



Rome, 1 January 2016
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Letter for the Jubilee year of the Order of Preachers

« Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel » (cf. 1Co 9, 16)
The Order of Preachers, yesterday, today, and tomorrow

My dear sisters and brothers,

Go and preach!

Since the celebration of the anniversary of the installation of the first nuns of the Order in Prouilhe, each year of the novena proposed by brother Carlos has been preparing us to hear today this sending. Our Dominican tradition tells us that Dominic one day heard from Saint Peter and Saint Paul: « Go and preach, for God has chosen you for this ministry », they said. By the door of the Basilica of Santa Sabina this same formula was used by the one who wrote the beautiful icon where Saint Dominic, in turn, addresses all of us, brothers and sisters in the Dominican family: Go, and preach! Vade Praedica!

Answering this call will be our way to bring the confirmation of the Order up to date as we celebrate the eight-hundredth anniversary. Answering it not only each of us individually but all of us together, as a fraternal communion, in apostolic solidarity with our communities, and by committing ourselves in the most vibrant way in the dynamic of the holy preaching that is the Dominican family. At the request of Dominic of Osma, Pope Honorius III confirmed the Order as the Order of Preachers in 1216. Today, at the request of the needs of the world and with the same determination as Dominic to serve the Church and the mystery of her communion, it somehow comes back to us to confirm in our turn this Order of Preachers. Of the Order Honorius III wrote that, by devoting all their forces to penetrating the Word of God and to evangelizing the name of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world, Dominic and his brothers responded to the desire of Him « who ever makes His church fruitful with new offspring, wanting to make these modern times measure up to former times, and to propagate the Catholic faith » (18 January 1221).

«Announcing the Gospel is not a source of pride for me, it is a necessity that is imposed on me: woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel! ». We are certainly far from the time when Paul wrote, but by the preaching of so many of our sisters and brothers, the Church has enlarged the tent of friendship with God! These years of preparation for the Jubilee have been for all of us, sisters and brothers, lay and religious, an opportunity to assess the way in which we, in our turn, are contributing, according to the path opened by Dominic, to establishing the tent of friendship with God. This was probably also an opportunity to become aware of the obstacles which were able gradually to restrain the enthusiasm of the first days, the institutional burdens, the fears and needs of personal security, the need for recognition, the indifference or the discouragements faced with fractures that disfigure the world. Certainly, we need to take steps to evaluate what we do and can do, to establish plans, in one place by developing our preaching to give full scope to the creativity brought by new vocations, in another place to prepare for a time of transition, even of recession. But the future of the preaching of the Gospel of peace, the future of the proclamation that this world as it is, is the place where God wants to germinate the seed of the Kingdom, will probably not be primarily the result of strategic plans, as pertinent as they can be. As Dominic wanted to make it clear to the Pope when he was asking him to confirm the first fruits of his intuition, the fire of the Gospel must first set alight the existence of each Preacher: they were to « be » preachers. It is this inner fire that one day gave us the audacity to ask for the grace to devote our whole life to the Word. It is the same fire that can establish in us impatience, insomnia, the hope that, going from town to village, the name of Jesus Christ becomes the name of a

brother and a friend who comes to live familiarly with men, inspiring in all the confidence to go towards Him (ST III q 40 resp3).

When Paul expresses this « inner necessity », he does it by saying how he himself wanted to try to be familiar with all, free in regard to all, making himself the slave to all: « Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible » (cf. 1 Cor 9, 19f). This is the same fire that lives within Dominic: the ardour of preaching. The first task of the preacher appears to be that of joining himself with those to whom he is sent. Because he desires that the Gospel become the abode of all, the preacher links his destiny with that of his interlocutors, to the point of accepting that his freedom depends on these new friendships, to the point of receiving his freedom and creativity from this dependency (is that not what begging means?). For the apostle, the fire inside is not only that of having something to say or to contribute, but it is the fire of impatience to share with all in this world, a world that will, on the day willed by God, receive its transfiguration from the truth of the Gospel. For Paul, we know, this transfiguration is the figure of the mystery of the unity of love in Christ (Eph 3-4). How can we not mention here the prophetic mosaic of Santa Sabina? (Gal 3, 28; Col 3: 11): all of you are one thing in Jesus Christ, for he is all, he is in all! Our mission is to proclaim this promise of communion: the star on Dominic's forehead reminds us of the star of Bethlehem which appears where the Word enters into alliance, into communion with human beings. This is the same light of the Word that comes to live at the heart of the community. This « coming » is like an inner fire, and it is this fire that we burn to transmit to others. The flame of preaching: symbol of our Jubilee and of our mission. Moved by this fire, in a world that sometimes seems to be doomed to divisions and conflicts, when identitarianisms and polarizations conspire to create obstacles to communion in diversity, at a time when the religions themselves do not always know how to escape these temptations, moved by this fire of desire for this promised communion, go and preach!

And now the image of Dominic's vision returns: Peter's staff and Paul's book. *Peter's staff*, first, never to forget that there is only one Shepherd, of whom Peter was the first of the servants. Thus, preachers are sent tirelessly to preach the grace of salvation of which the Church, in the unity of its communion, is the sacrament. But the staff also because it is about setting out, getting out of our establishments, to go beyond the boundaries of our safety, to step over the ditches that separate cultures and human groups, to accompany people's steps when it comes to moving forward on uncertain paths. The staff on which to rely when, aware of our weaknesses and sins, we ask for the grace of mercy so it might teach us to become preachers. The staff of the itinerant preacher of the grace of mercy. The mobility of this itinerancy, internal as much as it is external, means that the staff must always be accompanied by *the Book, carried by Paul*. Certainly, because in the Book is written what God wants to reveal to all. And also because it is in the Word that must be immersed the experience of faith, the conversation of evangelization, and the work of intelligibility that theology pursues. But *the book with the staff*, because the meeting, the dialogue, the study of other cultures, the esteem for other quests for truth, all this will constitute gateways to a deeper knowledge and understanding of this Word, which gradually reveals itself by dint of scrutinizing the Scripture that has been recorded in the Bible. Go and preach could also be declined as « go and study », not to become a *savant*, nor to pretend either to « teach others », but study in order to scrutinize the signs of the times, to discern the traces of grace which works at the heart of the world, to learn how to rejoice and give thanks and to understand a little better each day the depth of the mystery of His presence which is Word and Truth. Go, because the grace of which you want to become the preacher precedes you to Galilee, and you must learn to recognize it, to study it, to contemplate it, so as then to have the joy of sharing the news!

Off we went, taken into the crowd of those who have gone before us in the school of Dominic. Many schools of holiness are proposed to us! Because, as we well know, this « go and preach », by sending us on the roads of preaching, invites us to discover how these roads will become those of our adjustment to the Lord. At the start of this year of the Jubilee, it seems to me that the memory of the first community of disciples and friends who accompanied Jesus on the roads of Galilee must not leave us. It is in following him that this community was gradually « formed for preaching ». It was by returning to these first apostolic times that Diego and Dominic already had the intuition, the need for a

renewal of the methods, the ardour, and the message of evangelization. Today and tomorrow, in our turn, we are invited to this same work of renewal, in order to contribute « to make these modern times measure up to former times, and to propagate the Catholic faith ». And we have the chance to do so by welcoming in all continents new vocations that also constitute a call for an unceasing renewal of the dynamism of the preaching of the Order. So what are these roads on which we are called upon today to live familiarly with men? « I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent » (Lk 4, 43-44). The Order of Saint Dominic, as a whole, must be animated by a similar sense of the urgency of the « Visitation of the Gospel » (Lk 1, 39)! Certainly, we all have, sisters, brothers and laity, good reasons for saying that we must, above all, assure what we are already doing. Certainly, we can sometimes be « paralysed » when we consider the magnitude of the task and how few we are. Of course, we are right to emphasize that, where we are established already, the task of preaching is essential. But the « Visitation of the Gospel » urges us to join people, groups and places where the announcement of the Good News of the Kingdom must, yet again, « also » be heard. The object of preaching is this discrete and respectful approach of the One who comes, familiarly, offering friendship and the Mercy of God. It is well known that Dominic was not the « creator » of the Rosary. But it is not a coincidence that his Order was entrusted with the meditation and the preaching of the mystery of Christ by the contemplation of the mysteries of the Rosary. By being well established in the heart of the life of the Preacher, the mysteries of the life of Jesus, living among his own, establishing his place among men, confronting treason and death, and yet not ceasing to propose forgiveness, guide the way in which the preachers will, by their human words, serve the familiar coming of mercy so that the world might have life.

The Order yesterday, today, and tomorrow, sets the theme of this year of the celebration of the Jubilee. What will the Order be tomorrow? It will no doubt be the preacher, free, and joyful. As yesterday and today, it will no doubt be motivated by the desire to live and preach, for its own time, communion as the first apostolic community lived with Jesus in order to make the promise of the Kingdom be heard as Good News for all. Of course I do not want to pretend to draw the concrete figure of the « holy preaching » of tomorrow: this will be the fruit of the apostolic creativity of our brothers and sisters and laity in all the latitudes, driven by the creativity of the Spirit. But, whatever this figure, it seems to me that the Order will, for the future, have to make its own some of the crucial questions that I would like to formulate from the visits that I have the opportunity to carry out with brothers and sisters around the world.

How can we hear and understand what the Lord is saying to us through the new vocations with which He entrusts us by sending them to us? Looking at the early history of the Order, I am struck by the way in which the new brothers and sisters were carried to preaching, through their experience of faith, their formation, their history, their culture. The conversion of some, the extensive studies carried out by others, the experience of life ... all this gradually shaped the diversity and creativity of the Order of Dominic. What about today? A lot of new brothers and sisters join the Order after studies which have engaged them in new contemporary forms of knowledge, many come from cultural and family backgrounds with which the Church does not always easily engage. Many precisely because of the fact that they have been « seized » by the urgency of the Word at the heart of a life in which they left securities or plans for the future: how will the Order enable them to remain faithful to this generosity and deploy fully their creativity for the benefit of the apostolic creativity of the whole Order? The richness of these new vocations is a responsibility for all of us: continually to deepen and diversify our « service of the conversation of God with human beings ».

This service, if it is our common responsibility, is realised in a wide variety of cultures and the Order never ceases to become more international and intercultural. At the same time, in the Order as is the case in the world, even if we keep talking about globalization (or perhaps because we talk about it) the temptation exists to fall back on identities that are more « controlled » and closed in on themselves, with the risk of always being a little on the defensive when it comes to exchange, collaborations, choice for the common good which make you take the apparent risk of fragility and, especially, being unable to achieve the short-term projects that each entity has elaborated for itself. How will we, in the future, open wide the ways of the intercultural, exchange between the provinces and the congregations: how to place the international reality of the Order more fully at the service of the Church? Do we dare take the risk of internationalizing our communities, of witnessing to the

symphony that is possible between cultures, between the modalities of familiar proximity with the world, between theological schools, between forms of knowledge, between understandings of the Church? ... How, in fact, can the Order itself be, at the heart of the Church, this « conversation » for which Blessed Pope Paul VI called?

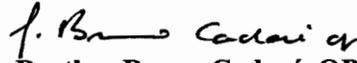
To achieve this, it seems to me that the Order in the future must, more and more, become the Order of a contemplative preaching. Paradoxically, while it does not cease to say, with reason, that the Church always needs more workers for the harvest, the Order should without a doubt offer a service that will not mean simply being devoured by pastoral action, but which will mean rather places of contemplation, of the search for wisdom, of the quest for the truth. That is to say the place that concern for the witness of fraternal communion must have in the future, the non-negotiable priority given to meditation of the Word, to the liturgy of the hours and to intercession, to patient watching in the presence of the Lord. But it is also to speak of the determination with which we will have to consolidate and deepen the intensity of study, a privileged way of contemplation but also a service for the Church that, in the name of the tradition that has been passed on to us, we cannot decline.

The Order, tomorrow should be more than ever animated by the desire to become more and more the « family of Dominic » which, from the beginning, was an innovation for the Church. This ought to lead us well beyond good fraternal relations between all the members of the Dominican Family. More sharply the question will no doubt be the following: how being this « family » allows us together to identify better the needs of the Church and of the world, and to respond in assuming together a common apostolic and evangelical responsibility?

It is largely through the realisation of this family that the Order will seek, tomorrow, to continue to be the servant of the friendship of God with the world. To do this, the brothers as also the sisters, and the laity too, will need to cultivate their willingness for mobility, for itinerancy. The needs of the Church, the needs of the world, change at a fast pace. At the same time, we have assumed onerous institutions and projects, conventual presences that are difficult to maintain, personal projects that struggle to be integrated in a common project. The challenge will be to give us the means to be always attentive more to the needs of others than to our own will to « maintain » what we want to do, or want to continue doing. How not to forget that it is characteristic of the Order, yesterday, today and tomorrow, always to go beyond established situations, to go out to meet those who have not yet had the joy of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, to take the risk of leaving securities in order to witness the mercy and the friendship of God for those for whom God is still, or has become, distant and foreign. How can we let ourselves be carried by the fire of the desire to go, once again, to other places to other cultures? ...

In the Basilica of Santa Sabina, where we celebrated the opening of the Jubilee year, Dominic loved to pray, to express to God his concern for the poor, for sinners and for faraway ones. He also loved to entrust to the mercy of the Lord the brothers that he sent out, in spite of their fears and uncertainties ... he did it with the conviction that only the mercy of God, tirelessly contemplated and announced, would be the strength of preaching. In this Year of the Jubilee of the Order, it is this same conviction that sends us in our turn to proclaim the Gospel of peace.

Go, and preach!


Brother Bruno Cadore, OP
Master of the Order of Preachers