



**FRATRES ORDINIS PRÆDICATORUM
CURIA GENERALITIA**

EVANGELIZATION OF THOSE CLOSE TO US: A GRACE, ROSARY TEAMS

To all of the members of the Dominican Family

Since the beginning of our Order of Preachers, the Rosary has been promoted not only as a school of devotion and prayer but also as an excellent tool for preaching.

Stemming from the Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* and the celebration of the **Year of the Rosary** (2002-2003), many of the Provinces of the Order, have initiated different activities and projects centered on the Rosary.

The canonization of **Fray Francisco Coll y Guitart** (1812-1875) on October 11, 2009, (distinguished preacher and promoter of the Rosary, founder of the Dominicans of the Anunciata), impels us to follow in his footsteps as an evangelist, catechist and exemplary preacher of this devotion which is so very Dominican.

Inspired by these events connected with the Church, after some years with no one in this position, a new General Promoter of the Rosary has been named. It is Br. Louis-Marie Ariño Durand. He sent a letter to initiate the celebration of the Year of the Rosary (2008) for the Dominican Family. He works tirelessly on the webpage dedicated to the diffusion and promotion of the Rosary.

Equally he has stressed the importance of the provincial, national and regional promoters or secretariats who promote this aspect of the Order, working together as a team with the entire Dominican Family.

For this reason, motivated by the real need to renew such groups as Rosary Fraternities-as for example has taken place in France- I would like to share with you the following information on the existence of **Rosary Teams**.

Without in anyway denigrating all that has happened over the centuries in the Marian domain and the Rosary within the Order, these teams are like a new missionary branch which fill me with hope; they are a great assistance to the Apostolate of the Order of Preachers-and in certain parts of the world they have already proven their worth.

In 1955-1957, our brother Joseph Eyquem founded them in Toulouse, with a laywoman Madame Colette Couvreur, to respond to a pastoral need. Just after the Second Vatican Council the Teams of the Rosary experienced great success and growth¹.

¹ In 1967 The Rosary Teams were recognized by the French Episcopacy. This recognition came from the Commission for the Apostolate of the Laity. They understand the missionary identity of the Teams and the special place they hold for the laity, because the Teams are not solely to be considered as a spiritual organization. In May of 1971 the pilgrimage to Rome of the Rosary teams underlined this universal dimension. On that occasion Pope Paul VI addressed them with the following affirmative statement. **Small groups, prayerful missionaries in the world, fraternal and welcoming, you stir up with the genuine simplicity of the Gospel,**

The teams are one of the first lay movements and for more than 20 years they have spread throughout the entire French territory. They organized themselves into an international structure in 2005. They are present in a number of countries (Ile Maurice, Ivory Coast, Australia, Haiti...). Their special grace is to be found in their discretion, their simplicity, their rapid growth: Their French publication is translated into more than 15 languages, including Spanish and English, and also the language of Madagascar and most recently Arabic.

I recommend these groups and their experiences. We do well to familiarize ourselves with them and to reflect on their value in our different cultural and ecclesial contexts and to place them in the hands of God, through the intercession of Mary, Our Lady of the Rosary, and to help establish them everywhere that members of the Order live or gather together.

Rosary Teams

The Rosary Teams unite common Marian prayer to the work of evangelisation those who live close to them. They are close to the Order in their goals and their means of accomplishing these goals. Rooted in the prayer of the Rosary, each day, each month, their members live in a spiritual communion with each other.

The contemplation of the mysteries of the Rosary makes real this union of those who pray with faith in this unique manner. Each member of the Rosary Teams unites their life to Christ's. They are thus sent on mission to witness to the Risen Christ.

This mission consists in evangelising those close to them. Already before Vatican II, Fr. Eyquem saw in a fresh new way the role of the laity in the mission of the Church. This is why the Rosary Teams do not meet in churches, but rather in houses, in each other's homes.

«It is a cherished idea of the Rosary Teams: the house of a Christian is a house of prayer. That is why the Common Prayer, one time per month, can be found in this most normal of places. If we are, in all places, the living dwelling places of God, then the house in which we live for our whole lives, if we are laypeople, becomes also a house of God. It is there that God gives His grace. It is there that He speaks to the heart. It is there, through a life which

and join together your worries and aspirations and together seek in a climate of prayer centred around Mary, to deepen or to find your faith, and to discover the marvellous plan of salvation and expectations that God has for you. The Rosary is for you a real source of nourishment for your faith. Taking the rosary as the means of prayer, of fraternal union and apostolic action, the Rosary Teams have as an objective to create everywhere small communities of prayer dedicated to the Virgin Mary and to invite its members to meditate on the Gospel, to live it and to proclaim it. (Cf. DOP Anno 79, Fasc. II, Junius, Aprilis 1971, pp.174-175). On November 7, 1972, the Master General, fr. Aniceto Fernández, in a letter, officially recognized the Rosary Teams. On May 23, 1984 in the General Audience given for the Rosary Teams in Rome, John Paul II declared: “You have been given the joy of being invited to unite yourselves into a movement of the Church which is at the same time both Marian and missionary in nature. Give thanks to God and make your own special contribution to the legitimate work of the apostolic movements. Maintain an ardent piety, both illuminated and ecclesial, joined with Mary, and always keep in focus the objective of living a profound union with Christ and staying close to his evangelical message, and as well to complete an apostolic work in your concrete settings and in your daily work. (Juan Pablo II, Audiencia, 23 de mayo 1984, espanol-italian)

[online] (1984) http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/audiences/1984/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_1984_0523_it.html [consulted: 10 february 2010]

is truly evangelical, that the true servants of God manifest themselves. It is there that we must walk in the presence of God».(Père J. EYQUEM, *Le Courier des responsables*, 1966)

Their prayer is characterized by these words: **Mary, in us, is the one who receives** They aid thus in the construction of the Christian community in villages and neighbourhoods. They can host those people who are not normally with us. Each month they meet in the homes of one or another of the members.

They make use of specific tools in their common prayer, and to assist their members in their daily personal prayer they make use of a special calendar in order to live “the Gospel with Mary.”

Specific nature of the team: the Team of the Rosary is not like a traditional confraternity. The Teams do not meet to pray the entire rosary together each month. They instead experience two types of prayer.

The first moment is the monthly meeting in the home of one of the members: the other is that of the personal prayer of each member. They are asked to pray one of the 20 mysteries of the rosary. Each member is connected with the others, contemplating the Lord with Mary. Each member is like one part of an immense rosary made up of living decades. As to the monthly prayer in a home, that is a little like a Liturgy of the Word: prayer to the Holy Spirit, invocation of Mary, proclamation of the Word of God, a reflection on the mystery, reflection for our life, prayer of praise and intercession (this is when the recitation of the decade takes place) and the sending out to mission. This moment is designated as a “liturgy of the threshold”, available to all.

The Rosary Teams are at the heart of people’s lives. They carry the sorrows and joys of families and those close to them, they welcome all with an inventive charity, attentive to all those who pass through the neighbourhood. *«In the Rosary Teams true Marian devotion should be able to be shown in a genuine concern for the poorest of the poor, but also with the desire to build a more human and fraternal society, and through the power of these efforts, turn all peoples and situations toward God from whom comes all Love».* (fr. Joseph EYQUEM, *L’Idéal des Equipes du Rosaire*, Conférence à Toulouse, 1990).

The Rosary Teams are present in different types of mission territory, whether in a country which has been evangelized long ago (centuries) or in a mission “Ad Gentes” which is on-going. It is a valued means of carrying out ministry which we can spread in the Church through the means of our Dominican communities.

Challenges

1. The renewal of preaching in a context of “new evangelization”: as we have observed for more than 20 years, non-Catholic sects do not make inroads where Rosary Teams are present.
2. There is a fruitful collaboration with lay-people working in their own dioceses: in the Rosary Teams each lay-person has a place. The chaplains, or those chosen to accompany the groups with the approval of the bishop, are associated with the laity.

3. The missionary vitality of the Rosary as a prayer and the missionary life of the entire Order. The Rosary Teams provide a Christian presence in those places where the Church has little presence for many reasons: the size of parishes, places where there are not many Christians, newly settled areas, far away villages, minority locations, different cultures, poverty etc. The Rosary Teams have a natural place in the frontiers of the Church.
4. Closeness to the poor, those who suffer, children and youth with whom the members of the Rosary Teams can make frequent and even daily contacts either in their own homes or elsewhere.
5. The list of challenges is long and always open: the experience of the Rosary Teams increases each day, in different contexts, in and outside of France.

Welcome, Accompany, Help the Rosary Teams to expand

-A monastery of nuns could be a haven of prayer and of welcome, helping to send out or accompany a Rosary Team.

-A convent of friars could be a place of formation, accompaniment, a meeting place, a place of celebration for Rosary Teams.

-Communities of Apostolic Sisters or a Lay Fraternity could help locally with an existing team or be of assistance in the developing and accompaniment of a new Rosary Team.

-Finally, each member of the Order is called by the “good news of the Rosary Teams” to live the Rosary and the evangelization of those close to them in a new way.

Our brother Joseph Eyquem left us on the 19th of October, 1990. My predecessor Fr. Damian Byrne expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Province of Toulouse. Would that today, with confident hope in Our Lady of the Rosary, these teams would bear much fruit for our mission. In the light of the 8th Centenary of our Foundation by St. Dominic, may the presence of the Rosary Teams demonstrate that our Order is above all and in many different ways, truly missionary!

Your brother in St. Dominic

Fr. Carlos A. Azpiroz Costa, O.P.
Master of the Order

Commemoration of Our Lady of Lourdes
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Prot. 50/10/131 Lettere del Maestro

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