

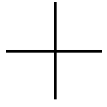
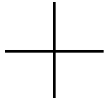
MESSAGE

The first impression does not deceive. In view of this we would like to share with you the lived experience of this Chapter from its first moments, in Caleruega, just two steps away from where Saint Dominic was born. We invite you to celebrate the vitality of our Order with us, an Order that is so old and always new: new projects, older brothers and young ones launching out into new areas and immersed in new situations, the rising force of Africa, urgent calls in Asia, brave beginnings in Eastern and Central Europe, inculturation in the Americas, the opening of our old Western European provinces to a new flowering world.

The lamentations of the wise and prudent found no echo among us, in a world which has suffered too many changes to remain true to old and proven values. We would rather see ourselves at the side of the small and the simple, finding joy in their many expectations, being spurred on by the challenges of a new society stirred up by a mysterious wind. Who knows where it comes from or where it goes? What is certain is that its breath nurtures us and whispers a known voice in our ears: the voice of Someone who calls us to life, and who sends us out to announce it.

To hear and listen to this word, analyze it, identify it, and then name it, proclaim it, propose it, is and will continue to be our service in the Church as Preachers of the Good News of the salvation offered to all.

Let us run along the roads then! Better still, let us open up new roads, learning to die to the roads that have been smoothed over a thousand times, in order to be born to the way that makes us neighbors to those we left far behind. The longing for itinerancy in order to go out of oneself, and merciful, to open our hearts to the misery of those who are excluded, marginalized, of those who are not of our tribe; a thirst for dialogue with men and women who seek truth; this is how we want the sons and daughters of Dominic, thinking of our



Saviour who is the Way and the Truth. And that burning desire for life for everyone, even giving up one's life and not only material goods, but loving poverty so that, naked, we can preach a naked Christ.

We carry this treasure in fragile vessels. Are we not, each and every one of us, wounded and vulnerable beings? But in our weakness the strength of God is revealed, this God who called us to be a community of brothers where one is welcomed, counseled, forgiven, questioned, celebrated and sent to men and women of today's world, whose happiness and salvation is the passion of the Preachers of the Gospel.

This is what we feel and we say it to you. This is what we define, and by which we are defined, members of the Dominican family, all born in Caleruega from where our common Father Dominic de Guzman blesses us.

Caleruega, August 8, 1995

