



Rome, the 20th June 2017

*To the priors provincial, the prioresses of the Dominican monasteries,
the international officials of the Lay Fraternities, the Priestly Fraternities,
the Dominican Secular Institutes and the Dominican Youth Movement,
as well as the general Superiors of the Apostolic Dominican Congregations*

***Letter of invitation to engage in the preparatory dynamic
of the Synod convened by Pope Francis on the theme
« young people, the faith and vocational discernment »***

Prot 50/17/383 Letters to the Order

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Saint Dominic,

As you know, Pope Francis has convened a Synod of Bishops on the theme « Young people, the faith and vocational discernment ». It is to meet in October 2018. With this letter, addressing myself to the respective superiors, I would like to invite the whole Order, brothers, nuns, laity, sisters and members of the Dominican family to take part in the process of preparation of this Synod, thus responding to the Pope's invitation to all young people (16 to 29 years) to prepare this Synod with him.

This letter is part of the perspective opened up by the conclusions of the Congress that closed the Jubilee (Rome, 18-21 January 2017; cf. Letter of 25 March 2017, *Prot 50/17/225 Letters_of_the_Order*). The latter had in fact identified the theme of the worlds of young people as one of those which, in the dynamic of the renewal of the preaching mission of the Order, should be a priority and could be the opportunity to renew our preaching by strengthening collaboration within the Dominican Family.

The call for a synodal approach devoted to evangelization

The Synod of 2018 is part of the dynamic opened by the one dedicated to « the new evangelization and the transmission of the faith », after which Pope Francis promulgated the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, followed by the two synods devoted to the theme of « The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world ». This dynamic calls particularly for the attention of our Order, which is entirely devoted to the evangelization of the Word of God according to the terms of the bull of Pope Honorius III of 4 February 1221.

That is why, as soon as the theme of the Synod was known, I requested an audience with Cardinal Baldisseri, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, which I attended with brother Orlando Rueda, *socius* for the Apostolic Life. This was the occasion for a first briefing about the preparation of this Synod, in which the Cardinal had told us that all were invited to participate, particularly young people themselves. Since then, the preparatory

document has been published ¹. During the presentation of this document to the press, this invitation to young people was strongly underlined: it is not just a matter of asking oneself how to accompany young people in the discernment of their choice of life in the light of the Gospel, but also to listen to their desires and the projects they have for their lives, at the same time as the difficulties they may encounter in their project to serve society in an active way. In his letter to young people, Pope Francis, citing the monastic Rule of Saint Benedict (Rule III, 3), recalled that this listening is part of the tradition of the Church and has a theological character.

Beyond the Christian dimension of its themes, the document insists on the fact that the aim of the Synod is to meet with all young people, believers and non-believers, close to the Church or not, insisting that all are called to live and to love, just as all are waiting for accompaniment in their choices about their lives.

At the May meeting of the General Council, General Promoters and the Coordinator of DSI (such a meeting is held on the occasion of each plenary session of the Council), we invited Mgr Fabio Fabene from the Permanent Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops who presented us with the process of preparation of the Synod, marked by three steps: listen to young people, interpret the facts from the point of view of discernment and vocation, open paths for moving forward together. Initially, the conferences of bishops and the conferences of religious were invited to respond to the questionnaire proposed in the preparatory document. In June, a web site will be opened, offering the possibility to young people themselves to take an active part in this « enquiry ». It is from all these responses that a working document will be drafted to constitute the basis of the Synod's reflections.

During this meeting, Mgr Fabene stressed two topics on which, in his opinion, the Dominican tradition could especially make its contribution: identify what in the Gospel and in the tradition of the Church could attract the young people of today; identify, from the richness and diversity of our apostolic or professional commitments in the world of young people, the means by which they can more easily be reached.

A Synod with young people: a project for the Dominican communion of preaching

In response to this synodal invitation, it seemed appropriate to seize the opportunity of this Synod to activate this line of apostolic commitment indicated by our recent Congress as a priority in the dynamic of strengthening the Dominican Family through preaching itself. It is in this spirit that I am now proposing that we give priority to this theme for the coming years.

In fact, the Congress for the mission of the Order celebrated at the end of the Jubilee Year highlighted on the one hand the very large number of brothers, sisters and laity of the Order engaged in the worlds of young people (the educational world, the academic world, social work, attention to unsettled places in the world where young people are often the first victims...) and on the other hand the fact that these various commitments undoubtedly open up many possibilities for further strengthening collaboration and unity within the whole Order and Dominican family. In addition, our various apostolic commitments allow us to perceive very clearly how young people, in all their diversity throughout the world, are among the first to reveal the very great changes that are affecting societies and cultures today: difficulties of transmission, interculturality which shapes individuals as well as communities, concern and enthusiasm for the future, a necessary reorganization of democratic processes so that everyone has a « voice in the chapter » when it comes to preparing the shared world offered to all, aspiration to a greater and more powerful communion between individuals and nations...

For all these reasons, at a time when reflection on the renewal of evangelization holds the full attention of the Church, it seems to me that it is also a good opportunity, and all together, to activate this specific message that the Order of Saint Dominic wishes to bring to the heart of the Church: that the Church becomes what it is when it positions itself in the act

¹ Version multilingue du document : http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/index.htm

of proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, in a « permanent state of preaching », one might say. Applying this conviction within the worlds of young people, it seems to me that the Order could make a really significant and specific contribution to the synodal dynamic opened up by Pope Francis.

It is in this context that I am writing to you today, in order to invite all the members of the Order to take part in this contribution in the next synod. We therefore make several proposals.

We ask the priors provincial, the prioresses of the Dominican monasteries, the international officials of the Lay Fraternities, the Priestly Fraternities, the Dominican Secular Institutes and the Dominican Youth Movement, as well as the general Superiors of the Apostolic Dominican Congregations, to transmit this invitation to those of our sisters and brothers who are apostolically engaged with young people between 16 and 29 years of age. The objective is to promote among these young people their own participation in this synodal process.

To preach, with young people

Here are a few steps that I propose to you so that the brothers, sisters or laity mentioned above can take part in this « project of the Dominican Family ».

1/ invite (and promote) the young people with whom they are engaged to acquaint themselves with the preparatory document, to participate in gatherings and reflections on this theme in their respective local Churches, and to contribute to the proposals that will be made to prepare the working document of the synod so that the reality of the hopes and concerns of young people is present in the final reflection of the Synod. To this effect, a site should be open during the month of June, inviting all young people to take part in the reflection.

2/ In this participation, I invite you to be particularly keen on implementing the commitment of the Order to listening to the Word of God, the rooting of reflection in Tradition, the search for the truth in dialogue with others who seek knowledge, compassion towards the appeals that come from the disturbed places of the world, the desire for the salvation of the world. From this point of view, it will be important to take account of the numerous experiences of brothers and sisters with young people who are obliged to live in situations of great precariousness and vulnerability in so many places in the world.

3/ on the site opened by the Secretariat of the Synod, young people will have complete latitude in responding to the questionnaire that will be proposed (www.sinodogiovanni2018.va). We do not therefore want to add too much to this enquiry.

Nevertheless, very soon we will propose a space for discussion on our own site (www.op.org). In fact, it seems to me that some specific issues of the Dominican tradition could stimulate the conversations of the brothers, sisters and laity of the Order with young people:

- As young people, in what way do you already have the opportunity to contribute to the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God?
- Can we together identify the elements of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church that could be the most « attractive » for young people today? As Dominic wanted to place himself in the school of Jesus as he gathered his apostles to go through the towns and villages proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, how would young people like to join, in their own way, such a dynamic?
- From your knowledge and relationship with the brothers, laity or Dominican sisters, what would be the new projects for evangelization about which you would like to take the initiative or in which you would like to be protagonists? What would be


- the types of language (word, media, attitudes, etc.) that would best correspond to the creativity of young people in the proclamation of this Good News?
- How would you like the Order of Preachers to contribute to keeping the Church close to the young people of your generations?
 - How can the educational places in which so many sisters and brothers are engaged, take part in the synodal reflection on the one hand, and, on the other, in the renewal of the « conversation » with young people which the Church wants to support?
 - From your point of view, what would be the specific elements of the Dominican tradition that you think are particularly adapted to the proclamation of the good news to the youth of your generations, especially those who are far from the Church?

You will have understood that the main point of the project I am presenting to you here is not a reflection on « our pastoral care of young people », but rather how to recognize and promote the capacity of young people themselves to be active agents in the renewal of evangelization. It is one of the riches of the great diversity of charisms in the Church, that they are not the « property » of those for whom they have been constituted, but are offered to the life of the Church in the world as a whole. The Order of Preachers was instituted in the charism of preaching and it is up to the Order, today more than ever, to offer to all the conviction that the Church becomes itself in proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom. Young people, and how to illuminate the great diversity and wealth of the worlds of the young throughout the world, are an opportunity to become aware of this duty.

This invitation will find a place of realisation and coordination on the website of the Order (www.op.org). I invite you to participate actively. The first active participation could be to give the *Socius* for the Apostolic Life any information, reflection, testimony that can be shared with others throughout the Order. Please send them to the General Curia by the end of October 2017, so that the work of the next meetings of the socii and promoters can be enriched (apostolatus@curia.op.org). It is not a matter of writing a document specific to the Order, but rather to facilitate, in the heart of the Order, a movement in which young people will be the first actors in the synodal reflection, on the one hand by their participation in the dynamic set in place by the Permanent Secretariat of the Synod, and on the other hand, by their own commitment in the proclamation of the Gospel. And to allow the Order as a whole to benefit from this dynamic of a « synod with young people ». In this regard, this « synod with young people » will be the subject of a specific project on Atrium, animated by the service of promoting communications.

Rejoicing at the prospect of what could be a common project of Dominican preaching today, I assure you of my fraternal friendship and of my communion in prayer and thanksgiving,

Your brother


fr. Bruno Cadore, O.P.
Master of the Order