

## ***PART I***

### **INFORMATION FROM THE LAITY OFFICE AT ROME**

Dear Sisters and Brothers in St. Dominic - and all those who are interested in being informed about the Statutes governing Lay Dominican Fraternities/Chapters!

Several years ago, my predecessor, Fr. Jerry L. Stookey, O.P., asked Fr. Columba Ryan, O.P. to convoke a team of Latinists of the English Province of Dominican friars to prepare an English translation of the Rule of Lay Fraternities of Saint Dominic. Important differences in the translation of the text have been experienced around the world, hence it was necessary to have as literal a translation from the Latin as possible.

The original text in Latin was published in the *Analecta* of the Order, 1987, pp.82-87. Owing to an error, Article 2 of Paragraph 12 of the approved final text of the Rule was omitted. Lay Dominican Provincial Chapters of English-speaking countries, with the approbation of their prior provincials, have the right to produce a modified translation when the language pattern used in their particular country differs from this 'British' English version. It is imperative to adhere strictly to the concept of the original Latin of the Rule, approved by the Holy See on January 15, 1987.

The Rule was drawn up two years before by the International Congress of Lay Dominican Fraternities, Montreal, June, 1985. As Lay Dominican Fraternities/Chapters are integrated to the Order of Preachers via the friars, they pertain not to the Pontifical Council of the Laity as do "associations of the faithful" but to the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes. This Rule declares (§ 24) that it has to be observed together with the General Declarations, approved by the Master of the Order and his Council and of the General Chapters, as well as national or provincial Directories adapted to local requirements, approved by the provincial authorities.

Lay Dominican Fraternities/Chapters should not regard the Statutes from a solely juridical aspect but as an aid to inspire the Lay Dominicans' vocation as preachers of God's love and mercy for his creation, in union with the other branches of our Order. To "Release the Fullness of our Preaching – catching Fire from Dominic's Vision" – the motto of the time of jubilee commemorating the 800th anniversary of the foundation of the Order of Preachers – the following texts may be a continuous helpful guideline!

Rome, Feast of the Holy Rosary, October 2007

Fr. David Michael Kammler, OP

*Promoter General of Dominican Laity*

## ***PART II***

### **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).

*from: <http://www.australia.op.org/>*

**PART III**

**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*

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**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*

**PART V**

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

**I. THE FUNDAMENTAL CONSTITUTION FOR THE DOMINICAN LAITY**

***Laity in the Church***

*Paragraph 1*

1. Among the disciples of Christ, men and women living in the world, have in virtue of Baptism and Confirmation, been made sharers in the prophetic, priestly and royal office of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They are called to this so that Christ's presence may be brought to life in the midst of peoples and that "the divine message of salvation be made known and accepted by all people throughout the world". (*Vatican Council II, Apostolicam actuositatem, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 4, par. 3*).

***Dominican Laity***

*Paragraph 2*

2. Some of them, moved by the Holy Spirit to live a life according to the spirit and charism of Saint Dominic, are incorporated into the Order by a special promise according to statutes proper to them.

***Dominican Family***

*Paragraph 3*

3. They are united in communities, and they constitute with other groups of the Order, one Family. (*Book of the Constitutions and Ordinations of the Friars of the Order of Preachers, LCO, 141*)

***Special Character of the Dominican Laity***

*Paragraph 4*

4. They are accordingly marked out both by their own kind of spiritual life and by their service to God and neighbour in the Church. As members of the Order, they share its apostolic mission, by study, prayer and preaching according to the state proper to lay persons.

***Apostolic Mission***

*Paragraph 5*

5. They follow the example of Saint Dominic, Saint Catherine of Siena and our forbears who illumined the life of the Order and the Church, and strengthened by their fraternal communion, bear witness above all to their own faith, listen to the needs of their contemporaries, and serve the truth.

*Paragraph 6*

6. They pay careful attention to the principal goals of the church's present-day apostolate, driven in a special way to show real compassion to all who are troubled, to defend liberty and to promote justice and peace.

*Paragraph 7*

7. Inspired by the charism of the Order, they are mindful that apostolic activity comes out of an abundance of contemplation.

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

### ***Life of the Fraternities***

*Paragraph 8*

8. They are, to the best of their ability, to live in true fraternal communion inspired by the beatitudes, and to express this in all circumstances by exercising the works of mercy and by sharing what they have with members of the fraternities, especially the poor and the sick; by offering suffrages for the deceased; so that that all may ever have one heart and one mind in God. (*Acts, 4:32*).

*Paragraph 9*

9. Whilst taking part in the apostolate with the brothers and sisters of the Order, members of the fraternities are to share actively in the life of the Church, always prepared to work with other apostolic associations.

*Paragraph 10*

10. The following are the chief sources from which the lay members of Saint Dominic draw strength to advance in their proper vocation, which combines at one and the same time the contemplative and the apostolic:

- a. listening to the Word of God and reading the Sacred Scripture, especially the New Testament;
- b. daily participation (as far as possible) in the celebration of the liturgy and participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice;
- c. frequent celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation;
- d. celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours in union with the entire Dominican Family, as well as prayer in private, such as meditation and the Marian Rosary;
- e. conversion of heart according to the spirit and practice of evangelical penance;
- f. assiduous study of revealed truth and constant reflection on contemporary problems under the light of faith;
- g. devotion to the blessed Virgin Mary, according to the tradition of the Order, to our holy father Saint Dominic and to Saint Catherine of Siena;
- h. periodic spiritual retreats.

### ***Formation***

*Paragraph 11*

11. The purpose of Dominican formation is to provide for true adults in the Faith, so that they may be ready to welcome, celebrate and proclaim the Word of God.

It belongs to each province to draw up a program:

- a. whether of progressive formation for beginners;
- b. or of permanent formation for all, even for members living apart from a fraternity.

*Paragraph 12*

12. Every Dominican must be prepared to preach the Word of God. It is in this preaching that Christians, baptised and strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation, exercise the prophetic office.

In today's world, the preaching of the Word of God must extend in a special way to defending the dignity of the human person, as well as life and the family. Promoting Christian unity and dialogue with non-Christians and non-believers is also part of the Dominican vocation.<sup>1</sup>

*Paragraph 13*

13. These are the principal sources to advance Dominican formation:

- a. the Word of God and theological reflection;
- b. liturgical prayer;
- c. the history and tradition of the Order;
- d. more recent documents of the Church and the Order;
- e. awareness of the signs of our times.

***Profession or Promise***

*Paragraph 14*

14. In order to be incorporated into the Order, members are bound to make profession, that is a promise in which they formally promise to live a life according to the spirit of Saint Dominic and the way of life prescribed by the Rule.

This profession or promise is either temporary or perpetual.

The following or a substantially similar formula is to be used for making profession:

**To the honour of almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of Saint Dominic, I, \_\_\_ \_\_\_, promise before you \_\_\_ \_\_\_, the President of this Fraternity/Chapter, and \_\_\_ \_\_\_, the Religious Assistant, in place of the Master of the Order of Friars Preachers, that I will live according to the Rule of the Laity of Saint Dominic [for three years] or [for my entire life].**

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

*Paragraph 15*

15. The Fraternity is the suitable means for the dedication of each person to the nourishment and growth of his or her own vocation. The frequency of meetings differs with fraternities. Each member's fidelity is indicated by his or her assiduity.

*Paragraph 16*

16. The admission of candidates, given that the prescriptions of the `Directory in regard to the state of persons and the time for admission have been observed, is committed to the lay person responsible, who after having taken a decisive vote of the Council of the Fraternity, proceeds with the Religious Assistant to the reception of the candidate in a rite determined by the Directory.

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<sup>1</sup> *Note: By a mistake this paragraph 12 in its second part is missing from Analecta SOP 1987 pp. 82-87, but substantial part of the only official Latin version approved by the Holy See on January 15, 1987 – Prot. #D.27-1-87*

*Paragraph 17*

17. After the time of probation determined by the Directory and with a favorable vote of the Council of the Fraternity, the lay person responsible, together with the Religious Assistant, receives the profession, either temporary or perpetual.

***Jurisdiction of the Order and Autonomy of the Fraternities***

*Paragraph 18*

18. Lay Fraternities are under the jurisdiction of the Order; however, they enjoy that autonomy proper to the laity, by which they may govern themselves.

***(In the Whole Order)***

*Paragraph 19*

19. a. The Master of the Order, as successor of Saint Dominic and head of the entire Dominican Family, presides over all the fraternities in the world. It is his responsibility to preserve the integral spirit of the Order in them, to establish practical norms in accordance with the needs of specific times and places and to promote the spiritual good and apostolic zeal of the members.

b. The Promoter General represents the Master of the Order for all the fraternities, and transmits their desires to the Master or the General Chapter.

***(In the Province)***

*Paragraph 20*

20. 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 by right (*pleno iure*) a member of the Provincial Lay Council. 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 heard.

c) A Provincial Council of the Laity of Saint Dominic is to be established in the territory of the province. Its members are elected by the fraternities and are regulated according to the norms defined by the Directory. It belongs to this Council to elect a provincial President.

***(Governance in Fraternities)***

*Paragraph 21*

21. a) A local Fraternity is governed by a President with his or her Council, who assume the full responsibility for direction and administration.

b) The Council is elected for a specific time and in the manner established by particular Directories. The President is elected by the councillors from among the members of the Council.

c) The Religious Assistant (brother or sister) assists members in doctrinal matters and the spiritual life. He or she is nominated by the Prior Provincial, after he has first heard the Provincial Promoter and the local Laity Council.

*(National and International Councils)*

*Paragraph 22*

a) Where there are several Provinces of the Order within the territory of the same nation, a National Council can be instituted, according to the norms established by particular Directories.

b) An International Council can be formed in a similar way if it seems opportune, after the fraternities of the entire Order have been consulted.

*Paragraph 23*

23. Fraternity Councils can send their proposals and petitions to a Provincial Chapter of the Friars Preachers; Provincial and National Councils to a General Chapter. To these Chapters some representative members of the fraternities are to be readily invited for treating matters which concern the laity.

*Statutes of the Fraternities*

*Paragraph 24*

24. The statutes proper to the lay fraternities of St Dominic are:

- a. The Rule of the Fraternities (Fundamental Constitution of the OP Laity, the norms of life, the governance of the fraternities)
- b. General Declarations, whether of the Master of the Order, or of General Chapters.
- c. Particular Directories

To complete the legislative work concerning the Lay Fraternities of St. Dominic, we approve and promulgate the following 'General Declarations of the Rule of the Lay Fraternities of Saint Dominic' by the authority which we hold. Thus the observance of the Rule shall be attained more easily and with greater spiritual fruitfulness.

Given at Rome, on February 16, 1987

Fr. Damian Byrne, O.P.  
*Master of the Order*

Fr. J.Martin, O.P.  
*Secretary*



## General Declarations of the rule of the lay fraternities of St Dominic<sup>2</sup>

1. The Rule by which the lay fraternities of St Dominic are governed, is the fundamental law for lay fraternities of the whole world; the present General Declarations, promulgated by the Master of the Order, are explanations or interpretations of the aforementioned Rule: national or provincial Directories drawn up by the fraternities themselves *and approved by the Master of the Order*,<sup>3 + 4</sup> are norms particular to local fraternities.
2. So that lay brethren and sisters may fulfil their obligations “not like slaves under the law but like free persons under grace” we declare that transgressions do not constitute a moral fault.
3. Superiors of fraternities can legitimately dispense from the prescriptions of the Rule or Directory, for a time or habitually, if they judge this opportune.
4. Priors Provincial have the power to convalidate invalid acts of a Fraternity, particularly regarding admissions to profession or a promise.
5. In addition to lay Fraternities for which this Rule is intended, there are priestly Fraternities which are governed by a rule proper to them.
6. Individual Directories should determine among other things:
  - a. conditions for admission to a Fraternity;
  - b. the time for probation and profession or promise;
  - c. the frequency of Sacraments, and the prayers which the lay brethren and sisters should each day raise to God;
  - d. the frequency of fraternity meetings and the form of their celebration, also the frequency of spiritual retreats;
  - e. both the internal constitution of each fraternity and the common constitution of the fraternities of a province or country;
  - f. the procedural manner of election of those officers about whom there is found nothing determined in the Rule;
  - g. the manner and limitation of dispensation;
  - h. suffrages for deceased brothers and sisters and for the whole Order.
7. The Rosary is a traditional devotion in the Order. By it the mind is raised to an intimate contemplation of the mysteries of Christ through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Therefore its daily recitation is commended to the lay brethren and sisters of St Dominic.

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from *Analecta SOP* 1987 p. 88

<sup>3</sup> Modified by Ordination of the 1992 General Chapter (Mexico), no. 201: “We ordain that the Directories of the Dominican Laity, national or provincial, should be approved by the corresponding Provincial Chapter(s) of the Province(s) in which these entities are established”

<sup>4</sup> Also modified by Ordination of the 2007 General Chapter (Bogotá), no. 244: “We ordain that the Directories of the Dominican Laity, national or provincial, should be approved by the Provincial with his Council in the Province(s) in which these entities are established.