2. Justice and Peace
3. The missionary dimension of the Order
4. The mass media - preaching the Gospel in the language of the day

Preaching and the apostolic mission of the Order apply to the Laity the same as to the other branches of the Order; only the manner in which it applies is different. The Chapter must find ways in which its members can best combat materialistic influences in the local area and work for social justice in their own areas. Dominican Laity make commitment to the spirit of the Order when they undertake in their profession to obey the Rule of St. Dominic for the Dominican Laity.

Commitment must mean a change in the life of the person aspiring to spiritual perfection in the Dominican Order. Being a lay member of the Order does not weaken the commitment made. The commitment is made for life after some years of serious consideration and a trial period being taken as an active member of a Chapter.

Every effort should be made to understand the meaning of commitment made by Dominican Laity so that in Profession the promise made to obey the Rule of St. Dominic for Dominican Laity will be sincere and the efforts of new Dominicans will increase the apostolic mission of the Order.

## **The Pillars Of Dominican Life**

### ***Dominican Spirituality For The Laity***

#### ***Preface***

The following chapters are adaptations of conferences I gave to the members four San Francisco Chapter of Lay Dominicans. They were further adapted to serve as our formation programs for those who have asked to be received into the Order. They are a distillation of reflections, study and conclusions I have drawn over my fifty-four years as a Dominican. As Master of Students for the formation of our young Dominicans to the priesthood I had to reflect on these concepts more intensely than I would have ordinarily. They have been further modified for a wider audience with the hope that it will find them helpful in clarifying what it means to be a Dominican. It is a glorious vocation, a rich blessing and grace from God. Let us be grateful to him for it.

*Gregory Anderson, O.P.*

*Chaplain to the San Francisco Chapter of Lay Dominicans*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Anyone who is at all familiar with spiritual literature knows that there are various schools of spirituality. We speak freely and easily of Benedictine Spirituality, Franciscan Spirituality, Carmelite Spirituality, and Ignatian Spirituality. We know also there a number of other subdivisions, such as Rhenish, French and so forth. We Dominicans may feel somewhat chagrined that Dominican Spirituality is not mentioned in the same context. We may wonder if there is such a thing as a peculiarly Dominican Spirituality, and if there is, why does it not get more publicity. Perhaps the reason is that we have not defined it clearly enough and talked about it enough. We purpose here to at least define it as precisely as possible and show that our Order does have its own spirituality worthy of inclusion along with the other schools. We must keep in mind that all of us, no matter to what school we may belong, seek to follow Christ who is the Way. Since the riches of Christ, however, are inexhaustible, there will be different paths available for us to follow him. They necessarily will have the same purpose - that is, to lead us to a deeper participation in the Christian life - and they all will use the same basic means, such as prayer, sacraments, liturgy and so forth, but they will vary according to their spirit, emphasis and practices. The best known and most popular of these schools are associated with the major religious orders. People will be drawn under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to one or another of these orders and may go so far as to join one of its branches - as male religious, nuns, sisters or laity.

Any definition of Dominican spirituality must encompass all branches of the Order, the friars, nuns, sisters and laity. This ideal must be common to all although each branch will have its own means for fulfilling this ideal. As the Acts of the General Chapter of Mexico in 1992 put it:

*Thus, as if arising from a tree planted beside living fountains, the branches of the Dominican Family are numerous. Each one has its own character, its special status, its autonomy.*

*However, since all participate in the charism of St. Dominic, they share the very same vocation to be preachers in the Church, discovering their mutual responsibility based on equality --- in complementarity and mutual cooperation --- and accepting the joy of giving but also of receiving and of learning from each other. The Dominican Family finds its source and sign of unity in the Master of the Order, successor of Saint Dominic. He guarantees incorporation into the family and promotes fidelity to the spirit of Saint Dominic. (No. 1)*

The main characteristic of Dominican spirituality is the preaching or proclamation of Divine Truth to the world. This is true for all branches of the Order, laity as well as religious. This sounds so basic that we may overlook its unique quality that sets it apart from every other type of spirituality. Yet the need to proclaim Divine Truth to the world is perhaps the greatest need of our time. Only Dominican spirituality can and will fulfil that need. We should not, then, hesitate to talk about it and give it its rightful place in the various schools of spirituality.

In this presentation, we will endeavour to show how Lay Dominicans share in the vocation of the Order to proclaim the truths of salvation and how they can grow spiritually by sharing in it according to the circumstances of their lives. Their contribution to the Order's mission is a most important one for without it the work of the Order cannot be fully effective.

### ***I: VERITAS - TRUTH***

Every major religious order can sum up its mission and spirit in a word or two. For the Benedictines it is the Opus Dei, the celebration of the Divine Office, or Christian Prayer, as they are calling it these days. For the Franciscans, it is Poverty. The Jesuits have as their motto "Ad majorem gloriam Dei," "To the greater glory of God," which expresses their ideal of service to the Church. For the Dominicans, it is "Veritas" or "Truth," which sums up in one word our thirst for the divine truth of the faith as revealed through Christ. If you look in the dictionary you will find that truth is defined as the quality of being in accordance with experience, facts or reality. There is in it always the element of objectivity; it is never completely subjective. This twofold character of truth is brought out by St. Thomas Aquinas' definition: "truth is a correspondence of mind and thing." In other words, we have truth when what is in our minds is in accord with the objective reality.

The Greeks began this search for truth around 600 B.C. and Western culture has been looking for it ever since, all too often with indifferent success. This is what we might call human truth, or that which we can know only with the human intellect. When Dominicans use the word, however, we mean divine Truth. The ultimate objective reality is God himself. Thus, we can have truth only when what is in our minds corresponds to what is in God's.

This ultimate Truth is totally and perfectly expressed in the eternal generation from the Father of the Word, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. As St. John tells us:

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. (John 1: 1)

He goes on to say:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. ( John 1: 14)

As he himself testified before Pontius Pilate:

For this was I born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice. (John 18: 37:b)

At the Last Supper Jesus told Thomas and all of us: I am the way, the truth and the life. (John 14: 16) Christ, then, is Truth Incarnate. Then he added: No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14: 6b) And the reason is, as St. John once again tells us:

The Word was the true light that enlightens all people. (John 1: 9) or as he himself said:

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 8: 12)

This light that shines forth from Truth Incarnate, the Word made flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the revelation he made to us for as he told us: The one who sent me is true, and what I heard from him I tell the world. (John 8: 26b)

Then he went on to say:

If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples and you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8: 31b-32)

This light of truth is not harsh, glaring, or cold but a warm, luminous, loving one for, after all, the God who is truth is also love. (v. I John 4:8a) As St. Paul said in his great hymn on love: Love does not rejoice over wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. (I Cor. 13:6)

In another place he said:

Living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love. (Eph. 4: 15 & 16)

Here it is obvious he is speaking about the building up of the Body of Christ, the Church. In his first letter to Timothy he is more explicit:

You should know how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth. (I Tim. 3: 15)

The Church, as we know, is the guardian of the truth revealed to us by Christ, preserving it intact from error and yet adapting that truth to meet new problems, questions and situations as they arise.

Going through a long list of Bible verses can be tedious, but, in this case, it will serve to bring out the multi-faceted riches and beauty of the Truth to which the Dominican Order devotes itself. First of all, Truth as the Divine Being, the Word of God, is the object of our worship and contemplation. Secondly, as the revelation of Christ, it is the subject of our study and object of our apostolic work. Thirdly, we, as Dominicans, will be completely loyal to the magisterium of the Church, the pillar and foundation of truth. From these elements we can conclude that the quest for truth should colour, shape and mould every aspect of our lives. It has been well said that the love of divine truth is the soul of Dominican spirituality.

An important element to keep in mind is that it is impossible to separate love and truth because we must love what we see as good and divine truth is the highest good, for it is God himself.

Our study should be done out of love so that we can come to a greater knowledge of the loving revelation of God to us. Our sharing of the truths we have learned and contemplated should be done out of love for those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death. Here, of course, we have the shining example of St. Dominic who dedicated himself and his Order to the proclamation of the truth.

From the very beginning of his work with the Albigensian heresy in Southern France, he recognized that knowing and preaching the truth was essential if heresy and false doctrines were to be overcome. There are certainly plenty of those in our day. While every age has thought of itself as being the worst of times, it is safe to say that our own can stack up with the most abysmal. To be sure there is an abundance of knowledge about all sorts of things but there

is little understanding of what it is all about, of who we are, of where we are going, of the purpose of life. What is needed most of all today, as it was in St. Dominic's time, is a greater knowledge of the truth, particularly divine truth, the revelation of God through Jesus Christ.

This holds true for every branch of the Order, friars, nuns, sisters and laity. The friars have as their mission preaching and teaching, writing learned articles and books, and using the media to spread the truth. It is the vocation of the cloistered nuns to pray not only for the work of the Fathers and Brothers, but for the spread of the truth. The Dominican Sisters have as their work teaching in our schools and carrying on the many ministries they fulfil so capably. But, perhaps more effective and certainly more far-reaching, is the call of the laity to bring the truth into the workplace, the market place, our schools, neighbourhoods, into every nook and cranny of society. This is something that only the laity can do.

This does not require great learning. One does not need a Doctorate in Sacred Theology, or even a Master of Divinity degree to fulfil this calling. We must never forget that one of the most eloquent and effective proclaimers of divine truth was a lay woman who could not read or write - St. Catherine of Siena. It was she, or the Father speaking through her, who said about our holy father, Dominic: But for his more proper object [Dominic] took the light of learning in order to stamp out the errors that were rising up at that time. He took up the task of the Word, my only begotten Son. Clearly he appeared as an apostle in the world, with such truth and light did he sow my word, dispelling the darkness and giving light. He was a light that I offered the world through Mary and sent into the mystic body of holy Church as an uprooter of heresies. Why did I say "through Mary"? Because Mary gave him the habit - a task my goodness entrusted to her. (Dialogue, no. 158)

One final note, the Dominican Order did not officially choose Truth as its motto until the last century, but it was a term commonly used long before that. Louis of Bavaria, who was the Holy Roman Emperor from 1314 to 1347, said, "The Order of Preachers is the Order of Truth which it defends with equal fearlessness and freedom." And, of course, Pope Honorius III, in his second bull of confirmation of the Order issued in 1216, called us the "Champions of the Faith and true lights of the world," which recalls Christ's words, "You are the light of the world." It is the light that shines forth from Truth.

## ***II. CONTEMPLATION FOR THE LAITY***

You may think it would be crazy or at least pathetically unrealistic to even suggest that you, as lay people, could be contemplatives. Your reaction may be: "What me a contemplative? I have a job, family responsibilities, civic duties and goodness knows what else to do. I don't have the time or opportunity to spend hours in a church praying and meditating, or even in a quiet spot in my living quarters to do that kind of thing. All I can hope for is the active life. I can be a Martha, but not a Mary."

You would react this way because you think a contemplative is someone like a monk or cloistered nun, or the rare lay person who has enough income to live on, little to do and enjoys sitting in a quiet corner praying and reading pious books. But this image ignores the fact that some of our greatest contemplatives have been busy people leading a most active life. St. Dominic and St. Catherine of Siena come to mind, so being a contemplative does not exclude being a busy person living an active life style. It also ignores the fact that even in monasteries and convents, floors have to be mopped, clothes washed, meals cooked, and work that has to be done to support its members. So we are then brought back to the cold, hard fact that even busy,

active lay people can be contemplatives. But you may wonder how. The problem is that we use the words "contemplation" and "contemplative" in two ways. One way is contemplation as a life style so let us consider that first. Father Walter Farrell, O.P., who interprets the mind and teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas so well and clearly is of great help here. He points out in his *Companion To The Summa*, (Vol. III, pp. 496-497) that the person whose efforts are principally directed to getting things done is leading an active life while the one whose efforts are directed principally to the knowledge of truth is leading a contemplative life. This means that the very fact you are a Dominican makes you a contemplative because you are dedicated to the truth. You want to know that truth that will set you free and share it with the world, even if your world is confined to the office, your neighbourhood or classroom. While you may be very active, your main goal is directed principally to the knowledge of truth. That is contemplation as a life style.

But this does not mean that you are contemplating. So now let us consider contemplation in the second sense in which we use it, which is a form of prayer. When you choose a contemplative life style it merely means that contemplation as a form of prayer is your goal. Perhaps we should first find out exactly what contemplation in this sense is before we go any further. So many writers on the subject will talk about it, but never say exactly what they mean. We do not intend to make the same mistake. Father Farrell defines it as "a swift intuitive knowledge, an instantaneous plunge to the heart of truth." (*Companion To The Summa*, Vol. III, p.498) Father Jordan Aumann, O.P., describes it in his article in the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* as "a loving knowledge of God that proceeds from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" (Vol. IV, p. 261) As such, it is founded upon faith, strengthened by hope and flows out of love. In other words, it is an experience of God's presence in which it seems as though the soul and God touch and the soul is held totally absorbed. There are no words or even concepts. There is no sense of time. It is just that the soul is focused in on God, and God is focused in on it.

If you have not experienced it, no one can describe it to you, but if you have, no one has to describe it to you. You know exactly what we mean. It is quite likely that some of you have had this wonderful experience but did not realize it was contemplation. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who certainly was a great contemplative, somewhere warns that such experiences are infrequent and fleeting. We are not talking about such phenomena as ecstasies, raptures, stigmata and all the rest that we associate with some of the great contemplatives. Apparently, St. Dominic never experienced any of those, although St. Catherine of Siena had a superabundance of them, including the stigmata. St. Thomas may have experienced one or two. They have nothing at all to do with the contemplative life. They are part of what is known as the charismatic gifts which have to do with the sanctification of others while contemplation is concerned with the sanctification of the individual.

There are those, including Thomas Merton, in his little book, *What Is Contemplation*, who talk about an "active contemplation," but I feel that is a waste of time and energy. What we are talking about is what is known as "infused contemplation," which is a gift of God and comes to us whenever he wants it. You may say, "It sounds wonderful. How can I get it?" God, of course, always wants to give it to us, but we have to go through some preparatory steps before we are capable of receiving it. There are two basic pre-conditions that must be present if those steps are to be effective. The first pre-condition is love, a deep love of God. As Father Farrell says, "Contemplation must always begin with love, endure by love and result in love." (*Companion*, vol. III, p. 497) This love of God means, among other things, that we do not focus primarily on the things of this world. Our Lord put it this way: So do not worry and say, "What

are we to eat?" or "What are we to drink?" or "What are we to wear?" All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. (Matt. 6: 31-33) Another way of putting it is: we may use material things but we cannot let them use us - to become the major interest and focus of our lives. It seems to me that anyone who has made the decision to become a Dominican has already made the decision to put God first and grow in love of him.

The other pre-condition is that if we are to be contemplatives we must possess the moral virtues, not in their ultimate state, but at least enough to quell the vehemence of the passions that keep the soul in an uproar. When we are in the state of grace we do have the advantage of having the infused moral virtues that make it so much easier for us to develop the acquired virtues. Once again, I suspect that a person who has made the decision to become a Dominican has also made considerable progress in growing in these virtues.

Once these pre-conditions have been met, then we are ready to begin the gradual approach to the heights of contemplation. We must first get the principles of divine truth from others, either by listening or reading, which is another way of saying "study," one of the major pillars of the Dominican life, and by appealing to God by prayer, another major pillar. Secondly, we must meditate on, or prayerfully reflect upon the meaning of these truths. Then, and only then, are we ready to receive that marvellous gift of infused contemplation, that loving experience of God's presence in our souls. This is an imperfect and incomplete experience at best in this world, but it is a foretaste of that vision of God in heaven where we shall see him face to face. This beautiful gift of God is perfected by the gifts of the Holy Spirit of knowledge, understanding and wisdom, and the more active and the more influential they are in our lives, the more apt we are to receive the gift of contemplation.

At this point, it should be clear to you that all this does not come easily or naturally without effort and difficulty. We move up the spiritual ladder one step at a time, and when we move up another step we become disoriented and fearful until we get used to it and are comfortable with it. As Thomas Merton, and all the spiritual writers, make clear, there will be times of darkness and aridity when we are tempted to give up, to think we are failing, that we have gone backward. This is where the virtue of hope comes in. It gives us the strength to climb up over those dunes of sand that stand in our way and keep on going until we realize that God is leading us closer to him through these trials. That is one of the crosses Christ asked us to carry with him.

This brings us back to the question we asked at the beginning: can you as ordinary lay people hope to become contemplatives? The answer is a resounding, "Yes." First of all, you are on the right path. You have chosen to become Dominicans who are by the grace of their vocation contemplatives in their life style. As those who have God's life within you, you have the equipment of grace which provides all the help you need to grow to the point where contemplation as a form of prayer can and will be given to you. All you need is patience, perseverance and hope.

In subsequent chapters we will consider study and the role it plays in our upward path toward contemplation. Then we will look at meditation and the various forms of prayer that help Dominicans, not only to be contemplatives, but actually to contemplate.

### ***III. STUDY***

We have discussed study in Chapter 9 it is important however to review this as the topic may have caused some apprehension for those of you who have not been in a classroom for years and have no desire to go back into one. But we are not thinking of study in that sense. Actually, we are talking about something you do all the time. For example, a person who is interested in cooking will pore over cook books looking for recipes that will be interesting and delicious as well as within the range of his or her time available and culinary skills. A person using a computer will carefully go through the manual of the program he or she is using to find out what can be done with it. You may have to consult it many times when you run into new and unexpected problems. You may even be reduced to calling the program's technical support to ask for help. Those who are planning a vacation will look through travel brochures to decide on a destination that will be both enjoyable and within their means. The list could go on and on but the point is that even for the ordinary actions of life we will do a certain amount of study and preparation so that we can get the best out of what is available to us.

We say that people who do not do that sort of thing are rowing with one oar, or that the elevator has not gone all the way to the top floor, or some such expression that indicates they do not have good sense. How much truer this is for those of us who say we want to be contemplatives, or to bring truth to others. How can you be a contemplative when you have nothing to contemplate, or give truth to others when you do not know it yourself? If we are willing to do some study and preparation to achieve mundane goals, how much more eager should we be to learn what will lead us to such sublime ones? This does not mean that you have to enrol in some theological institution to get a degree in theology, or to sign up for summer or night courses at some Catholic institution. It does mean, though, that you should be thoroughly familiar with the basic truths of your faith. If you had the advantage of twelve years of a good, solid Catholic education you may think you know it all. But you would be surprised at how much you have forgotten of what you learned or were supposed to have learned. It would not hurt at all to brush up on your knowledge of the faith by reading the New Catechism or some basic work of Catholic theology.

You should also try to deepen your understanding of the Scriptures, for, after all, they are the Word of God. And this is not too hard to do. You can choose a brief passage - particularly from the Gospels and the letters of St. Paul - and reflect prayerfully on its meaning. If you have difficulty finding one, your Book of Christian Prayer is full of them. In addition, you should also learn something about the background, purpose and message of the various books of the Bible. One of the easiest places to get this information is by reading the introductions you will find in the New American Bible or the New Jerusalem Bible. They are brief and have been written by top-notch Catholic scholars. A solid knowledge of the Word of God will not only be a well-spring of your own spiritual growth, but will help you respond intelligently to the fundamentalists we run into so often these days. Let me give you a warning about them. They will quote Bible verses at you one after another until you are dizzy. Your reaction may be, "These people know so much about the Bible." Do not be overawed or impressed with them. It does not mean that they know the Bible at all. It merely means that they have memorized a lot of Bible verses. But they do not know the context of those verses at all. They pick and choose the ones that will prove their own point - which is usually anti-Catholic. This is a misuse of Scripture.

The best way to handle those people is to smile sweetly and say, "How beautiful! Now, what is the verse before that?" Ninety times out of a hundred, they will not know it. Pin them down and



try to make them put the verse they have quoted into its context. Of course, it helps if you know what that context is.

But reading is not the only way we study and learn. St. Thomas includes listening as well. You have your chapter talks by the chaplain or others, sermons at the Masses you attend, and talks that are given on various subjects in your parish or other places. There are also Catholic radio talks plus all sorts of resources on Internet, and on and on the list could go. We are living in an age of recordings. There are some marvellous audio and video tapes available that can be very helpful in our learning and study. This reading and listening is not just a one-shot affair. You just do not read the New Catholic Catechism and let it go at that. No, you should be eager to learn more and more. It is a life-long process. For example, every Dominican priest, has had seven years of intense study but most have never stopped studying and never stopped learning during all the years since their ordination. We do not deserve any particular credit for this because this is what a Dominican is supposed to do. It is only logical to conclude that anyone who is interested in fulfilling his or her vocation as a Dominican will do this sort of thing almost naturally.

I include the Dominican Laity in this assessment. It is just human nature that the more you know, the more you want to know. These insights you gain into your faith will be so wonderful that you will be eager to gain more. Oh, there will be times when it seems as though you have run into a stone wall and you are getting nowhere. In such cases, keep in mind that you have the gift of understanding, the sixth Gift of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to penetrate into the deeper meanings of the truths of our faith. Remember, all you have to do is to pray for an increase of it, and the Holy Spirit will give you insight and enlightenment.

You will also want to learn more about the Dominican Order. Here, of course, you will want to go beyond reading the lives of St. Dominic that are available. You will also want to read William A. Hinebusch's "A Brief History of the Dominican Order" and Benedict Ashley's "The Dominicans." Reading Sister Jean Dorsey's " St. Dominic's Family" cannot only be fun, but you will become acquainted with your brothers and sisters who are the saints, blessed and holy members of our Order. In addition, there are a number of other excellent books that will be coming out in the future, so you have a lot to look forward to in the years ahead.

What I have been talking about is not beyond the range of the average, ordinary, intelligent person, which would include all of you. Those of you whose education, background and IQ level are above normal have a tremendous wealth of material available to you as well. But even those who are in neither of those categories can be accommodated and satisfied. Remember St. Thomas' words: Some who have sanctifying grace may suffer dullness of mind with regard to things that are necessary for salvation, but with regard to those that are necessary to salvation, they are sufficiently instructed by the Holy Spirit. (II, II, q. 8, art. 4, obj.1)

But let us face it, even the brightest of us have a certain amount of dullness in regard to revealed truth. All of us desperately need the instruction of the Holy Spirit. So, no one is left out in this life-long process of learning that is an essential part of Dominican life. It is, indeed, one of its pillars. As I said at the beginning, if you are serious about being contemplatives and the bearers of the torch of truth to the world you live in, then you will want to study and learn more and more. You will find that your Dominican vocation will give you the recipe for happiness, both now and forever. It will provide the manual for fulfilling your call from God which you can consult over and over again and it will be better than any travel brochure ever

published to guide you to your destination, where, in union with all your brothers and sisters in St. Dominic, under the mantle of Mary, you will enjoy the eternal vision of God in heaven.

#### ***IV. LITURGICAL PRAYER***

Until about thirty years ago we had what was known as the Dominican Rite. We Dominicans celebrated Mass and Divine Office differently than the rest of the Western Church. The feature that most people noticed was that we took water and wine into the chalice at the beginning of Mass rather than at the Offertory. There were many other differences too but that was the most obvious. The reason we had our own rite was that at the beginning of the Order in the 13th. century, there was no one officially approved way of celebrating Mass. Every city or area in Europe had its own variation of the liturgy. The Order was the first to move its men around all over. If a Dominican was moved from Cologne to Paris to Naples, let us say - as St. Thomas Aquinas was - he had to learn a whole new way of celebrating Mass every time he moved. It got so that our men were spending about as much time re-learning how to celebrate Mass as they were in preaching or teaching. Rather early on they got the idea of having just one rite for Dominicans no matter where they went. In 1256 Blessed Humbert de Romans, the fifth Master of the Order, issued a new unified liturgy. In 1267, Pope Clement VII approved it and Dominicans held to it until recently.

The reason we able to do that was that when St. Pope Pius V in 1570 imposed on the whole Church what is correctly known as the Roman Rite - not Tridentine as some call it - he exempted those rites which had been approved for over two hundred years. Remember now, the Dominican Rite was approved in 1267 - 203 years before. Also remember, St. Pius V was a Dominican which goes to show that it pays to have one of your men in the right place at the right time. When the new rite of the liturgy was approved in the 60's we adopted it because there were no strong reasons for holding on to our old Dominican Rite, especially since many of the features of the new rite were more similar to the old Dominican Rite than it was to the old Roman Rite. Our old Solemn Mass was even more magnificent than the Pontifical Mass celebrated by bishops. Its only problem was that it was so complicated that few of us were able to get through it without making quite a number of errors, and we had no Master of Ceremonies to keep us on the right track as the Roman Rite did. The Dominicans have always been devoted to the Liturgy, going back to St. Dominic himself who had been a Canon Regular at the Cathedral in Osma, Spain. He loved the Divine Office and celebrated Mass everyday that he could. Sometimes, of course, in his peregrinations around Europe he would be caught out in the middle of nowhere with no church around. But otherwise, he did not miss celebrating Mass or the Divine Office.

This love of the liturgy became central to Dominican life, a rich source of prayer and a powerful means of uniting ourselves to Christ. But before we go any further let us make sure that we clearly understand what the Liturgy is. It is the official worship of the Church,, the Body of Christ, the People of God, offering praise and worship to God, to the Holy Trinity. It is centred in the Mass and expanded in the Divine Office or Prayer of Christians. When one joins in celebrating Mass or when he or she says the Prayer of Christians, even when saying it alone, he or she is joined to the whole Church in prayer, worship and praise.

Through the Liturgical Year, which begins with the First Sunday of Advent, we enter into the mysteries of Christ. We go through the life of Christ from the divine preparations for his coming to his birth at Christmas to the Epiphany and Baptism. We then have the beginnings of our consideration of his public life, but shortly thereafter, on Ash Wednesday, we plunge into Lent and the events leading up to his Passion and Death. Then comes Easter, the

celebration of his Resurrection, Ascension into Heaven and the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the new Church. When that is over we will go back to the public life of our Lord to reflect on those three years he spent walking the dusty roads and hills of Galilee and Judea, preaching, teaching and healing.

Through the Liturgical Year, then, we come into intimate contact with Christ our Lord and re-live the mysteries that wrought our salvation, and through it we are enabled to become more like unto him. As Pere Festigire, a great French Dominican scholar, said, the liturgy is "the method authentically instituted by the Church to make souls like unto Jesus." (Quoted in Pere Bernadot, O.P. in *Dominican Spirituality*, translated by Anselm Townsend, O.P., p. 87), or as Pere Bernadot himself says, "it is the most simple and certain way to become like unto Jesus Christ." (Loc. cit., p. 91). Back in 1919, Abbot Columba Marmion published one of the great classics of our time, *'Christ in His Mysteries'*, in which he shows how wonderfully the revelation of the Gospels concerning our Lord is taken up and elaborated by the liturgy during the year and how the whole effect of the Church's worship is to furnish motives and means for the imitation of Christ. The Liturgy, then, is another one of those marvellous resources God has made available to us to grow in holiness. What a treasure we have! Not only did St. Dominic see and appreciate this, but Dominicans down through the years have done so. They have - and still do - see it as an effective antidote to the activity of preaching and prevents the preacher from getting caught up in the hustle and bustle of travelling from place to place and also from becoming proud if he is successful and popular. The Liturgy is a constant reminder of his mission - to preach Christ and him crucified.

For those Friars engaged in teaching, the Liturgy prevented their study and preparation for classes and lectures from becoming cold and abstract speculation. In fact, it complements what they are studying for the Liturgy celebrates the mysteries of Christ which they are endeavouring to understand. As Pere Bernadot says: "This is living dogma speaking to the heart as well as the intelligence." (op. cit., p.92) It should be noted that the Liturgy contains the fullness of Catholic teaching in its prayers, psalms, hymns, readings from Scripture and the Fathers of the Church. And we must remember as well that every word has been approved by the highest authority in the Church. It not only inflames the heart but also nourishes the mind because, as we have said, it brings us into intimate contact with Christ and his mysteries.

This was all well and good for the Friars who were, of course, fluent in Latin, because, for hundreds of years, that was, throughout the Western Church, the only language the Liturgy was in, but how about the lay people who were not able to understand Latin? Those who could not read any language at all could recite a certain number of Our Fathers and Hail Marys during the day. Later on, those who could read some language could say the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. But it was the same office every day and after awhile it became boring or, at least, monotonous. There was no variety to speak of, but our Dominican Laity would loyally and devoutly keep to it. In 1970, everything changed. The Holy Father approved the revision

of the Liturgy of the Hours, mandated by the Second Vatican Council, and shortly after, in 1975, an English translation was published and the laity could recite the Liturgy of the Hours right along with the clergy and religious. As Pope Paul said in the Apostolic Constitution approving the New Office: The Office has been drawn up and arranged in such a way that not only clergy but also religious and indeed laity may participate in it, since it is the prayer of the whole people of God. For this reason, the General Rule for all Dominican Laity, promulgated in 1987, recommended, "the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours in union with the whole Dominican family." Most Province Directories have a similar recommendation.

We use the word "recommends" rather than "obliges" because nothing in the Dominican Rule for any of its branches binds under the pain of sin. St. Dominic was most insistent on this. At any rate, you are fortunate to be able to join with the whole Order in reciting the Liturgy of the Hours. Look upon it as a privilege rather than an obligation, something you want to do because you get so much from it. If you have that attitude, then it will not be difficult to work in morning and/or evening prayer nearly every day anyway. Some days you cannot, so do not worry about it.

The General Rule also recommends that the laity attend "as far as possible, daily Mass and Communion." Another advantage the revised liturgy has brought is evening Mass which makes it so much easier for people to get to Mass on a daily basis. But as the Rule recognizes this is not always possible, and for many it will be impossible all the time because of the hours of work, a long commute, family and home responsibilities and a number of other factors over which we have no control. It is, however, an ideal and a goal we should keep in mind so that someday we will be able to. I am always amazed at the number of people who do make the sacrifice to get to daily Mass. They do it because they know from their own experience that participating in the renewal of the life-giving sacrifice of Christ on the Cross gives them spiritual strength to meet the trials, difficulties and hardships of life. The Mass, along with the Prayer of Christians, are the most powerful means available to us to grow spiritually, to become more like Christ, and enter more fully into his saving mysteries. Lay Dominicans of today are far more fortunate than those of earlier times. You are able to use the same rich resources of the Liturgy the Friars have used for nearly eight centuries to grow in the Dominican life and spirit, resources St. Dominic saw were essential for us to fulfil our mission of bringing truth to the world.

#### **V. PERSONAL PRAYER**

As we saw in our previous chapter, St. Dominic was devoted to the Liturgy, that is to say, the Mass and Divine Office, or as we call it nowadays, The Prayer of Christians. But the Liturgy did not exhaust his longing to be in communication with his Lord and God in prayer. We are told that after Compline, or Night Prayer, instead of going to bed, he would stay in the church praying intensely with great physical involvement. Often he would stay in the church all night long, grabbing a little sleep on the hard stone floor. Recently, much has been made of a little work entitled "The Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic." It was written by an early Dominican who seemingly knew our holy father and had observed him at private prayer. But when you examine these ways closely, you realize that they are not methods of prayers, but rather ways he used bodily postures, gestures and movements to help him express what was in his heart.

In considering them, we must remember, first of all, that St. Dominic was a Spaniard of an ardent nature and these "ways" were personal physical expressions of his interior prayer. Secondly, we must note that he made no attempt to impose these ways on his followers, even his earliest companions. He left the physical expression of their prayer up to them - and to us. Hence, we should feel under no obligation to adopt them. As St. Dominic well realized, each one of us has a different personality, a different psychological make-up and different emotions. We are, then, free to choose whatever physical expression - or none at all - that helps us to pray better. It is hard to imagine someone like St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, using any of the nine ways of prayer that were so congenial to St. Dominic. And yet, no one would say that St. Thomas was any less a Dominican for it. One matter in which we have no choice is that, like St. Dominic, we must add personal, private prayer to our liturgical prayer. Surely, all of you are convinced of this already so it is not necessary to sell you on its necessity and power. Since it is

impossible to cover all the aspects of private prayer in the limited space we have, the best we can do is to recall some of the aspects of prayer with which you are familiar and offer some observations that may be helpful to you.

Someone has defined prayer as conversation with God, but not in the sense that it is a kind of chat with him in which he speaks for awhile and then we put in our two bits worth and on it goes with the two of us alternating back and forth as we do in talking with our friends and acquaintances. Rather, the term must be understood in the sense that it is our side of the conversation. God has been speaking to us for a long time. As the author of the Letter to the Hebrews said: In times past God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe . ( Heb.1: 1 & 2)

Now God is waiting for us to answer. We should think of prayer as our response of love to God's loving words to us. This does not exclude the possibility of God in his own way communicating with us, whether it be by inspirations through the gifts of the Holy Spirit or by the overwhelming experience of his presence in contemplation. Very rarely, if ever, will he speak to us in what seems like words, although no voice or sound is heard. All too often we are so busy talking to him by saying our prayers that we never give him a chance to get a word in edgewise. There is an old story about the old lady who had a goose that unexpectedly laid a golden egg. In her excitement she ran next door to her neighbour to share this wonderful bit of information. The neighbour lady was very loquacious and began talking a blue streak the moment the old lady walked in. Every time the neighbour paused for breath, the old lady would begin off, "my old goose she" but she could get no further before the stream of talk started again. After a number of efforts to relay her good news, she went back home in disgust. All too often we put God in the position of being able to get in only the equivalent of "my old goose she" before we interrupt with our prayers. Give him a chance to communicate with us. He will have something wonderful to tell us.

This brings us to what could be called "the prayer of shut-up." By this I mean that after praying for awhile, whether in your own words and thoughts, or using those of others, we should shut up, stop talking and give God a chance to communicate with us in whatever way he chooses. During this time we should try to quiet the soul. Another word for it could be - "serening" the soul. By this is meant not just being silent, but bringing serenity and peace within our minds and hearts so that the gifts of the Holy Spirit can function without interference. Even if God does not choose to communicate with us, the benefits of "serening" our souls are tremendous. In other words, it is not time wasted.

You may be wondering how you will be able to find time to engage in this sort of prayer. Actually, it does not take as long as you might think. You know, just because one prayer is good it does not follow that two prayers are better. Our Lord warned us against that kind of thinking when he said: In praying do not babble like the pagans, who think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him (Matt. 6: 7&8) What he is saying is that we do not pray to inform God of our needs, or what we think we need. Prayer is for our benefit, not his. Another definition of prayer is the raising of our minds and hearts to God. We can do that briefly in a few words, even while working. Many opportunities will present themselves during the day when we can say such phrases as "Dear Lord, I love you," or "Here am I Lord, I come to do your will," or whatever phrase you like. Often we meet with frustrations, failures, aches and pains, hurts and so forth.

They may be small but they can all be turned to our benefit by saying something like "Dear Lord, I accept this in union with your sufferings on the Cross."

The media speak of "sound bites" referring to brief phrases said usually by a candidate that can be used to his advantage or disadvantage in campaigns. Similarly, we can speak of "prayer bites," referring to those brief raisings of our minds and hearts to God. They will always be to our advantage. Perhaps the greatest problem we all face in prayer is distractions - involuntary ones, of course. We do not want them, but, all of sudden, there they are. Our minds are off a thousand miles away, usually on trivial and inconsequential matters that could easily wait for another time for our consideration. When we become aware of them we try to bring our minds back to our prayer and before we know it we are off again on another tangent. It can be frustrating and discouraging. Some of the most encouraging words on this subject are those of Father Walter Farrell, O.P. He said: How much damage is done to prayer by involuntary distractions? Certainly they do not affect the merit of the prayer; that is taken care of by the first intention with which we started the prayer. Nor do they detract from the effectiveness, the powers of entreaty, of the prayer. The one effect of prayer they do lessen or even destroy is the spiritual refreshment and consolation which normally come from prayer. In other words, we cheat ourselves when we do nothing about these distractions, cheat ourselves of a consolation and refreshment that might easily be ours. On the other hand, we cheat ourselves yet more if we give up prayer in disgust because of these distractions." (Companion to the Summa, Vol. III, p. 266) Of course, we can also fall back on these reassuring words of St. Paul: In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will. (Rom. 8: 26 & 27)

There you have it. All we have to do is our best and God will take care of the rest. Often the prayer we are most dissatisfied with, that we feel has been done poorly and inadequately is the most pleasing to God, because it has been done out of love of him and not for any good feelings we may have got from it. On the other hand, that prayer from which we received a great deal of consolation and satisfaction may not be as pleasing to him because it made us feel good.

In any case, we as Dominicans must be persevering in our personal prayer. We must be responding to the love of God so eloquently and intensely manifested to us through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ who is forever the light of the world. Only in this way, can we hope to become the light of the world ourselves. Only in this way, can we fulfil our Dominican vocation.

## ***VI. MEDITATION OR MENTAL PRAYER***

The early Dominicans would have been appalled if anyone had suggested that meditation could be reduced to a mathematically calculated fraction of the day. For them, meditation, and its fruit, contemplation, was an essential occupation of a Dominican. Yet the Code of Canon Law of 1918 imposed on us an hour of meditation every day. The saying of the Rosary cut that down to 45 minutes. Systematised methods of meditation began to be developed in the 15th. century and reached their peak in the 16th. The most influential was the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Many of the newly founded religious congregations and societies - as distinguished from Orders, such as the Jesuits, Passionists, Redemptorists, Sulpicians and a great many others, developed their own methods until finally there was a bewildering

multiplicity of them. One was so long and detailed that it would take the better part of a half hour, the usual allotted time, just to read through it, leaving little time for actual meditation.

One of the reasons for all this creativity was that these new foundations had eliminated the Divine Office in common and the monastic observances which St. Dominic had incorporated into the daily life of our Order and they needed something to replace them. That something was a specified period of meditation in common. What you had then was a group of grown men sitting in a chapel thinking their own thoughts and saying the Divine Office, the Prayer of the Church, privately. To a Dominican, it does not seem to be a good trade-off.

Although a specified time and length of meditation was not within our Dominican tradition, meditation or mental prayer most certainly was. At this point, we should carefully and clearly define exactly what meditation is. It is a form of prayer but it differs from personal or private prayer which is expressed in words, whether in one's own or those of others. It is usually done in silence but can be spoken. Meditation is in the mind, which is why it is also called mental prayer, and consists of thinking or reflecting on some truths of our faith. It begins with that but should end with affective or loving thoughts and resolutions of the mind and heart. It is a step on the road to contemplation, which is an experience of God's presence in which it seems as though the soul and God touch one another and the soul is totally absorbed without thoughts or reflections of the mind. We must point out that the two are not mutually exclusive. There is no such thing as being able to quit meditating because we have experienced contemplation. As we saw in that earlier chapter, those experiences are infrequent and fleeting even for those who have reached the heights of the spiritual life. In between them, we can and should continue to meditate.

As we said earlier, many methods of meditation have been developed in the last 450 years, but the one that seems to fit in best with the Dominican tradition is nearly as old as the Church. It is called *Lectio Divina*, or in English "divine" or "sacred reading," a rather pale rendering of the Latin but it is the best we can do. This goes back to the Fathers of the Desert in the 300's and it was a method used by our holy father, St. Dominic. In fact, it was the eighth of his nine ways of prayer. We are told that he would sit down to read. Sitting there he would open up some book before him, usually the Scriptures or Fathers of the Church. He would begin with the sign of the cross and then start reading. He would pause from time to time to reflect on the words before him, often expressing his response to what he was reading with a conversation with God, using physical gestures and reactions of his heart. Remember that we said St. Dominic was very physical in his prayers.

This continues to be, it seems to me, the simplest and the most effective way to meditate for modern Dominicans, both religious and lay. To do it properly, we should, first of all, get into a comfortable physical position, one in which aching knees or a sore back will not interfere with our prayer. Then, we should quiet ourselves both exteriorly and interiorly, or, in other words, we should serene our souls. Then we pick up the Scriptures, let us say, and turn to some passage that appeals to us and begin to read. When we are struck with some words we linger over them, reflect prayerfully on them letting our hearts be moved to acts of love, flowing into resolutions to live more fully the truths we have been reflecting upon. Then when we have exhausted the meaning of that particular passage we move on to the next and continue the process for as long as we can or want to. I think you will agree that this is not hard to do and perhaps you have done it already. As a starter, the eighth chapter of St. Paul's letter to the Romans is recommended. If anyone is not moved to prayerful reflection by it, he or she is having a bad day indeed. Another great passage is the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's first letter

to the Corinthians, the hymn to love. The entire letter to the Ephesians is marvellous for it is filled with so many beautiful thoughts that we can reflect upon and be moved to love God more. Another book of the New Testament that we should appreciate more is the first letter of St. Peter. It is marvellous and provides so much material for prayerful reflection. Psalm 104 is one of the richest of all the psalms for not only prayerful but joyful reflection.

There are other books besides the Bible that can be most helpful, such as Thomas a Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. But at first it is best to stick to the Scriptures. There is enough material for meditation in them to last a life time. They also have the benefit of being the Word of God. Through them, God speaks to us. This does not mean that every part of it is suitable for meditation. There is not much to be got out of the books of Joshua and Judges.

Let it be clear that you are not being urged to get in a specific period of time for meditation each day. That would be impractical for most of you. What you might try to do is to get in ten or fifteen minutes once a week. It just might grow on you and you will be moved to do more when the opportunity presents itself.

One thing is certain. You are going to have bad days when nothing seems to go right. You sit there and look at the passage and nothing comes. Your mind is blank, or you are off in a maze of distractions. You might even fall asleep. But do not worry about it. You want to love God and you are trying, apparently in vain. God loves you for the effort as poor as it may seem. This reminds us of a story about St. Teresa of Avila, who was such a down to earth person. She kept falling asleep in meditation and this worried her. She felt she was failing in a most important spiritual exercise. But she resolved it when the thought came to her, "God loves me just as much when I am asleep as when I am awake" and she never worried again. Despite the bad days you may have which may discourage you, do not give up the effort. Eventually, you will find that its rewards are well worth any effort you put out. Just be patient with yourself. God will be.

By now, all of this should be clear enough so that you can begin this wonderful method of meditation called *lectio divina* and profit from it. We have gone into this at some length because of the importance of meditation in our spiritual lives. There are some spiritual writers who will say it is absolutely essential. That may be going too far but certainly it is of great value and it is something that anyone who is serious about growing spirituality should make a real effort to practice and in saying this, the laity are included. You are urged to try to get in some meditation or *lectio divina* sometime during the week. This may involve taking a close look at your priorities and asking, for example, how much time are you spending in watching television, which is a great consumer of time for so many people. Or how much time do we spend in reading books or magazines that are basically fluff. We might ask ourselves: could some of that time be spent in an activity that will have everlasting benefits for our immortal souls, make us more pleasing to God, and which will bring us closer to Christ. Meditation will do exactly that.

### ***VII DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY***

The story is told that St. Dominic once had a vision of heaven and there he saw members of all the religious orders except his own. He began to weep. Our Lord asked him why he was weeping. Our holy Father told him that it was because he could see none of his children there in heaven. Our Lord motioned to his mother; she opened her beautiful blue mantle and Dominic could see under it a multitude of Dominicans. While there is no historical proof of authenticity of this story it is one that is dear to all Dominicans for we like to think of ourselves



as being in a special way under the mantle of Mary our Mother. And rightly so since a deep devotion to her has always been a hallmark of our Order, one of its pillars, you might say. It began with St. Dominic himself who was especially devoted to her and used to pray for long periods before her altar. We are told that one of the ways of his prayer was to say one Hail Mary after another and as he did so he would genuflect at each one. He also joyously accepted the change in religious garb that our Lady had given to Blessed Reginald. Before that time St. Dominic and his first companions had worn the clothing of the canons regular which he had been when he was in Osma. It consisted of a white robe or tunic and a surplice. After Blessed Reginald had decided to join the new Order he fell deathly ill. St. Dominic prayed fervently for his recovery. Shortly after, our Blessed Mother along with St. Cecilia and St. Catherine of Alexandria, both virgin martyrs of the early Church, appeared to him and anointed him with a heavenly perfume. She then showed him a long white scapular and told him it was to be a part of the Dominican habit. He was completely cured and was clothed in the new habit by St. Dominic himself.

Ever since then the scapular has been the essential part of our habit and is specially blessed. This is brought out beautifully in the ceremony of reception of novices of the Lay Dominicans. As the Chaplain put it on you he said: Receive the scapular of our holy Order, the most important part of our Dominican habit, the mother's pledge from heaven of the love of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary towards us, under whose wings and mantle you shall find a shade from the heat, and a bulwark and defence in life and death from all dangers of soul and body.

Another devotion to Mary that is precious to Dominicans is the singing of the Salve Regina after night prayer. The singing of this beautiful hymn was started when he was Provincial of the Province of Lombardy by Blessed Jordan of Saxony who would later succeed St. Dominic as Master of the Order. As he himself tells it in his little book "On the Beginnings of the Order of Preachers" one of the brothers in the house at Bologna, where St. Dominic died and is buried, was plagued by a most savage demon who almost drove him mad and created all kinds of disturbance in the house. Blessed Jordan then decided that they should sing the Salve Regina after Compline or Night Prayer. The brother was freed from his tribulation so the practice spread to the rest of the Province and from there to the entire Order and it is still our practice today. Then Blessed Jordan goes on to say:

A dependable religious once told me that he had often seen in spirit, while the brethren were singing, "Turn then, most Gracious Advocate," the mother of the Lord prostrating herself in the presence of her Son and praying for the safety of the whole Order. The memory of this ought to be preserved, so that when the brethren read of it, they will be inspired to an even greater devotion in their praises of the Virgin.

Every Dominican saint and blessed has had a tender and loving devotion to our Blessed Mother. The Friars make their vows to Mary. You, as Dominican Laity, make your promises to Mary. Those of you who have made your profession can surely remember saying: To the honour of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Blessed Dominic, I, brother or sister so and so, before you, Father Director and before you, Prior or Prioress, and so on.

It is understandable, then, that we Dominicans can and should feel that our Blessed Mother has a special affection for our Order for devotion to her is a basic characteristic of it and has been from the very beginning. The crowning glory of Dominican devotion to our Blessed Mother is the Rosary, the greatest and most widely used popular devotion in the Church. Unfortunately, there is not a shred of evidence that it was given to St. Dominic by our Lady, nor is there any

indication that he knew anything like it. We are all familiar with that painting that shows our Lady giving St. Dominic the Rosary. Sad to say, it is not based on reality.

It seems that the originator of the Rosary essentially as we have it today was a Dominican named Alain de la Roche who lived from 1428 to 1475. I say "essentially" because, first of all, the Hail Mary, as it was recited by St. Dominic and Alain de la Roche consisted only of the first part of the one we say. The second part of it, beginning with "Holy Mary, Mother of God" was not added officially until 1568. Secondly, only in 1600 did it take its present form of fifteen mysteries. Saint Pope Pius V, a Dominican of course, helped greatly to popularize it by attributing to the Rosary the victory of the Christian fleet over the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto, perhaps the most crucial naval battle of all time. During the battle he asked the Rosary Confraternity of Rome to be constantly reciting the Rosary in our church of the Minerva while he himself was saying it in his private chapel. Afterwards, he established the feast of Our Lady of Victory which later on became the feast of the Holy Rosary celebrated in many Dominican churches on the first Sunday of October.

Even though the Rosary as we have it today was developed over a long period of time, we can say in a very real sense that St. Dominic was responsible for it because it was he who established the tradition from which it came. We have already noted his tender and fervent devotion to our Lady. We noted also his physical involvement in his prayer by repeating the Hail Mary as he genuflected each time he said it. We have also talked about, in our chapter on meditation, his emphasis on the importance and value of meditation in our spiritual life. The Rosary is a perfect combination of all these elements. The physical one is the holding of the beads in our hands, letting them slip through our fingers as we say the Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Bes. Other religions use a string of beads as calming device. They do that for us, but they do more. They are also timers, meaning that in the time it takes us to say one Our Father, ten Hail Marys and one Glory Be we meditate on the major mysteries of our Lord's life, death and resurrection. The Rosary is one of the greatest meditation methods ever devised. One decade of the Rosary does not take long but yet in that brief time we are brought into contact with our Lord's saving mysteries. What a beautiful devotion it is, one that helps us to grow in our Christian life. This is exactly what St. Dominic wanted for the faithful to whom he sent his children to preach the Truth. As Father Benedict Ashley, O.P. in his book, "The Dominicans" says: His devotion to the Blessed Virgin established in the Order the tradition that eventually took a popular form in the holy rosary. (p. 12) One thing the Friars did was to establish Confraternities of the Most Holy Rosary everywhere they went and it is richly blessed by many indulgences and blessings by the Holy See.

On the wall of the Sistine Chapel there is that magnificent mural by Michelangelo called the Last Judgement and most of you have seen at least pictures of it. A little noticed detail is in the middle on the left hand side. A man is leaning over holding out a Rosary and two men who are falling into hell have grabbed it and are being pulled up into heaven. That was the expression of Michelangelo's belief in the power of the Rosary in one of the world's great masterpieces of art. There is a rumour that this author cannot confirm that Michelangelo was a Dominican layman. We do know his brother was a Dominican Friar, and he had done, as a beginner in the art of sculpture, an angel on the tomb of St. Dominic in Bologna. Whether a Dominican lay man or not, he was convinced of the power of the Rosary to save souls. We as Dominicans are firmly convinced of that today. Let each one of us, then, use the Rosary as a means of drawing us closer to Christ by meditation on his sacred mysteries which wrought our salvation.

### **VIII. PENANCE**

Back in 1285, the seventh Master of the Order, Munio de Zamora, issued the first rule for lay Dominicans. It was called "The Rule of the Third Order of Penance of St. Dominic." In the revision of it in 1923 it was entitled "The Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Secular Third Order of St. Dominic," but its opening words speak of "The Third Order of Penance of St. Dominic." In the latest revision in 1987, the word "Penance" is dropped from the title and is given only passing mention in the text itself. The title of the new Rule is "The Rule of the Lay Communities of St. Dominic, commonly known as the Dominican Third Order." This represents quite a change in the tone and spirit of the Rule as well as in the purpose of the Third Order itself. It was an outgrowth, as you may know, of groups of lay people in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries known as Penitentes. They practised severe penances, such as fasting, self-scourging, the wearing of hair shirts, chains and the like. These practices sound rather repugnant to our ears and we may wonder why they were so popular. We read the lives of the saints and are appalled by the severity of the penances they inflicted upon themselves. We may even think that we should imitate them, and, in a way, we should.

To understand what I mean, we must keep in mind that penance is so closely connected with prayer that it cannot, and should not, be separated from it, but we do not have to go to the extremes St. Dominic and many of his followers went to. In the first place, it is hard for us to imagine how extraordinarily difficult everyday living was for the average person in the Middle Ages. In the winter time, particularly, the diet was completely monotonous. There was no way they could preserve meat, for example. French and Italian cuisines were undreamed of. There was no pasta, no potatoes, rice, tomatoes or a great many other vegetables that are staples nowadays. Few spices were available and they were dearly expensive. There was gruel, root vegetables like turnips and rutabagas, and, of course, bread but not much else. At best, the people were undernourished, even the wealthy.

The houses were most uncomfortable. When you visit restored peasant homes and palaces in Europe you might conclude that the peasants lived better than their lords. The peasants' cottages were small but with large fireplaces so that they could at least keep warm. Palaces had fireplaces too, but they were big stone buildings and even with the use of tapestries on the walls they were unable to keep out the freezing cold. Monasteries did not even have fireplaces. The author was told by a Spanish Dominican who had done his studies in Avila, Spain, that the stones out of which the monastery was built were always moist. He said that on winter days he could reach out of bed in the morning and touch the walls and they were covered with a thin sheet of ice. In situations like that, what are you going to do for penance? Their whole way of life sounds like a penance to us. But they took it for granted. The result was that they had to find some way of depriving themselves of even what little they had according to our standards. It was those practices they adopted that sound so dreadful to us.

Another factor is that they had no idea of any of the principles of mental and physical hygiene that are commonplace nowadays. As a result, they abused their bodies by a lack of proper food, which, by and large, they did not have anyway, or adequate rest and they beat themselves until they bled and did all the other things that we know now are harmful to the human system and psyche. It is no wonder then that St. Dominic wore himself out and died before he was fifty. Yet, this was well beyond the normal life expectancy at that time. In evaluating the role of penance in our lives, we must keep in mind that those people of the Middle Ages were starting from their life situation and so must we. What would be penance for them would be agony for us. But what would be severe for us would be sheer luxury for them. We have a lot more choices of things to give up than they did and we should be grateful to God for that.

Nonetheless, our practices of penance must come from the same three principles that motivated them. The first of these is that, as in all religions that emphasize contemplation, we must bring under control our love of pleasure and comfort if real serenity of mind is to be achieved. This is essential for contemplation, which as we as Dominicans are committed to, as we saw in our chapter on contemplation.

The second principle is that original and actual sin are facts of the human condition. We find it difficult to free ourselves from sin and achieve that inner harmony God intended us to have when he created us. We can do this only by disciplining our appetites and subjecting them to the governance of reason enlightened by faith. The third principle that guided the medieval folk and should also guide us is a desire to identify ourselves with Christ and him crucified. We want to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow in his footsteps, and we cannot do this if we put our own pleasure and comfort first. Another factor that must be taken into consideration is the lack of consciousness of sin in our times, in our culture. In 1973, Dr. Karl Menniger of the famous Menniger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, published a book called "Whatever Became Of Sin?" in which he decried the loss of a sense of responsibility for our words and actions. It is always someone or something else's fault - not ours. This attitude of society affects us and our awareness of our own sinfulness. The biggest problem is that we truthfully recognize that we are not guilty of the crimes, misdemeanours and evils that we read about, see on television or hear about from office gossip that are being committed daily in great numbers. We certainly are not sinners in that sense. But when we read of the saints like St. Dominic who frequently bemoaned the fact that they were such great sinners, we may wonder how they could honestly say that.

The answer lies in their clear and keen realization that their response of love to the love God has shown them is totally inadequate. They can see that they have received so much from him and they are giving back so little. Any flaw, any failing, any imperfection that interferes or gets in the way of our response to the love of God is a horrid thing, a thing to be deeply regretted and grieved over. That holds as true for us as it did for them. We can, then, say with St. Dominic, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."

On the practical level we must begin with a clear realization that while we may not commit big sins and certainly not mortal ones, we do commit smaller ones or, as they are called, venial sins. As our Lord told us, "Even the just man falls seven times a day." Over and above this, our response to God's love is so often feeble and lukewarm. All of these interfere with our love of God so we despise them and yearn to be free of them. We will not be, of course, until we get to heaven, but while we are here on earth we can do penance for them. Penance can do two things for us. First, as we have said, its discipline will help us to develop those virtues that are so necessary to our inner serenity. Secondly, it can serve as reparation for our sins. Whenever we hurt someone we love we will try to atone for it. Flowers and candy are popular ways of doing this, as is preparing a favourite meal for an offended husband, and there are, of course, many others. But behind them all is a deep human need to go beyond saying, "I'm sorry." If we will do this sort of thing for other human beings we will most certainly do it for God. When we do them for him, we call them penances, the concrete expressions of our sorrow for having offended him. Thus, they are a form of prayer.

Ideally, the expression of this sorrow that we choose will accomplish both purposes of penance. Besides being acts of reparation for our sinfulness, they will also help us to grow in one or more of the virtues. The important point to remember is that they should not be chosen in imitation of St. Dominic or any of the other saints. As we have shown, their life situation

was much different than ours. We should, however, be motivated by the same principles that motivated them, namely, our desire to foster contemplation by mastering our love of pleasure and comfort; the development of those virtues that free us from our sinful impulses; and thirdly, our desire to take up our cross and follow Christ.

We should not overlook, either, those crosses that present themselves without our willing or desiring them, such things as illness, the debility of advancing years, heartaches, hurts inflicted on us by others and so forth. Accepting them as crosses to bear with Christ can be most fruitful penances. Penance, then, should be an integral part of our lives as Dominicans. It is especially your heritage as lay Dominicans. As the new Rule says, one of the sources from which you draw strength to grow in your vocation is "conversion of heart and penance according to the spirit of the Gospel." (II, 10, e) In this sense, you are still members of the Third Order of Penance of St. Dominic.

### ***IX. COMMUNITY LIFE***

Community life is of key importance to all Dominicans of every stripe. It is in fact, one of the pillars of Dominican life. For the members of the First, Second and Third Order Religious it means a group of men or women leading a common life according to a rule. All of us in these categories live under the same roof, follow a common rule under a superior and try to put up with each other twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It can be difficult when personalities clash, irritations and frustrations can create friction and tension and human failings and individualities can cause hurt, disappointments and heartaches. But, on the other hand, it can also be a tower of strength. Living in community demands sacrifice, giving up personal desires, concessions to others, keeping quiet when you feel like blowing up and all sorts of other things, but they are worth it because the rewards - the inspiration given by your brothers and sisters, their companionship, their help and concern and, most of all their love, greatly outweigh the disadvantages. It is your home, the place where you belong and where you have been called to be.

You, as lay Dominicans, will not live in such close quarters as those of us who belong to the Friars, Nuns and Sisters and yet your chapter is a real community. You are members of the same family, brothers and sisters in St. Dominic, having a common goal, purpose and mission. The chapter is your community, the place to which you have been called to be a member.

In a very real sense, you are similar to the early Christian communities to whom St. Paul wrote his letters. They did not live under the same roof either. They too met occasionally, once a week as rule for the Eucharist when conditions permitted. Persecution, lack of priests and barbarian invasions would often hinder them. It might be helpful to recall some of his exhortations to those communities and apply them to ourselves. To the Romans he wrote: Love one another in mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honour. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. (Rom. 12: 10-13)

He told the Galatians:

***Bear one another's burdens and so you will fulfil the law of Christ.*** (Gal. 6: 2)

He urged the Philippians:

***Complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as***

*more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also everyone for those of others.* (Phil. 2: 2 & 3)

The most beautiful passage is to be found in his letter to the Colossians:

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect.* (Col. 3:12-14)

When we analyse these passages we can see that love should be the hallmark of a Christian community, a love which expresses itself in affection, giving honour, acting with humility, compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience. If conflicts arise, all should be quick to forgive. It is the kind of community that requires concessions, the giving up of personal likes and dislikes, having no axes to grind and hanging in when things do not go as the individual would like. Its great reward is that it is a school of love. St. Paul based these exhortations on the fact that all Christians were bound together as members of the one body of Christ. In our communities, our chapters, you are not only bound in that way, you are also bound together as brothers and sisters in St. Dominic, so that everything St. Paul said about those communities holds doubly true for you. This is why the Rule is so insistent that members attend the chapter meetings each month. As it says: It is the responsibility of all members to attend meetings regularly where their attendance is recorded, and to notify the secretary treasurer or other officers in advance if they are unable to attend. (III, B., 1,c) It also gives the reason why it is a responsibility: The Community is dependent on the talents and loving service of each member. It provides ways to grow in charity and desire for perfection. (II, A) It then goes on to list these ways, such things as uniting in our common love of God and sharing it in the Eucharist and prayer in common, study, giving service to others, mutual support, tenderness toward those in pain or sorrow and a special concern for our deceased members.

This brings out the idea that the chapter, our Dominican community, should be something more than just a meeting to attend. Yet attendance at the meetings is tremendously important for us to develop these qualities. Another aspect is that without your presence we are less than we should be or could be. We are deprived of that important element only you have to share with us. In other words, you need us, but we also need you. The fact is, we need one another. This takes time to develop, but develop it will. While it is developing, you will get out of your community only as much as you put into it. I have known members of the First Order who complained that they got nothing out of community. Of course, they didn't. They put nothing into it. They sat back and waited for the community to do things their way. Community in any branch of the Order does not work that way. It does not work that way for the Friars and it certainly will not for the Laity.

Any chapter that has been established for a number of years will have members who, because of age or infirmity, cannot come any longer to the regular meetings. They become what we call prayer members. They are important to the chapter because they pray for its growth, vitality and development. As St. Dominic recognized when he founded the cloistered nuns, their prayer was essential if the work of those out on the lines was to be fruitful. Each chapter should have some way of keeping in contact with those people who in past years contributed so much to it, whether it is an individual or a group that telephones or visits these prayer members on a regular basis. But a sense of community means more than a concern for those who cannot come to the meetings. It also means a care and concern for those who are here. One way of doing that

is to have a portion of our meetings devoted to a sharing of our concerns, problems and sorrows and a request for prayer. We should also share our joys and special blessings and ask that all join in thanking God.

This helps us to get to know one another as brothers and sisters. Another way is community recreation which is an important element for the Friars. One simple way is to share coffee and cookies at the meetings and perhaps a potluck dinner or agape meal from time to time to help to foster a sense of community and togetherness. All this is just as essential for Dominican life for the Laity as it is in the Friars. Over and above the individual chapters, there is the larger unit of the Province with a Provincial Promoter and a Provincial Council that meets at least once a year to bring a sense of cohesiveness to all the chapters and is a means of sharing ideas, programs and activities. There are also national or regional meetings and the Laity like the Friars are world-wide and every so often there is a world meeting of Lay Dominicans. This helps to bring out that all us are part of the same family, the Dominican Family --- all of us, Friars, nuns, sisters and laity, are brothers and sisters in St. Dominic. We do promise you a rose garden, but it also has its thorns. It needs tending, cultivating and cherishing. If we, each one of us, do that, then the roses will bloom profusely and we will be surrounded by beauty, and imbued with the sweet aroma of sanctity.

#### ***X. POVERTY***

St. Dominic emphasized the need for poverty for his Order of Preachers. He differed, however, from his contemporary, St. Francis of Assisi, in his reasons for it. For St. Francis, poverty was an ideal, a way of life, a value to be lived. In his poetic fancy, he sang of "Lady Poverty" It was an end in itself too, doing this makes us more Christ like. For St. Dominic, it was a means to an end his Order should use if its preaching was to have an impact. As a canon regular in the Cathedral of Osma he had taken a vow of poverty which was a sharing of common property and living off the generosity of the laity. When he came to Southern France to begin his ministry of preaching he saw how the perfect of the Albigensians could exert their tremendous influence, not only by the austerity of their lives but by their poverty, depending entirely on the alms of their faithful followers. This was not difficult where most of the people were friendly. St. Dominic realized that if his preachers were have any effect they would have to be just as poor as the perfect. He was taking a great risk doing this in an area where the majority were unfriendly. For this reason, he urged the Cistercians who had been sent to preach against the heresy to take off their splendid garb and get off their fine horses, dress simply and walk among the people. The Cistercians did this willingly because they were men of a simple life used to living poorly. Since they were officially papal legates they thought they had to take on the splendour that papal legates commonly used in those days. Dominic himself lived in great poverty and required his little band of preachers to live the same way. As the Order spread throughout Western Europe he continued to hold to that principle, but as time was to show it was excessive in its application. Its severity had to be mitigated. It was St. Thomas Aquinas who laid down the realistic purposes and limits of religious poverty. Members of religious orders must take a vow of poverty, for religious life would be impossible without it. Now, the question arises: what about the laity? Are they required to take a vow of poverty and to own nothing? That would be unrealistic, particularly if there were families involved. They have to work for a living, buy food and clothing, provide shelter and furniture and, of course, they have to pay taxes. Does this mean that poverty, which is so essential to the Order, plays no role in their lives? Of course, not. There is such a thing as what the New Catechism calls "poverty of the heart." The basis for all voluntary poverty is to be found in the First Beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Pay special attention to those words "poor in spirit." Our Lord is not requiring material poverty or penury. Rather, he is asking

for a spirit of detachment from worldly goods. As the New Catechism says: The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. (no. 2544) It goes on to explain: All Christ's faithful are to direct their affections rightly, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect charity by the use of worldly things and by an adherence to riches which is contrary to the spirit of evangelical poverty. (no. 2545) Thus even rich people can cultivate a spirit of poverty, although it is more difficult for them than it is for those of modest means. A wealthy woman, a Lay Dominican, once told me that she could feel the tug of her wealth and she had to resist it firmly. She could drive any make of car she wanted, even the most expensive, but she chose to drive a small Ford until it wore out. She could afford a mink coat but she bought only cloth ones. Her husband's position required a certain amount of luxury and elegance, but she resisted becoming attached to them.

On the other hand, just because people are poor does not mean that they have the spirit of poverty. They can avariciously long for material things, covet the riches of others and be attached to possessions they may not have but want. The great Dominican theologian, Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange summed it up in these words: Voluntary poverty can be practised either in the midst of the abundance of worldly good, when the spirit is not attached to them, or in destitution when one bears it generously for love of God (Three Ages of the Interior Life, Vol. II, page 141) He urges us to keep in mind the words of our Lord: O you of little faith? So do not worry and say "What are we to eat? Or What are we to drink? or "What are we to wear? All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil. (Matt. 6: 30b-34)

Thus, poverty of the spirit is closely connected with confidence and trust in God. As Father Garrigou-Lagrange says: Voluntary poverty and confidence in God go hand in hand; the more detached a man is from earthly goods, the more he desires those of heaven; and the less he relies on human helps, the more he place his confidence in God's help. Thus confidence in God is the soul of holy poverty. All Christians should have the spirit of this counsel. (ibidem. pages 143-44)

Another benefit of the spirit of poverty is that it makes us more like unto Christ. St. Francis saw this clearly, but St. Dominic also recognized its value because he was convinced that anyone who preaches Christ should imitate him as much as possible. Christ, as we know, became poor for our sakes. He could have chosen to come as an earthly prince, dressed in fine clothes and living in a splendid palace with dozens of servants at his beck and call. Rather he chose to come as a poor man - not a destitute one. The trade of a carpenter was an honourable one and those who plied it could live reasonably well by their standards. Of course, there were times when people could not afford to have work done and the Holy Family had to be concerned about where the next meal was coming from. A good example of this combination of poverty and trust in God was during the flight into Egypt. The angel had appeared to Joseph in a dream and ordered him: Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him. (Matt. 2: 13) Nothing was said about where he was to go in Egypt or how he was going to make a living to support his wife and her child. The message was "just go." Joseph, without question, got up, packed their sparse belongings and set out. They had nothing but their confidence in God to take with them. Apparently it was enough because after the death of Herod about two years later, they were able to return to Nazareth where Joseph was able to resume his trade as carpenter. If God treats people as much as he loved the Holy Family in this way, we can expect no better. We must imitate them and trust in God to keep his promise to see to it that we will have enough to live



on. The spirit of detachment and voluntary poverty will also make it possible for us to fulfil the command to give of our superfluity to the poor. In this, we imitate Christ who had a concern for the poor and even worked a miracle to feed them in their need.

The Church from the beginning has shown its love and care for the widows, orphans and the sick. In time religious orders were founded that dedicated themselves to these needs, but the laity have always been active in assisting or financing these corporal works of mercy. Our Dominican Laity should also be involved in these works, as, indeed, they have. As we read down through the lives of our Dominican lay saints we can see that everyone of them has reached out to care for the underprivileged. St. Rose of Lima is a good example. She is, in fact, considered to be the founder of social services in the Americas. All of this involves a simplicity of life style, of detachment from this world's goods, as desirable as they may be and a deep trust in God's providence and love for us. It is in this way that the Dominican Laity can participate in the spirit of voluntary poverty that St. Dominic felt was so essential to the work of his Order. All we have to do, really, is to make our own the words of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," and seek nothing more.

### ***XI. LOYALTY TO THE CHURCH***

There is tradition that Pope Innocent III saw in a dream the Basilica of St. John Lateran collapsing but two men were holding it up. To understand the significance of this dream you must remember that the Lateran, and not St. Peter's, is the cathedral of Rome and of the world. As such, it symbolizes the universal Church, so what the Pope saw was the Catholic Church collapsing. Shortly afterwards he met St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic for the first time and he recognised them as the two men he had seen in his dream holding up the Church. Loyalty to the Church and its magisterium has been a hallmark of the Dominican Order from the beginning. As you know from the life of St. Dominic, the first thing he did, after he had worked out plans for founding the Order, was to go to the Pope to get approval for it. After Pope Innocent died, he went to his successor, Pope Honorius III for final confirmation which, of course, was granted in a series of four bulls.

His sons were to continue in the same spirit of submission to the authority of the Church. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, humbly submitted his writings to the judgement of the Holy See. One of the most beautiful and touching stories along this line is the case of Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange. He was the greatest of all modern scripture scholars and the founder of the prestigious Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem. He lived from 1855 to 1938. When he first began publishing his articles and commentaries on Scripture he was considered to be a "dangerous radical." One time Pope St. Pius X called in the Master of the Order and told him to give Father Lagrange a formal precept not publish any more. A formal precept is a command given by a major superior - prior or above - that binds under pain of mortal sin. It is very serious and rarely used. The Master of the Order answered, "I don't have to give him a formal precept. All I have to do is to ask him." He did and Father Lagrange obediently ceased publishing, but not writing fortunately. In our own time, the great French theologians, Fathers Congar and Chenu were silenced by the Holy See, which they accepted humbly. But they emerged from under the cloud to become the stars of Vatican II.

Down through our long history we have been extraordinarily loyal to the Holy See, submitting ourselves to its magisterium. Only a tiny few have been exceptions to that general rule. In fact, the official theologian to the Pope, the Master of the Sacred Palace, is always a Dominican and has been since the time of St. Dominic who was the first to hold that office.

That same loyalty holds true for the Dominican Laity. Where could you find a more loyal, devoted and zealous advocate and supporter of the Holy See than St. Catherine of Siena? Every Dominican can take pride in some words of Pope John XXII. In the year 1316 he lamented that tertiaries and beguines in large numbers were falling into heresy. But he went on to say, "I exclude the Dominican Tertiaries whose faith and docility to the Church are irreproachable. " This is just common sense on our part. After all, we have the clear words of our Lord: And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 16: 18 and 19) Thus we have his guarantee that the gates of the netherworld or hell would not prevail against it. This means that falsehood could never breach its walls. Satan, the father of lies, is the source of all falsehood and loves to sow it among us poor mortals. We have our Lord's assurance that there is one place it cannot be sown and that is the Roman Catholic Church. We know that in it we shall always find the truth.

It just stands to reason that an Order dedicated to the truth, as ours is, will be completely loyal to the Church for it is the only source of divine truth in this world. To where else can we turn? While we must accept its teaching we do not have to overlook or deny the sins of its members, condone the failings of its clergy, accept as Gospel the opinions of theologians or even the highest authorities including the Pope. Let me give you an example of this. In the late 500s conditions were so chaotic in Europe that Pope St. Gregory the Great predicted in a sermon that the end of the world was at hand. It was not an *ex cathedra* statement - that is to say, one we have to believe - but an opinion that turned out to be erroneous.

The word "magisterium" is one that is commonly used these days. Today, in some circles, it seems to mean whatever the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Defence of the Faith says. But not even the Prefect would agree with that assessment. A better understanding can be found in what are called the *Loci Theologici* (Theological Places) proposed in the sixteenth century by Melchoir Cano, the great Spanish Dominican theologian. After Scripture, of course, at the top of the list are apostolic traditions, the defined dogmas of the Church, defined either by Ecumenical Councils in concert with the Pope or by the Pope alone speaking "*ex cathedra*," which is rare. Only two come to mind, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of our Blessed Mother. Next come teachings, as distinguished from dogmas, of Ecumenical Councils in concert with the Pope, as for example, Vatican II which defined no new dogmas. Next in order are statements of the Popes in bulls, apostolic constitutions and the like. Then comes the teachings the Church Fathers, and the common opinions of theologians, not necessarily unanimous, but an overwhelming majority of them are. Finally, there is the common belief of the faithful, which we call "*sensus fidelium*." All of these put together make up what is the teaching of the Church. I submit that this is what we mean or should mean when we use the term "magisterium."

It is this body of doctrine that we have to accept as what we must believe if we have good sense. But where are we going to find it? Fortunately, recently a new Catechism has been published in English that is a summary of authentic Catholic teaching, approved by the Pope. Hopefully, this will serve to at least reduce the number of what are known as "cafeteria Catholics." We use the word "cafeteria" because these Catholics are something like the diners in a cafeteria who pick and choose whatever they like to eat, leaving what does not appeal to them at the serving tables. In much the same way, this kind of Catholic picks and chooses whatever doctrines from the truths taught by the Church that he or she likes, denying or ignoring the rest. This approach is not only arrogant but also illogical. Illogical because, at least

implicitly, it denies the infallibility of the Pope but assumes that they are infallible in that they are able to choose what is true and what is not. As someone has said, there are as many popes as there are cafeteria Catholics.

Not only are they illogical, but very often they are contradictory. Let me give you an example of what I mean. There are people who will deny that there is a hell. But if there is no hell, why would we need to have a redeemer? In one fell swoop these people wipe the need for Christ, his incarnation, his suffering, death and resurrection. It makes you wonder, if these people are correct, why God would go to the trouble of going through all the pain and suffering that he did. You could go on right down the line and find one inconsistency, one fallacy after another. For many of these people it is due to a sheer ignorance of their religion. This is so widespread and unfortunately there is no interest or desire to learn more about it. It would seem reasonable for them to say, "Well, if the Church teaches this, there must be a reason," and then make an honest effort to find out what the reason is. This it seems to me is why all Dominicans should be eager to know their faith and know it thoroughly. Certainly, it is one powerful reason why study is one of the pillars of Dominican life. For others, it is a matter of wanting to have their cake and eat it too. They want to be Catholic but do not want to accept everything it believes and teaches. But it does not work that way. Either you buy the whole package or you end up with nothing. If you buy it, you have truth, divine truth guaranteed, not based on human opinion, likes or dislikes, but on the word of Christ. This brings out, it seems to me, what a beautiful and precious gift we have in the Church, one we should treasure. This is why loyalty to Church is one of the pillars of Dominican life.

## ***XII PREACHING***

You probably have been wondering when we would ever get around to talking about preaching. Your thinking may have been: if there is anything that is a pillar of Dominican life it would be preaching, and you would be completely correct. That is why it has been left until last. All the other pillars we have talked about exist to support and uphold preaching. In fact, it might more accurately be called the capstone of Dominican life, for it ties all the others together and with them forms the structure of Dominican life. Without it, they would merely be a series of decorative columns with no particular reason for existing outside of being beautiful.

You may be further wondering and saying to yourself: I can see how the Friars of the First Order can be preachers. They can get into the pulpit and preach the Word of God. I can even see how the nuns of the Second Order can be involved in preaching because they pray for the success of the Friars' preaching, and without prayer we can do nothing, as St. Dominic saw so clearly. I can also see how the Sisters of the Third Order Religious can, in a broad sense anyway, be called preachers because they are teachers, run hospitals and do all sorts of works for the Church so competently and fruitfully. But can I as a lay person be a preacher and yet I belong to the Order of Preachers? How can I preach?

It is true that in English, preaching means pulpit oratory, but St. Dominic did not name his Order in English, but in Latin – *Ordo Praedicatorum* - meaning those who are engaged in "praedicatio." If you look in a Latin dictionary you will find that "praedicatio" means "making known" or "proclamation." This has a much broader, much wider meaning than mere pulpit oratory. It would include writing and teaching, areas in which Dominicans in all branches of the Order have always excelled.

In this sense of proclamation or making known, lay Dominicans have a far broader range of activities available to fulfil their vocation than do the Friars, Nuns or Sisters. It would most

certainly include the sharing of their faith by parents to their children, by teaching in Catholic schools or CCD classes for public school children. These are the obvious ones. But there are many more. But to find out how past Dominicans have utilized the means they had available let us take a look at our Third Order Dominican saints as a starter.

St Catherine of Siena endeavoured to bring Christian principles into the innumerable conflicts between the various city states of Italy and settle their disputes and she was quite successful at it. She was also successful at convincing the Pope to return to Rome and be truly the bishop of the Eternal City, a rather basic Christian principle.

St Rose of Lima was devoted to her family which had fallen on hard times and used her talents to grow flowers and do fancy needlework to support her parents. She also cared for the sick, poor and oppressed of the city of Lima to the extent that she is known as the founder of social justice in the New World. But it was all done very simply and humbly. There were no social workers, no complicated forms to fill out. It was done on the basis of need out of love.

St. Lorenzo Ruiz was a catechist who left his home, family and friends in the Philippines to go to Japan with the Friars to help them bring the people of that country to the Faith. In doing so, he gave his life as a martyr to witness for the Faith. Joined with him are the forty or more lay Dominican martyrs in the Far East. There is no more eloquent way of proclaiming, making known the truth of the Catholic Faith than giving your life for your beliefs, your faith.

But let us face it. It is quite likely that none of you are ever going to be called upon to give your lives for the Faith. You are not going to be able to settle disputes between city states of Italy, because they do not exist anymore and the Pope does spend a good part of his time in Rome. You may indeed have to support your parents through whatever talents you may have and you may be able to help the poor and afflicted in various ways, but you will not have to be pioneers in this field. But, this does not exhaust the possibilities for your contributions to the life of the Church. It seems to me that Internet is now providing all of us Dominicans, but especially you as Lay Dominicans, a marvellous opportunity to reach the world and inject truth in the numerous discussions that go on it. This a medium for our modern times.

Another one is the example of living your faith fully and completely. More people are drawn to the Church by the example of Catholics than by any other reason. This is why the early Church grew so quickly. The pagans saw Catholics leading good moral lives, showing concern for one another, caring for each other, especially those who were poor and in trouble, such as widows and orphans. They used to say, "See the Christians; see how they love one another." Certainly they were willing to die for their faith, but more importantly they lived it, which can be much harder in the long haul.

St. Dominic saw the tremendous value of example as an essential quality of preaching. When the Cistercian monks arrived with their abbot dressed in full panoply, robed in rich materials with full pomp and circumstance he told them to get down off their horses, throw away their fancy clothes and appear as poor men. The Cistercians actually lived very austere lives but they felt they, as Papal legates, had to put on all this show to impress the heretics but St. Dominic knew that just the opposite was true. He then insisted that his sons and daughters should give this same example by their lives of poverty and austerity. This will hold true for you, as his sons and daughters. But what does it mean for you as lay Dominicans? First of all, it seems to me, is that you are going to have to resist the subtle, insidious allures of materialism that surround us on every side. They provide us with all kinds of clever rationalizations for

embracing their alluring temptations. This all of us must do, As Dominicans we must live as simply as we can. This, as St. Dominic saw, was essential for us if we were to give good example to others.

Of course, the virtues we live by, our charity, our gentleness, our concern for and understanding of others are also important, as is our willingness to accept the unkindness, the thoughtlessness, the cruelty of those we work and live with. Nothing will win others more than our living our Christian lives, no matter how difficult it may be at times.

Another way of preaching that you as Lay Dominicans can do, is the sharing of your faith with others. You are going to run into people, as I am sure you do all the time, who have a false and twisted idea of what Catholics believe and they will challenge you. In these circumstances we should always follow St. Peter's advice: Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence. (I Peter 3: 16b-17a) But to do this effectively you really have to know your religion thoroughly. There are so many false ideas out there about what the Catholic Church teaches, about the Scriptures and about morals. When they say, Catholics worship Mary, how are you going to respond? When they present all kinds of false ideas about the Bible, how are you going to answer them? When they approve of abortion or contraception and condemn the Church for its positions on these matters, how are you going to reply to their arguments? There are answers and it is incumbent on you, as Lay Dominicans, to know them. This is where study comes in and why it is so necessary for Dominicans.

Admittedly, none of these are spectacular or glamorous ways of preaching, but they are most effective ways. You may not seem to have been effective and you may think you have failed to make any impression at all and, of course, you may not have. But you never know how God is going to use what you say and how you say it. We must keep in mind that rarely is one person responsible for the conversion of another. The process of conversion is something like putting together a jig-saw puzzle. People along the way slip in a piece or two until finally the puzzle is complete but the picture is not finished until every single piece is in place. God may be asking you to put in a few pieces but they are necessary. You will not know that, however, until the Last Judgement when you will see the whole picture, completed and perfect. That is, perhaps, the only way that any of us are going to be able to see the results of our preaching. Not even St. Dominic as he lay dying, knew that his work of preaching would continue long after his death. Little could he dream then that 768 years later it would still be going strong, still attracting men and women to its ideal. And so it is that each of us in our own way of bringing truth to the world share in his mission of *praedicatio*, of proclaiming the revealed Word of God to others. What a privilege we have, what a rich blessing from God is ours, that he has chosen us to share in this ministry, to be the children of Dominic. Let us thank God that he called us to be Dominicans. Let us pray that we will be faithful to our vocation. Let each one of us take seriously the charge of St. Paul:

Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship, perform the work of an evangelist; fulfil your ministry. (II Timothy 3: 2-5)

If we do this, then we can say with him: I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance. (II Timothy 3: 7 & 8)

**CONCLUSION**

We can, then, conclude that there is a Dominican Spirituality which merits to be ranked with the other schools of spirituality. It is based on solid principles which we have called the Pillars of Dominican Life. It is a spirituality that will lead us to a closer union with God and a greater holiness of life. It has been tested for nearly eight hundred years and has produced hundreds of Dominican saints and blessed, not to mention the innumerable men and women who, even though they have not raised to the altars of the Church, have achieved deep personal holiness. It is indeed a valid school of spirituality that is a great source of strength and guidance to those of us who have dedicated our lives to being bearers of the Torch of Divine Truth to the World we live in. Let us be grateful to God for it.

*Pillars of the Order*  
*Gregory Anderson OP*



## Appendix 1

### The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic



Saint Dominic was a man of prayer, both formally and informally. We are told that his nights were given to God in deep prayer. Dominic stood in prayer with his arms extended as if he were on a cross. During the days and more informally in the evenings, Dominic lived his prayer in service for others, always keeping in mind the reason why the Order was founded the salvation of souls. In the brief explanations below to the various ways in which Dominic prayed, we might remember that our own prayer lives, as Dominicans and those who would consider following the Dominican way, must extend beyond formality and into the practice of life situations. In attempting to do this, we incorporate the Gospel into our life's work and leisure so that our whole life is prayer.



#### The first way of prayer of Saint Dominic

Saint Dominic's first way of prayer was to assume a humble posture before God, one that emphasised his own lowliness before the greatness of God. Here we see Saint Dominic inclining his head before the altar of God.



### **The second way of prayer of Saint Dominic**

The second way of prayer was for Saint Dominic to lie face down before the altar of God reciting the verse from Saint Luke's gospel (18:13): 'Lord be merciful to me a sinner.' It is said that Dominic taught the young friars that if they were unable to weep for their own sins that there were many in need of God's mercy



### **The third way of prayer of Saint Dominic**

Saint Dominic's third way of prayer was to perform penance by disciplining himself with an iron chain. The practice of this type of discipline may seem odd or extreme in our modern world but clearly self-discipline is needed and vital to mature spiritual growth.



### **The fourth way of prayer of Saint Dominic**

Saint Dominic had this fourth way of prayer that sees him remaining before the altar looking at the Cross with frequent genuflections. He had a deep confidence in the mercy of God for himself, for sinners and also for the young friars that he sent out to teach and preach.





**The fifth way of prayer of Saint Dominic**

Saint Dominic's fifth way of prayer was to stand before the altar in contemplation with the palms of his hands turned inwards. Then he would clasp his hands and raise them to his shoulders all the while in fervent prayer. Again, he taught the friars by his example of prayer. It is said of Dominic that when he was travelling on the road that he would steal away, and standing still utter a word from sacred scripture.



**The sixth way of prayer of Saint Dominic**

Saint Dominic often prayed with his arms outstretched in the form of a cross. He would often quote scripture appropriate to this posture: 'O Lord, the God of my salvation, I have cried in the day and night before you....' It is said that he practiced this method of prayer on special occasions and also this way of prayer is the one remembered when he restored the life of a young man in Rome.



**The seventh way of prayer of Saint Dominic**

Saint Dominic was often found standing erect stretching his whole body upwards with his hands joined and raised towards heaven. Often he would open his hands as though in receipt of

something. The friars would hear him praying aloud saying: 'Hear O God, the voice of my prayer when I pray to you, when I lift up my hands to your holy temple.' (Psalm 27)



### **The eighth way of prayer of Saint Dominic**

Saint Dominic's eighth way of prayer involved thoughtful reading of scripture or scripture commentary. He would lose himself both intellectually and emotionally in this reading, sometimes whispering questions posed in the text. When reading the Gospels, Dominic would sometimes lean forward, make the sign of the cross as if thanking God for some spiritual insight. He would often weep as if overcome with the beauty of the word of God.



### **The ninth way of prayer of Saint Dominic**

Saint Dominic practiced his ninth and final way of prayer while travelling, losing himself in prayer, meditation and contemplation as he walked.

This is a brief introduction to the 'Nine Ways'. They show Saint Dominic as one who was zealous in his prayer and who had a simple and ascetic lifestyle. He responded to physical discomfort by praising God and made austerity into a form of prayer. More than anything these nine ways of prayer of Saint Dominic points us to the fact that the pursuit of worldly things is futile and that the primary importance for Dominicans and all of humanity is our spiritual union with God.

Taken from the website of Irish Dominican Vocations [www.irishdominicanvocations.ie](http://www.irishdominicanvocations.ie)

## Appendix 2

### THE RULE OF THE DOMINICAN LAITY (BACKGROUND)

The Dominican Laity originated in its present form with the promulgation of the first Rule under Munio de Zamora, Master of the Order, in 1285. The spiritual origin of the Laity was in the penitential movements centred around St Dominic, who gathered around himself groups of the laity for the spiritual and material defence of the Church and for apostolic work. The Laity has existed, under various names, as long as the Dominican Order itself and has always performed specific functions and collaborated closely with the other branches of the Dominican Family.

There have been five Rules of the Dominican Laity since the foundation of the Order. The First was that promulgated by Munio de Zamora in 1285, for the "Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St Dominic". The Rule of Munio, slightly amended, received Papal approval in 1405. This Rule survived for centuries, serving the laity and being adopted for other branches of the Dominican Family.

The Second Rule, adapted to the new Code of Canon Law in 1917, was approved in 1923 under Master Louis Theissling, with the title: "Rule of the Secular Third Order of St. Dominic".

After Vatican II, the need was felt for a new Rule or an updating of the 1923 Rule; accordingly, the Third Rule was approved in 1964. However, the General Chapter of River Forest in 1968 proposed a Fourth Rule, which was promulgated by Master Aniceto Fernandez in 1969 and approved on an experimental basis by the Sacred Congregation for Religious in 1972 under the title: "Rule of the Lay Fraternities of St Dominic". With this title, reference to "Third Order" had disappeared, to be confirmed by legislation of the 1974 General Chapter abolishing such terms as First, Second or Third Order.

Finally, after the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law in 1983 and the "Bologna Document" on the Dominican Family in 1983, the General Chapter of Rome in 1983 commissioned the Master of the Order to hold an International Congress of the Dominican Laity in order to renew and adapt its Rule. The Congress was held in Montreal, Canada, in 1985 and a new Rule was prepared. This, the Fifth Rule, the "Statutes of Fraternities of Lay Dominicans", was approved by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes in January 1987 and promulgated by Master Damian Byrne on 28 January 1987.

The Dominican Laity is governed by these "Statutes of Fraternities of Lay Dominicans", by the General Declarations of the Master of the Order and General Chapters and by Provincial or national Directories, covering questions of local organisation and practice, as provided for in the Rule and the General Declarations. These Directories are prepared by the Laity in the local area and are submitted for approval to the pertinent authority (LCO 149).

**CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTES**



Prot. #D. 27-1-87

The Master General of the Order of Preachers on March 14, 1986, through the Procurator General, sent this Congregation the text of the Rule of the Lay Fraternities of Saint Dominic in order to obtain a definitive approval of the text.

After mature consideration and paying attention to the favourable vote of the Congress, this Congregation by force of the present decrees approves the text, of which there is an exemplary in the Archives of the Congregation, together with the corrections of the Congress presented in the letter sent with it. Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome on January 15, 1987.

Jerome Cardinal Hamer, OP,  
*Prefect*

Archbishop Vincent Fagiolo,  
*Secretary*

**CURIA GENERALIS ORDINIS PRAEDICATORUM**



**TO THE LAY FRATERNITIES OF SAINT DOMINIC**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord and Saint Dominic:

Joyfully I give you the text of the Rule of the Lay Fraternities of Saint Dominic, which has very recently (January 15, 1987) been definitively approved by the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes.

The text of the preceding Rule, promulgated by Father Aniceto Fernandez in 1969, was approved by the Holy See on an experimental basis. The General Chapter held in Rome in 1983 commissioned the Master General of the order to hold an international meeting of the Dominican Laity in order to renew and adapt the Rule of the Dominican Laity. This meeting, held in Montreal, Canada, June 24-29, 1985, produced the text which is now definitively approved.

Let this Rule be in your hearts and in your fraternities as a gospel ferment to nourish holiness and promote the apostolate together with the whole Dominican Family.

Greetings in the Lord.

Given at Rome, January 28, 1987, on the Feast of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

*Damian Byrne, OP*  
**Master of the Order**

## **THE RULE OF THE LAY FRATERNITIES OF SAINT DOMINIC**

*Translated by Fr Columba Ryan OP*

### **I. THE FUNDAMENTAL CONSTITUTION OF THE DOMINICAN LAITY**

#### **1. Laity In The Church**

Among the disciples of Christ, those men and women who live in the world are, by their baptism and confirmation, made sharers in the prophetic, priestly and royal offices of our Lord Jesus Christ. They have as their vocation to radiate the presence of Christ in the midst of the peoples so that the divine message of salvation be known and accepted everywhere by the whole of mankind. (Decree of Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, on the apostolate of the laity, paragraph 3).

#### **2. Dominican Laity**

Some among them are moved by the Holy Spirit to live according to the spirit and charism of Saint Dominic, and are incorporated into the Order by special commitment according to statutes of their own.

#### **3. Dominican Family**

They form communities and, together with other groups in the Order, make up one family (cf. *Constitutions of the Brethren*, 1. IX)

#### **4. Special Character of the Dominican Laity**

Hence they are marked out by the particular style of their spiritual life and of their service to God and to their neighbour in the Church. As members of the Order, they share its apostolic mission, by study, prayer and preaching in keeping with their state as members of the laity.

#### **5. Apostolic Mission**

Following the example of Saint Dominic, Saint Catherine of Siena and others of our forebears who were shining examples of the life of the Order and the Church, they draw strength from fraternal communion, above all to bear witness to the faith which is theirs, to be sensitive to the needs of people in the present, and to serve truth.

6. They pay careful attention to the principal objectives of the church's present-day apostolate, and feel a special compulsion to show real compassion for every form of distress, to defend freedom and to promote justice and peace.

7. Inspired by the Order's charism, they remember always that apostolic work springs from the fullness of contemplation.

### **II. LIFE OF THE FRATERNITIES**

#### **8. Life of the Fraternities**

They do their best to live in true community in the spirit of the beatitudes, and they give expression to this in regard to other members of the fraternity, particularly the poor and the sick, and as circumstances require, by doing works of mercy and sharing with them what

resources they may have, and by offering prayers for the dead, so that all may be united in heart and soul in God (Acts 4:32).

**9.** Together with the brothers and sisters of the Order the members of the fraternities take part in the apostolate; they are to share actively in the life of the Church, and be ever ready to work with other apostolic groups.

**10.** The principal sources from which the Lay Dominicans draw strength to go forward in a vocation which combines the contemplative and the apostolic in the closest union, are the following:

- a) hearing the divine word, and reading sacred scripture, especially the New Testament;
- b) as far as possible daily liturgical celebration and participation in the sacrifice of the Mass;
- c) regular celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation;
- d) celebration of the liturgical hours in union with the whole Dominican family, as well as private prayer such as meditation and the rosary;
- e) conversion of heart through the spirit and practice of the repentance demanded by the gospel;
- f) sustained study of revealed truth, and constant reflection on the problems-of the day in the light of faith;
- g) devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary according to the Order's tradition, and to our holy father Saint Dominic, and to Saint Catherine of Siena;
- h) spiritual retreats from time to time.

### **11. Formation**

The purpose of Dominican formation is to produce people truly adult in faith and so able to hear, celebrate and proclaim the Word of God. It belongs to each province to draw up a programme:

- a) for the gradual formation of beginners;
- b) for the on-going formation of everyone, including those who are isolated.

**12.** Every Dominican should be able to preach the Word of God. It is in this preaching that the prophetic office of the baptised Christian is exercised. In the present world the preaching of the Word of God implies especially the defence of human dignity. Promotion of Christian unity and dialogue with non-Christians and nonbelievers are part of the Dominican vocation.

**13.** The principle sources for a complete Dominican formation are these:

- a) the Word of God and theological reflection;
- b) liturgical prayer;
- c) history and tradition of the Order;
- d) contemporary documents of the Church and of the Order;
- e) understanding the signs of the times.

### **14. Profession or Commitment**

To be incorporated into the Order, members must make a profession or commitment by which they formally commit themselves to live according to the spirit of Saint Dominic and in the manner prescribed by the rule. Profession or commitment is either temporary or final. In making profession the following form, or one substantially the same, is to be used: "In honour of almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of Saint Dominic, I, N/N, in the presence of you, N/N, President of this Fraternity, and of you, N/N,

Religious Promoter, representing the Master of the Order of Preachers, promise to live according to the rule of the Laity of Saint Dominic (for three years)/(for my whole life)."

### **III. ORGANISATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE FRATERNITIES**

**15.** The Fraternity is the best nurturing ground and growth-point for each member's dedication to his/her vocation. Frequency of meetings will vary from one Fraternity to another. Regularity of attendance is the measure of each member's fidelity.

**16.** The admission of new members will follow the prescriptions of the directory in regard to the qualifications of candidates and the time factor. It is the responsibility of the lay-person in charge of the Fraternity first to take a decisive vote of the Fraternity Council, then, with the Religious Promoter, to proceed to the reception of the candidate in whatever rite is laid down by the Directory.

**17.** After the period of probation laid down by the directory, and with the vote of the Fraternity Council, the lay person in charge, together with the Religious Promoter, will receive the candidate's temporary or final profession.

#### **18. Jurisdiction of the Order and Autonomy of the Fraternities**

Lay fraternities are subject to the jurisdiction of the Order; but they enjoy the autonomy proper to the laity by which they are self ruling.

#### **19. At Order Level**

- a) The Master of the Order, as successor to Saint Dominic and head of the whole Dominican family, presides over all fraternities in the world. It is his task to maintain intact in them the spirit of the Order, to establish practical rules according to the demands of time and place, and to promote the spiritual good and the apostolic zeal of members.
- b) The Promoter General represents the Master of the Order for all fraternities, and submits their proposals to the Master of the Order at the General Chapter.

#### **20. At Provincial Level**

- a) The Prior Provincial presides over the fraternities within the territorial limits of his province, and, with the consent of the local bishop, establishes new fraternities.
- b) The Provincial Promoter (brother or sister) represents the Prior Provincial, and is a member of the Provincial Lay Council with full rights. He/she is appointed by the Provincial Chapter, or by the Prior Provincial with his Council, after the Provincial Lay Council of the Dominican Laity has been consulted.
- c) A Provincial Lay Council is to be established in a province. Its members are elected by the fraternities, and it is regulated by the rules laid down in the Directory. It belongs to this Council to elect a Provincial President.

#### **21. At Fraternity Level**

- a) A local fraternity is governed by a President with his/her Council. They are fully responsible for the government and administration of the fraternity.
- b) The Council is elected for the length of time and in the manner laid down by the particular directories. The President is elected by the Councillors from the members of the Council.
- c) The Religious Promoter (brother or sister) helps the members in doctrinal matters and in the spiritual life. He/she is appointed by the Prior Provincial after consulting with the provincial Promoter and the local Lay Council.



## **22. National and International Council**

- a) Where there are several provinces of the Order within one national boundary, a National Council may be established, according to the rules laid down in particular directories.
- b) Similarly there can be an International Council if it is deemed useful after consultation with the fraternities of the whole Order.

**23.** The Councils of the fraternities can send proposals and petitions to the Provincial Chapter of the Friars Preachers; and likewise Provincial and National Councils to a General Chapter. Some who carry responsibilities in the fraternities should be invited and welcomed to such chapters, to treat of matters which concern the laity.

## **24. Statutes of the Fraternities**

The statutes governing the Lay Fraternities of Saint Dominic are:

- a) The Rule of the Fraternities (fundamental constitution of the Dominican Laity, Rules of Life, Administration of Fraternities);
- b) General Declarations of the Master or of General Chapters;
- c) Particular Directories.

## **GENERAL DECLARATIONS**

**1.** The statutes by which the chapters of the Dominican Laity are governed is the basic law for all chapters in the world. The General Declarations which are promulgated by the General Chapter are explanations and interpretations of the statutes. The Constitutions, either provincial or national, which are prepared by the promoters and the laity and approved by the Master of the Order, are particular norms for a territory (cf Mexico City 1992, n. 201).

**2.** Whereas the members embrace their obligations "not as slaves under the law, but as free men under grace", it is here declared that individual transgressions do not constitute a moral fault.

**3.** Superiors of Chapters, i.e., Chaplain, President, or Council, as appropriate in each case, may legitimately dispense from individual regulations of the statutes of Constitutions, either temporarily or permanently, if this seems suitable.

**4.** Provincials have power to validate invalid acts of a chapter, especially about admission to profession.

**5.** Besides chapters of the laity, to which the present Rule applies, there are chapters of priests which are governed by special norms.

**6.** Individual Constitutions should determine, among other matters:

- a. the requirements for admission to a chapter;
- b. the length of time for probation and profession;
- c. the frequency for the sacraments and the daily prayers to be said by members;
- d. the frequency and character of chapter meetings and occasions for spiritual renewal;
- e. the organisation within a chapter and between the chapters of a Province or a nation;
- f. the method of electing all officials, except for those matters already determined in the Rule;

## Dominican Black Abbey of the Most Holy Trinity, Kilkenny, Lay Chapter

g. the method for, and limitations on, dispensations;

h. the prayers to be offered for deceased members and for the whole Order.

**7.** The Rosary, which leads to a familiar contemplation of the mysteries of Christ under the guidance of Mary, is a traditional devotion in the Order. Dominican Laity are strongly encouraged to pray it daily.

**Appendix 3**

**Sample letter of request for admission**

Address:

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Date:

To:  
Chapter Council  
Lay Dominican Chapter  
Dominican Black Abbey  
Kilkenny

Dear Brothers and Sisters

I \_\_\_\_\_ having discerned, studied, participated at and been an Inquirer/Postulant in the Black Abbey Lay Dominican Chapter, formally request to be considered for admission and formation as a Novice into the Lay Fraternities of St Dominic.

Yours Sincerely

in Christ and Saint Dominic

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