

## LETTER OF PROMULGATION

My dear Brothers in St. Dominic,

We have celebrated a General Chapter in Caleruega, the place of St. Dominic's birth, but also the place that he dared to leave behind as he set out on that adventure which was the preaching of the gospel and the foundation of the Order. Our Chapter was indeed a celebration of the gospel we are called to preach and of the fraternity we share, but it was also an invitation to us to follow our brother Dominic's example and to set out on the renewal of the Order, not knowing in advance what this will demand of us.

The Chapter began with three days of open debate on a variety of topics, organised after a wide consultation with the Order and the capitulars. A dossier of the papers presented during the first days will be prepared by the General Secretariat of the Order and distributed to all Provincials, Vice provincials and Vicars General. In the light of these debates, Commissions were established responding to the most important concerns of the Chapter. During the second week, these Commissions met and prepared presentations for open debate in the plenary. This enabled the whole Chapter to contribute to the preparation of texts prior to the formal process of their emendation and votation.

It was widely agreed by the capitulars that the principal aim of this Chapter should not be the production of more long documents that attempt exhaustive analyses of every aspect of the life and work of the Order. Recent Chapters have produced excellent documents that we do not need to repeat. I would therefore ask you to resist the common Dominican temptation to judge the Acts of this Chapter by what they omit rather than to respond to what they do say.

Caleruega was the home of our brother Dominic, and it was a place in which we all found ourselves at home, welcomed by the people and invited to their homes. Our sense of being at home was especially deepened by the welcome that we received from the nuns of

the monastery of Caleruega, with whom we prayed every day, with whom we sang and danced in their cloister and who worked hard in many ways to help the work of the Chapter.

It was therefore appropriate that one of the dominant themes of the Chapter was the need for us to deepen our awareness that our identity as Dominicans does not derive ultimately from our membership of a local community or a Province, but of the Order. We are not a federation of Provinces, for it is the Order which is our home. If we are to be loyal to our charism, then we must meet challenges that few Provinces can face alone. If we are to preach the gospel in new places, strengthen the presence of the Order in Asia and the Soviet Union, bring the Order to birth in Africa, establish new centres of theological reflection, enter into dialogue with other religions, then we need to respond as an Order, transcending the narrow identities of nation or Province. The Commission *De Politica Oeconomica Ordinis* explored some of the consequences of this. The promotion of our common mission and the birth of the Order in new places demands a real redistribution of resources.

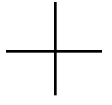
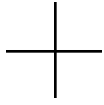
The Chapter also constantly returned to the necessity of deepening cooperation within the wider Dominican Family, and I wish to thank the nuns, sisters and laity who attended the Chapter and made such an important contribution to our debates.

Caleruega was the place from which Dominic departed, the home he left behind. A second and related theme of the Chapter was that of itineracy. If we are to renew the Order for the next millennium, then we must be mobilized, mobile friars, ready to move. This is a theme which reoccurs in so many of the documents of the Chapter. We must be mobile within our Provinces and among the Provinces, mobile of body and also mobile of heart and mind. We must, like Dominic, leave our homes, our families, beloved communities, projects which are dear to us, so that we may do what Christ demands of us now.

Dominic left Caleruega to become a poor preacher, and the urgency of rediscovering his poverty emerged as a third dominant theme of the Chapter debates. I am profoundly convinced that unless we rediscover Dominic's poverty, then we will not know his joy and liberty.

The final theme which surfaced as central to the Chapter was that of dialogue. The first school of this dialogue is our own communities, and the Commission *De Vita Communi Fraterna* stressed the importance of learning to live with each other in openness and honesty, in the taking of decisions, in our use of money, in facing conflicts and failure, and in that most delicate area of our affectivity. But such fraternal life prepares us for and sustains us in the many other challenges to dialogue which are central to our preaching: with those with whom we disagree over theological issues, with those who are alienated from the Church, with the members of other religions and none.

We have indeed celebrated a Chapter, and the joy of its celebration was largely due to the enthusiastic and joyful service given by so many members of the Province of Spain who were our hosts. I especially thank the Provincial, Juan José de León Lastra for the generosity of the Province; the general secretary, Bernardo Fueyo Suárez, and his assistant, Salustiano Mateos Gómara, for their calm and efficient dedication to the work of the Chapter; the Administrator, Francisco Faragó, and José Luis Alcalde Revilla and Sister Inmaculada Egues for their preparation of such creative liturgy that was a constant source of renewal for the members of the Chapter. I wish to thank all the translators, who engaged in the endless struggle to make sense of the speeches of the brethren, and the prior and community of Caleruega who made us at home. Above all I wish to thank all those many Spanish brethren who served the Chapter in so many different ways, but who above all welcomed us as their brothers and sisters.



Given at Santa Sabina, Rome, on the 8th September 1995, the Feast  
of the Birth of Our Lady.

Your brother in St. Dominic

Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, OP  
Master of the Order

Prot. num. 50/95/1694

