

CHAPTER VI

DOMINICAN FAMILY

Prologue

92. As members of the Dominican Family, we accept the invitation of the General Chapter in Mexico, which in number 11 of its Acts, asks us to direct “an attentive reading and mature reflection” of the documents written about the Dominican Family. It seems to us, after analysis of the events of recent years, that the time has come where we might propose more concrete steps to both ourselves and to the other members of the Dominican Family.

In fact, over the last 30 years “we have noticed the recovery and development of an old reality: that of the Dominican Family (Mexico, 116) in such a way that at the present moment many strengths or positive results show a desire to see the men and women in a single, world-wide organization which discovers in St. Dominic a model and inspiration to proclaim together the good news of Christ Jesus to today’s world.”

We consider among our recent achievements: the various teachings that have been affirmed by General Chapters, historical investigations, letters from the Master of the Order and through studies and publications by the sisters and laity in magazines, days of reflection, journals on Dominican life, congresses and seminars; and in some parts of the world, visible signs of organization.

While these efforts are very encouraging, the Dominican Family still remains a dream or an ideal to many people. The partially attained collaboration between the different branches of the Dominican Family has not grown in proportion to expectations if we consider the lived reality in some areas or countries. We note that the friars are not sufficiently prepared for working in collaboration with the sisters and the laity.

The General Chapter of Mexico noted this: “authentic collaboration cannot be realized without planning” (116). In fact, utopia and doctrine will not bring commitment as long as they do not express their “spiritual and moral” basis (Madonna dell’Arco, 225) in a larger organization that shows in which areas all its members enjoy equality in proposals, decisions and actions.

PROPOSAL

93. In order that the Dominican Family might develop a greater consistency in its identity and mission, it should produce its own organizational project, with the participation and commitment of “friars, nuns, sisters of active life, members of secular institutes and fraternities of priests and laity” (LCO 1, IX).

In recent years, we have witnessed signs of a process of an international organization in some branches of the Dominican Family: the International Commission of Nuns, the International Movement of Dominican Sisters, the European Congress of Lay Dominicans. In Latin America, where the Dominican Family is strongly present, instances of coordination between the various branches can be seen, as in the case of joint meetings between CODAL and CIDAL. Here and in other areas there are secretariats for the Dominican Family.

Bearing in mind these experiences, we set as an objective that within six years, the first General Assembly of the Dominican Family will be convoked by the Master of Order, as a source of unity, with the agreement of the representatives of the other branches of the Dominican Family. At this occasion, the representatives of all the previously organized branches of the Dominican Family, will be able to jointly study proposals that might foster common projects with regard to formation, collaboration and action.

In order to attain this goal, we suggest that the Dominican Family initiate a process that will allow it first to receive and study this proposal of the General Chapter of Caleruega. Such a reflection should reinforce already existing local or regional centers of coordination

among the distinct branches, and create them where there are none yet. Once this is done, better forms of organization and representation to the General Assembly of the Dominican Family can be set up.

It is only then, at this level of organization, that we shall be able to answer most of the questions concerning the Dominican Family.

As it follows this path, the Dominican Family will continue with its style of collaboration, and the sense of belonging to the charism of St. Dominic as it has until today, empowering them and broadening their participation in assemblies and meetings at different levels; and, at the same time, each member and each branch will be aware of deepening their own identity, as well as their own commitment with the common mission of the Dominican Family.

Let us go forward on this road with St. Dominic, thinking of Christ our Lord.

PETITION

94. We ask the Master of the Order to institute an Assistant for the Dominican Family.

RECOMMENDATIONS

95. We recommend that the delegate of the Master of Order, for the nuns and the International Commission of Nuns:

- a) propose to the Master of the Order the nun's number of representatives at General Chapters and their manner of selection,
- b) study the participation of the representation of the nuns in the decisions of the General Chapters directly related to nuns and monasteries, and in the election of the Master of the Order.

96. We recommend that the Assistant of the Master of the Order for the Dominican Family count among his tasks:

- a) to promote among the brothers the proposal that this Chapter makes about the Dominican Family and its projection into the future;
- b) to coordinate with the delegates or representatives of the other branches whatever has to do with the life, mission and organization of the Dominican Family.

EXHORTATIONS

97. Inspired by the growing role that the laity, and particularly women, are filling in ecclesiastical life, we appeal to our brethren to:

- a) pay special attention to the laity in the Dominican Family, both in promoting them and encouraging their growth in the charism and mission of the Order.
- b) to support those friars who are able to create a sense of welcome and organization for youth movements with a Dominican inspiration.
- c) to explicitly encourage the charism and vocation of the Order among youth, associating them with our mission, and if suitable, with a temporary commitment.
- d) to accompany young people in the discernment and process of their definitive incorporation into the Dominican Family.