

"Let us walk faithful to the love we had at first"

(see Revelations 2, 4)

Letter to the whole Order announcing the Jubilee Year for the 800th anniversary of the foundation of the first community of contemplative nuns

My brothers and sisters:

I send you this letter from the Monastery of Blessed Mary in Prouille, the first monastery of the Order, on the Feast of Saint Catherine of Siena, our older sister, "into whom, it seems, 'the whole soul of Dominic passed (as indeed into Blessed Jordan of Saxony)'" [\[1\]](#)

In our history there are many events that encourage us to renew our faithfulness to our vocation as sons and daughters of Saint Dominic: "to contemplate and share the fruits of our contemplation".

"The nuns of the Order of Preachers came into being when our holy Father Dominic gathered women converts to the Catholic faith in the monastery of Blessed Mary of Prouille. These women, free for God alone, he associated to his 'holy preaching' by their prayer and penance" [\[2\]](#) Blessed Jordan wrote: "the Order of Preachers had not yet been founded; it was rather a question of its institution, as Saint Dominic was still dedicating himself fully to the ministry of preaching ... And so, from the death of the Bishop of Osma - Diego - until the Lateran Council, approximately ten years passed, during which bro. Dominic was practically alone in the region" [\[3\]](#)

800 years have now passed since this historic event. As we consider what is, in some way, the first Dominican community, truly the hidden seed of the Order, analogously we celebrate as well the theological priority that contemplation holds in our life and mission.

It is truly right and just that we thank God for the gift of our contemplative sisters! They support us in the path we follow; they participate in a special way in our preaching; they welcome us that we may share the hopes and joys, the grief and anxieties of our itinerant ministry. As Saint Catherine of Siena did, so they encourage us to have no fear, to go forth in the highways and byways to meet those who thirst for God; they compel us to live a passion for Christ and for humanity.

We must live this anniversary with the serene joy of Saint Dominic. God willing, and with the whole of the Order of Preachers, beginning with the first Sunday of Advent (3 December 2006) and continuing through the Epiphany in 2008, we will celebrate a Jubilee Year, dedicated to the memory of these 800 years of our contemplatives. We will live a "novena" of years that will take us to another important event: the 8th centenary of Pope Honorius III's confirmation of the Order with the Bull *Religiosam vitam* of 22 December 1216.

We will concentrate our celebration during this Jubilee Year in each and every monastery throughout the world. The contemplative charism of our nuns is certainly not tied to any one particular site or community. For this reason, we have not planned any functions, events or ceremonies centred in Prouille. Nevertheless, as an eloquent sign of the communion with all of the monasteries of the Order, on the first day of the Jubilee some of the friars of our General Curia will celebrate the Eucharist in monasteries that the Order considers "true sanctuaries" due to their special connection with the life of Saint Dominic: the Monastery of Blessed Mary in Prouille (founded in 1206-1207); the Monastery of the Holy Rosary (ex-Saint Sixtus) in Rome (founded in 1219); the Royal Monastery of Saint Dominic in Madrid (founded in 1218-1219); the Monastery of Saint Dominic in Caleruega (founded in Caleruega in 1270).^[4] Each monastery could organize similar initiatives involving the whole Dominican Family.

To prepare our hearts for this celebration, each monastery will offer its own suggestions and proposals for events, initiatives and celebrations to help the whole Dominican Family renew our vocation by concentrating on the riches of the contemplative life, the well-spring of our preaching. The International Commission of the Nuns will also offer some subsidies to live more intensely this Jubilee Year.

May all of us, the sons and daughters of Saint Dominic, prepare ourselves to make this pilgrimage to our monasteries joyfully; let us there drink of the fresh simplicity of the "love we had at first", feeling ourselves at the feet of Jesus, that we may be with Him and listen to Him. Let us live this time with intensity and grace, sharing with our contemplative communities the joy of their consecration, the fruitfulness of their silence, the beauty of their liturgy, their special love for the Word.

The Jubilee Year will be an expression of gratitude for our Dominican vocation through which we are called to Praise, to Bless and to Preach God with the Church, in the Church and for the Church.

The Holy Spirit providentially inspired Saint Dominic de Guzman to lay the foundations of the Order of Preachers in some way in the life and mission of our contemplatives. We shout *Magnificat!* for all that the Lord has done for us through them!

Fraternally in Saint Dominic, from the Monastery of "Blessed Mary" in Prouille, 29 April, the Feast of Saint Catherine of Siena, 2006,

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Master of the Order

Prot. 50/06/465 Lettere all'Ordine- MO

[1] Fr. Aniceto Fernández in *Analecta O.P.* 78 (1970) 481; see Mortier, *Histoire des maîtres généraux de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs*, I (Paris 1903) 139.

[2] *Liber constitutionum Monialium Ordinis Prædicatorum* n. 1, § I.

[3] *Libellus* n. 37.

[4] see ACG Providence 2001 nn. 321-323.