

# **Dominican Monastic Life: Reflections**

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## **Chapter 3**

### **Dominican Monastic Life: Ideal And Spirituality**

#### **3.1 A brief Historical Review**

##### **3.1.1 The general climate of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries**

Dominican monastic life came into being at a critical period in history when the old order of medieval society was fast changing and giving way to the emergence of new. Secular and ecclesiastical societies were experiencing what seemed a great upheaval as new institutions sprang into being to answer new needs. All sectors of society: political, economic, intellectual and religious, were experiencing the impact of the said upheaval, with their interaction itself accentuating it.

In the political and economic milieu, feudalism was giving way to the rule by communes in a struggle by which the latter wrested power from feudal lords. The Church's involvement in the feudal system brought the same struggle within it. Prelates and clerics, usually owners of large estates, found themselves actively engaged in protecting their rights against an encroaching commune to the sad neglect of their Christian flock.

There was likewise a revival of intellectual interests in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Latin translations of the Greek philosophers were making the latter's teaching available to the West, and those who wanted to could avail themselves of this knowledge in the new universities springing up to answer this need. But interest was not limited to the philosophers. A general yearning for true religion and a revived interest in Scripture was manifesting itself among the ordinary Christian. Here was a time in which the emerging middle-class man was becoming more and more capable of articulating his needs in society, and with the same capacity, was expressing "his enthusiasm and exuberance for authentic Christianity."<sup>i</sup> C.H. Lawrence aptly calls the whole movement of this period, "The quest for the primitive"<sup>ii</sup>, for it manifested indeed a desire to return to the beginnings, akin to that which had impelled the first desert monks to flee into solitude, to live the evangelical life.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, however, it was the *vita apostolica*, which exerted the greater appeal and inspired Christians. Already in the 11<sup>th</sup> century the Gregorian reform (1059) had called on Catholic clergy to surrender wealth and live a communal life after the examples of the apostles. The emergence of Orders of Canons Regular was a response to this call, which was made by men and women alike, the latter becoming canonesses. The revived interest of later centuries in the *vita apostolica* was, in a way, remotely prepared for by this reform, even though the later point of emphasis was slightly shifted. Later groups, including the Orders of Friars that came into being in the 13<sup>th</sup>

century, laid emphasis on preaching as the essential work of the apostles, with community life and poverty being its handmaids.<sup>iii</sup>

The life of the secular clergy at this period was far from edifying. Priests were generally ignorant of Catholic doctrine and theology, and their personal lives corrupt. They were more engrossed in the quest for material gain than in the care of their Christian flock. "All of their religious teaching was limited to the recitation of the creed and the Lord's Prayer, and in the best of cases a miserable comment was added," reports Vesely, pathetically.<sup>iv</sup> These men were no match to the learned members of heretical groups that were springing up to provide for the growing spiritual needs of the people. There was a felt need for learned orthodox preachers.

In a bull of 1213, Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) asked for the reform of morals, the suppression of heresies by preaching and for the training of priests. The Lateran Council, which took place two years later, likewise petitioned bishops (whose special responsibility it was to preach), to commission capable priests to carry out the task if they themselves were prevented to do so.<sup>v</sup> While these appeals were going on, St. Dominic Guzman and a handful of companions were engaged in a preaching mission in the south of France.

### **3.1.2 St. Dominic, Bishop Diego and the Preaching Mission**

St. Dominic was born in Caleruega in Spain, of a family of the lower nobility called Guzman. At fourteen he went to study philosophy and theology at Palencia during which time he demonstrated the nobility of his heart by selling his books to help the poor in a time of famine. He joined the Chapters of Canons Regular at Osma after his studies and was ordained a priest. Dominic remained a canon for about ten years, occupying the office of subprior under the prior Diego d'Acebes who later became the bishop. It was with this prelate that the new phase of the life of Dominic was destined to begin.

Bishop Diego was called upon by the king of Spain to go on a diplomatic mission to Denmark to negotiate a marriage for his son, and the former chose St. Dominic for his companion. On their way they passed through Southern France where they encountered the Albigensian heresy. It is recounted that Dominic spent the night arguing with his host, a member of the sect, and by daybreak the latter was converted.

On a second journey to Denmark, when Diego and his companion learnt that the marriage could not take place (the girl had either died or entered a monastery), they made their way to Rome where Diego hoped to obtain leave to resign his diocese and go to preach in the Baltic regions. Innocent III refused Diego's resignation and sent them back home.

It was on their way that they met Arnould of Citeaux and other papal legates who were sent to preach to the Albigensians. These latter were making no headway and were full of discouragement. Observing their retinue and luxury, Bishop Diego advised them to rid themselves of all that and imitate the austerity of life of the heretics. The two of them likewise joined in the mission and the preaching went on. Although some of the preachers did not persevere, success accrued to those who did. And enduring testimony of the success of Dominic and Diego was the conversion of a number of Albigensian women from heresy. It was with this group of women that the story of Dominican monastic life begins. Before we take up their story, however, we would first look at the

heretical group whose history, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, was so closely wound up with that of the Dominicans and especially the nuns.

### 3.1.3 The Catharists (Albigensians)<sup>vi</sup>

The Catharists were a heretical group who adhered to a more recent form of Manicheism. Members of this sect held that matter was evil, and therefore, the good God could not have created the material world, so they proposed a fallen spirit as the creator of the material world. If matter was evil, these men concluded that the Lord Jesus could not have assumed a real body of flesh and therefore, he carried himself through life like a phantom. Such reasoning naturally led to the negation of Christ's death on the cross.

Members of the Catharist sect deplored any action multiplying matter, since the latter was conceived as essentially evil. Marriage was therefore attacked and consequently, the stability of family life was jeopardized. Both the sacraments (because they are administered through material things) and the resurrection of the body fell under the same condemnation.

Catharist doctrine was definitely not Christian, rejecting as it did the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, which holds that God became Man thus raising the human person to the dignity of child of God.

The sect was very highly organized, having its own hierarchy. Members practiced evangelical poverty, and its preachers were intellectually well prepared to defend their ideas. Among the members of this sect, the most faithful devotees were called the *perfect*. These lived an exceptionally ascetic life, holding virginity in high regard and abstaining from food of animal origin. They had received what they called the *Consolatum*, which they believed purified from sin and imparted the Holy Spirit. It was from their ranks that both the bishops and preachers of the sect were chosen.

## 3.2 Foundation of the nuns – Prouille

### 3.2.1 Prouille

After the conversion of the first group of Albigensian women, Diego and Dominic found themselves in a dilemma. Should the women return to their homes, the possibility of being pressured by friend and kindred to return to the sect awaited them. On the other hand, were they, the preachers themselves, sufficiently prepared to take care of such a group? The eventual solution to the problem was arrived at by Diego and supported wholeheartedly by his friend, who was in fact the one destined to carry the burden of the foundation. Their solution was to allow these women to continue their life of religious dedication and austerity in a monastic lifestyle. Diego was not destined to see this project through. He died in 1207 in his own diocese where he had gone to recruit priests for the preaching and to collect funds for the apostolate and the establishment of the nuns.

Due to lack of adequately reliable sources, it is difficult for us to know the exact details of the founding of the first monastery of nuns of the Order of Preachers. Two versions of it have come down to us. The more well known is that given by authorities like Jordan of Saxony (on the beginnings of the Order of Preachers), M.

-H. Vicaire, Bede Jarret, William Hinnebusch, etc. These hold that one community of nuns was established at Notre Dame de Prouille beside a convent of friars in the manner of a double monastery.

Vicaire is certain about a strict rule of enclosure having been given to the nuns from the very beginning of their foundation, a rule which he believes could have been elastic initially due to the temporariness of the dwellings of the sisters at the time but, which was strictly established as soon as things became more stable and life more regular. The latest date this author gives us for the enclosure's final establishment is 1212.<sup>vii</sup>

A second version of the foundation of the nuns is given by Jiri M. Vesely. According to him, the foundation of the monastery at Prouille underwent three stages in its development. For this author, the monastic community took a definitive form only from 1217 to 1221. The following are the three stages as Vesely presents them to us:

1. From 1206-1210, there is at Prouille a kind of missionary group of pious women about Dominic and his companions. They had neither a fixed habitation nor common life. Their role was to help in the missionary activity of the preachers. It was in the manner of a lay apostolate group.<sup>viii</sup> In the rest of the text, Vesely has two communities of these pious women at Prouille: one at Notre Dame de Prouille and the other at a house donated by a certain Bola. There is a third community at Fanjeaux and the last to be established at Limoux after the donation of the Church of St. Martin of Limoux.<sup>ix</sup>

The friars and the women moved to this place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1209. Because the women were engaged right from the beginning in the apostolate of teaching, Vesely suggests that not many of them could have been converts.

2. From 1211-1216: The number of women having increased, some of them continued to dedicate themselves to the apostolate and the rest started to build up a kind of enclosed community, but without taking religious vows. Thus the beginnings of a form of religious life were laid.<sup>x</sup>

3. From 1217-1221: At this period we find at Prouille already a regularly organized religious family of women living according to the rule of St. Augustine and the directives of St. Dominic.<sup>xi</sup> Vesely has it that even at this period, the historical sources refer to the nuns as Augustinians rather than Dominicans.

The above version of the foundation of the first monastery of Dominican nuns is supported by H.-C. Scheeben whom our author uses as his authority on the subject.<sup>xii</sup>

Even with such difference in the narratives, there are still similarities by which we can build up our story. The first nuns were drawn from among the ranks of the Catharists, many of who had already received the *consolatum*, and were living the life of the perfect. Apart from the fact that Dominican preaching was directed mainly against this sect, the Catharists will always have a particular relationship with the Order of Friars Preachers. This is due, first of all, to the fact that the sect gave to the Order its first group of nuns. It also exerted a considerable influence on the work of the founder himself. Bede Jarret reports on the Catharists' highly efficient method of organization, which influenced Dominic's own strategy.<sup>xiii</sup> From them he learnt the important role women could play as collaborators in the work of evangelization. In this Vicaire agrees with Jarret for he too states:

He (Dominic) had realized from the very beginning of his preaching the incomparable role of women among the Catharists and had immediately, by the foundation of Prouille, answered the legitimate religious appeal which was contained in such devotion."<sup>xiv</sup>

Womenfolk of the Albigensians were engaged in a wide range of activities such as catechetical instructions (especially in their own homes), teaching of the young, messengers, spies, for the spreading of their faith and the consolidation of their doctrines. The women Dominic and Diego found in their charge had been dedicated members of their former sect and had collaborated in furthering its cause in a like manner. It was only logical that the two preachers regarded it as opportune to associate them in their holy preaching in a way consonant with ecclesiastical arrangements of their time for women.

The first community of nuns established by St. Dominic at Notre Dame de Prouille in 1207 was destined from the very beginning to be formed along lines of traditional monasticism, which at that time for women meant a purely contemplative life, lived within a strictly enclosed monastery. M.-H. Vicaire holds that the regular orientation of the community life was Cistercian and that Dominic's first rule for the nuns was based on that of Citeaux, because it was the founder's intention to hand over the monastery to the Cistercians when the nuns were sufficiently initiated into their new way of life.<sup>xv</sup>

Although this information is not totally supported by all historians (see the previous footnote), we are certain that at the time of St. Dominic (1170-1221), there was an overwhelming Cistercian influence on the monastic life of women. It would have been quite normal for him (in consultation with the nuns) to think of having the monastery affiliated to the Cistercian Order, as St. Gilbert of Sempringham had wanted to do earlier for his canonesses, or even to borrow from their usages. The Cistercian life was, after all, closer to the type of life St. Dominic envisioned for the sisters. But the truth is that things did not work that way; neither did Dominic hand over the sisters to another existing Order. He had other plans for them. As has been noted, he established them in the convent at Prouille beside a priory of his fellow preachers. Fr. Bede Jarret gives us an inkling into the relationship that existed between these two houses. He says:

To all intent and purposes...Prouille was a double monastery in which dwelt side by side the preachers and the nuns each with their separate establishment, yet joined in one common life. The prior had to maintain the rights of the two communities, keep their deeds and the bequests, preside over the mixed council of friars and sister, sign all contracts for sale...Directly, the prior had control over his own religious; indirectly, he had to watch and supervise the observance of the nuns...<sup>xvi</sup>

Such indeed was the usual arrangement in double monasteries. For the group of Dominican nuns this arrangement meant that they too were directly associated with the Holy Preaching. This community of nuns at Prouille witnessed first of all to the initial success of the apostolate of the preachers and then at its establishment, having been placed at the very heart of their preaching, it became a vital part of that apostolate, assisting it and guaranteeing its success. In a way, we can see this contemplative community as destined to nourish and encourage the growth of the budding Order of Preachers itself which reached maturity nearly ten years later (1216). The nuns were not

only associated with preaching; their contemplative life was its very heart and force of the foundation on which Dominic built the Order of Friar Preachers. We often state that the nuns were founded first before the preachers as if Dominic founded several unconnected institutions, each one claiming the first-born right. But the truth of the matter is that the founder established one unique edifice – the nuns constituting the solid foundation on which it was set up.

### **3.2.1.1 The apostolate of the first nuns**

We shall now look at what the community of nuns at Prouille served in its initial phase. Once again, Fr. Bede Jarret tells us the community serve three purposes: apostolic, educational and a refuge from hostile surroundings.<sup>xvii</sup>

The sister's apostolate was in the main their contemplative life of prayer and penance, although their monastery was also intended to be a "center to which those could resort who desired to learn more about the faith."<sup>xviii</sup> Their apostolate was a direct involvement in the concerns of the preachers, i.e. the Salvation of all people. Although the most primitive constitutions of the nuns do not expressly state this apostolic dimension of their life, later ones do.

The 1930 constitutions express it thus:

The nuns of the Sacred Order of Preachers...strive after Christian perfection; and by means of that perfection, implore for the labours of their brethren abundant fruit in holiness.<sup>xix</sup>

But even more explicitly does the letter of the Master General. Fr. Anicetus Fernandez put it:

"Our holy Father Dominic instituted the Dominican Nuns as an essential part of the Order and an efficacious help to the life and apostolate of the brethren..."<sup>xx</sup>

These later assertions stem from a clearer grasp of the role of the first monasteries of nuns of the Order. The sisters did help also in instructing women within their monastery premises who wanted to know more about the Catholic faith. They engaged likewise in the education of young girls, although they were forbidden to take in very small children (except in rare cases), a measure which was meant to ensure the regularity of their life and the silent atmosphere conducive to contemplation.

From what has been seen thus far, it is clear that even though the first monastery was strictly contemplative, the strict rule of enclosure being enforced from the beginning, the first sisters shared immensely in the Holy Preaching, making the salvation of souls their particular concern.

### **3.2.2 Other primitive Dominican monasteries**

Apart from Prouille, three other monasteries of women were founded directly or indirectly by St. Dominic. A foundation was made at Madrid, which was completed by 1221 and entrusted to the care of Blessed Mannes, brother of St. Dominic as its prior. Nothing much is known about Madrid except that it conserves the only extant letter of the founder written to the community. In the said document, the saint exhorts the sisters to make good use of their normalized monastic conditions to live a fervent life of monastic observance. He stresses the importance of enclosure and silence and among other thing,

Dominic assures them of their right to accept candidates without imposition from outside.<sup>xxi</sup>

**San Sisto:** A more prominent foundation after Prouille is that of the Monastery of San Sisto in Rome. It had been Innocent III's intention to reform monasteries of women and to that end, he would gather nuns from various monasteries of Rome in a model monastery under a strict rule. This Pope did not live long enough to carry out his project; it was left to his successor, Honorius III to do so. Before his death (1216), Innocent had commissioned the canons of St. Gilbert of Sempringham to take charge of the church of San Sisto and to undertake the establishment of the reformed monastery of women. After a period of deliberation, however, this Order found itself unable to measure up to the task and in 1219 it was exempted. It was then that Honorius turned to Dominic and entrusted the charge to him, his brethren and sisters of Prouille, Fanjeaux, and Limoux.<sup>xxii</sup>

Decadence and laxity have been put forward as the main reasons for the desired reform of female monasteries in Rome, but it appears that the root cause of the laxity itself was poverty. Many medieval monasteries of women had to grapple with this problem, which brought in its trail even graver ones. Here is what Eileen Power has to say about the poverty of medieval nunneries.

In the history of medieval nunneries nothing is more striking than the constant straits to which they were reduced...In smaller and poorer houses nuns seem actually to have gone short of food, and bishops on visitation sometimes remarked with their own eyes holes in the nuns' clothes. We hear of buildings in ruins or roofs letting in rain. Large portions of nunneries were chronically in debt.<sup>xxiii</sup>

The situation described here is typical of nunneries in England but it is no less true of nunneries on the continent, and especially in Rome. Reasons for the financial difficulties included insufficient endowments of monasteries. Sometimes nuns suffered from their own incompetent management of their goods. The problem of poverty led to the acceptance of boarders who in many ways led to the general laxity in monasteries. In Rome, it would seem that the basic insecurity brought about by poverty opened the monastic doors to the frequent visits of friends and relatives and occasioned frequent visits to the same by the nuns themselves. In such a climate, regular observance became in many monasteries simply nonexistent. Vesely's summary of the entire situation is to the point: "Miserable indeed was the economic situation of monasteries of nuns, yet more miserable was their morality."<sup>xxiv</sup>

Dominic's first move, when he took charge of the new foundation of San Sisto, was to enforce a strict or "complete enclosure",<sup>xxv</sup> using the terminology of Vicaire. According to this author, Innocent III himself had a strict enclosure for San Sisto in mind when he commissioned the Gilbertines who already had a strict rule of enclosure for their nuns, to take charge of the foundation. Be this as it may, St. Dominic's own resolve to impose complete enclosure seems to have been the result of his evaluation of the actual situation at hand. The enclosure would enable the sisters to start anew, for as the saint reckoned, reform could be best achieved only if contact with the world was completely curtailed. In practice, therefore, by virtue of their rule of enclosure, the nuns of San Sisto could not go out at all; neither was anybody else allowed to come in, except those

permitted by ecclesiastical arrangements. Some Dominican friars were commissioned to keep surveillance of the sister's enclosure.

It cannot be imagined that such a regulation as this was simply accepted from the onset without any protest from the sisters and their relatives. We must remember that most of these women had, in the first place, never made profession in an institute with such a rule of enclosure. They therefore had every right to resist and they did. Things nevertheless turned out well in the end. Through prayers, pleading, reasoning or coaxing, St. Dominic assisted by others, succeeded in convincing some of the sisters to take up residence at San Sisto, and to remain there, when a later storm broke out and many went back on their word. However, it must be mentioned that only two communities responded favorably to start again at San Sisto: Santa Bibbiana and Santa Maria in Trastevere (also called Maria in Tempulo). The last mentioned community would stay only on condition that a precious icon of the Madonna, said to have been painted by no human hand, which was in their possession, remained with them at their new abode. The icon had in an earlier occasion returned to Santa Maria in Trastevere when it was transferred to the Lateran. If it remained this time at San Sisto, the sisters would take it as a divine intervention and would themselves remain there, but if not, they would follow it back to their former monastery. As things turned out, the image remained at San Sisto and so did the sisters.

Eight sisters came from Prouille to instruct the nuns in their new spirit, and by the time everyone was settled there in April 1221, the community numbered to about sixty-nine. Sister Blanche from Prouille was the prioress. A community of friars was established there to take charge of the material and spiritual needs of the sisters.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

**Sant' Agnese:** Setting aside the foundation of Madrid, there is apparent a sort of progression in the foundations of the primitive Dominican monasteries of nuns. The community of Prouille, founded for women converts, came as an answer to a current need – the need to shelter the women of heresy. This gave it its particular character. It was very much associated with the work of preaching of the early friars and their combat with heresy. San Sisto likewise was founded as an answer to an existing need – the reformation of the Roman religious communities of women. Here too, the particular circumstance of the foundation gave it its own specific character. An outstanding feature of the community of San Sisto is the special emphasis on the rule of enclosure and withdrawal. By the time we come to the foundation of Sant' Agnese in Bologna, we are no longer dealing with taking care of existing needs, but the maturing of Dominican monastic life, initiated in these previous humble beginnings. At Sta. Agnese, young Catholic girls are attracted directly to the Dominican monastic ideal, and are challenged to give their lives to the service of God and neighbour in that way. Guy Bédouelle sees each of these communities as signifying one main element of the vocation of the Dominican nun. Prouille is seen to signify a life of penance in the service of the faith; San Sisto, conversion of manners; and St. Agnes, prayer and intercession in the spirit of the apostolate.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The foundation of St. Agnes brought Dominican monastic charism to its final stage.

It was St. Dominic's inspiration to establish the community of nuns at Bologna, but Jordan of Saxony actually carried the project through. Dominic died before it became a reality. This foundation is closely associated with Diana d' Andalò, a young, patrician

Bolognese girl. She was first attracted to the Dominicans by the spirited preaching of Reginald of Oleans. When Diana came into contact with Dominic, she made a vow of obedience to the latter who soon after, decided on the establishment of a monastery of nuns, even at the cost of delaying the building of the convent of friars of that city. This foundation was destined to experience many setbacks at its initial stages. The family of Diana put up a veritable opposition and the bishop of the diocese withheld his authorization; but the indomitable will of the young girl eventually won the day. On the feast of St. Mary Magdalene, in 1221, Diana secretly received the habit of the Augustinian nuns of Ronzano, an action that infuriated her family. Their violent effort to drag her away cost the girl a rib. It was after this incident that Dominic died and Jordan of Saxony came to Bologna as provincial superior. Things were eventually settled and Diana and four companions took the Dominican habit in 1223. Although Jordan asked the nuns of Prouille to send sisters to instruct and form the new community, this proved impossible. He finally got four sisters from San Sisto and, one of them, Sr. Cecilia, became the first prioress.<sup>xxviii</sup>

The rest of the history of the monastery of St. Agnes is the impressive story of the spiritual friendship of Jordan of Saxony and sister Diana and her community. Through his many letter to Diana, Jordan's personal recognition and appreciation of the place of the nuns in the Order and its apostolate are clearly revealed. He regarded the nuns as partners in the work of evangelization, actively participating in their own specific way in all of the Order's apostolic endeavors. Consequently, as Master general, Jordan does not hesitate to make his plans known to the sisters and to solicit their prayers. He tells them of a project, a particular concern for the good of the Order, asks for their prayers, then when all is accomplished, he informs them of the outcome and once again petitions for prayers of thanksgiving. The Order's aspirations are as much the concern of the nuns as the friars. Jiri Vesely, commenting on Jordan's letters says:

His letters addressed to the sisters of St. Agnes are concerned with all the interests of the monastery; but what predominate are his preoccupation for their growth in holiness, and the development of the Order for which he particularly asks for prayers and sacrifices; that is to say, their own contribution to the apostolate. In this is clearly reflected the meaning of the life of the nuns.<sup>xxix</sup>

### **3.2.3 Conflict between the Nuns and Friars:**

It is an unfortunate fact that the sense of partnership between the nuns and the friars in the apostolate of the Order, so discernible at the early stages of the foundations of both Prouille and Bologna, was very quickly lost. This came about when the proliferation of monasteries of nuns affiliated to the Order; seemed to threaten the ministry of the friars. In accordance with the mentality of Churchmen of the Middle Ages, women (nuns) were considered incapable of performing certain duties for themselves, and as a result, they had to be *taken care of*. St. Dominic was to an appreciable extent influenced by the mentality of his time in this matter. He established houses of friars near the monasteries of the nuns so that the former would take care of the spiritual, as well as the material needs of the sisters. The help of the friars became even more urgent with the insistence on the strict rule of enclosure. All business and other matters pertaining to the sisters, which had to be done outside the enclosure, fell to the

care of the prior and his community of friars. But it is clear from the foundation of Prouille that Dominic considered the sisters not only as part of the apostolate of the friars but even more as helpers in the apostolate.

The task of taking care of the sisters, however, became overwhelming for the friars as monasteries continued to increase. As a result, the positive role of the sisters in the Order was lost sight of and the brethren's only cry was to be got rid of the charge. It was the Master General, Raymund of Pennyafort, who first petitioned the Holy See to exempt the friars from the charge of taking care of the nuns. His petition was granted and, consequently, monasteries of nuns were withdrawn from the Order's jurisdiction and the friars dispensed from the charge. San Sisto and Sant' Agnese in Bologna, however, appealed to the Pope who exempted them from the ruling and reinstated them in their former place within the Order. The example of these two communities was immediately emulated by others and, by 1246, thirty monasteries were once again incorporated into the Order.<sup>xxx</sup> Although the papal legate in Germany, Cardinal Hugh of St. Cher, ordered the Dominicans of that country to assume charge of their sisters, the Master General, John of Wildenhausen, in the general chapter of 1252, reaffirmed the Order's position to quit the charge, making it clear that the supervision of the sisters was not among its top priorities.<sup>xxx</sup> The problem between the friars and the nuns continued until Humbert of Romans became Master General of the Order. He drew up new constitutions and imposed them on all Dominican monasteries of nuns with the aim of establishing a uniformity of observance among them. At this same time Clement IV placed the monasteries under the jurisdiction of the Order with a compromise. The friars would hitherto be responsible only for the spiritual welfare of the nuns, a task which would not necessitate having a house of friars near each monastery of nuns.

It is evident that the conflict between the Dominican friars and the nuns was not typical of their Order. It had taken place earlier among the Norbertines resulting in the eventual expulsion of the canonesses from that order. We witnessed the same struggle in the Cistercian Order in our previous chapter.

Although some Dominicans describe this conflict between their nuns and friars as a growth crisis,<sup>xxxii</sup> I see it as having arisen from a distorted view of the role of religious women at that time, a view that persists in a limited way even till today. Apart from a few cases in which we find clear-sightedness like that of Jordan of Saxony, the general tendency was to concentrate on the need the nuns had of the ministry of the friars. It obscured the important fact that these nuns themselves had a role in the same ministry. Both nuns and friars were companions, contributing in their various ways to the ministry of preaching. They could help and be a challenge to each other. In the first community at Prouille, the idea of partnership between the sisters and the friars in the "holy preaching" seems to have been understood right from the beginning. Apart from the contribution the sisters made through prayers and sacrifices to the ministry of preaching, their prayerful monastic atmosphere also served as a spiritual refreshing ground for the friars engaged in preaching. In San Sisto, this partnership does not appear to have been emphasized due to the particular circumstances of the foundation of that community. The brethren established there had the specific charge of taking care of the sisters. But even here, there is no doubt that the sisters themselves were aware of their role in the apostolate of the Order, for it is said that St. Dominic himself instructed them about the Order. Nevertheless, the seeds of the problem seem to have been sown after the

foundation of San Sisto. Even after the conflict had been resolved, apart from a few occasions as in the case of the Dominican mystics of the Rhineland, where the interaction between the friar and nuns was seen to have been of great benefit to each group, the place of the sisters in the Order, as members in their own right, the call to share the same charism and collaborate in the same apostolate, was not quite recognized. The tendency to consider the nuns as a responsibility entrusted to the Dominicans (meaning the friars), still lingers on; but it must be stated that even many nuns themselves think that way. They tend to think of themselves in terms of “daughters” entrusted to the “fatherly” solicitude of the brethren. It is the mentality handed down throughout the centuries. Maybe a statement like this in the nun’s Constitutions can help to foster such a view of themselves:

Finally, he (Dominic) entrusted them as part of the same Order to the fraternal concern of his sons.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

It must be stated that if Dominic entrusted the nuns to the fraternal concern of the friars, it is likewise to be understood that he entrusted the friars to the sisterly concern of his daughters. We are dealing here with two mature groups working for the same purpose, albeit in different ways, each helping and challenging the other in its specific way.

### **3.3 Characteristics of the Life of the First Dominican Nuns**

#### **3.3.1 Monastic and contemplative**

Leaving aside now our historical research, I would like to return to the life of the early Dominican nuns and see what were its specific characteristics.

In the establishment of the Order of Friars Preachers, St. Dominic combined elements of the monastic life and of the canonical life to form a third and new thing – the Friars Preachers. The case of the sisters, however, was different. For them the holy founder adopted a form of life, which remained essentially monastic: it retained all the elements of a monastic lifestyle, utilizing a rule that was fully monastic, based on the customs of Premontre.

Dominic was a man of his time and readily influenced by the needs of those times. He has been described as a resolute man who “set to work with intense energy and rapidity, swift judgment and amazing vitality”<sup>xxxiv</sup> as soon as he saw the best means to achieve what he wanted. He has been presented to us as a man totally given over to the work of preaching for the salvation of souls, and who availed himself of all the means conducive to that goal. The great need of his time was effective preaching to combat the menacing heresy, and Dominic knew that a well-trained clergy capable of expounding the tenets of the faith was necessary, yet he was also conscious of the fact that intellectual arguments alone do not effect conversion. The touch of grace, which brings about the hearts’ conversion must be solicited in prayer and, above all, by a life totally given to God. The heretics seemed to have understood this in their own way and so they backed up their preaching by an ascetical life of prayer. Although this same fact would be impressed upon the friars by St. Dominic, he deemed it necessary to embody the contemplative dimension in a more tangible way in his whole structure. The nuns were

his answer to such an aspiration. Hence, their own foundation too came into being as an answer to a current need – the need for authentic contemplation to give soul and vitality to preaching. Although their monastic way of life was not new, it was nevertheless bound up with the contemplative life for women of their era. Neither could be thought of except in relation to the other. The contemplative life Dominic desired for the nuns of his Order was lived in a monastic life-style; in other words, the contemplative life of the Dominican nun was founded on traditional monasticism. Their life embodies all that is monastic and contemplative.

### 3.3.2 Contemplative and apostolic

It follows from the above discussion that contemplation, as a way of life cannot be said to be a foreign element to the Order of Friars Preachers, which is essentially apostolic. The so-called “cloistered”<sup>xxxv</sup> nun cannot be seen as an alien in an apostolic Order. As a matter of fact, the contemplative dimension of the nuns’ life is what they share with the friars. They do not share the strictly monastic life (although even the friars retain some elements of it), but they do indeed share the contemplative life. I am aware that by holding this position, I may be going directly against a somewhat general opinion that the Dominican Friar is active and not contemplative. However, the friars of the Order are supposed to live the apostolic life, which combines contemplation and action; and in which action flows from contemplation. The following is what their Fundamental Constitutions say:

We also undertake as sharers of the apostolic mission the life of the Apostles in the form conceived by St. Dominic, living with one mind the common life, faithful in the profession of the evangelical counsels, fervent in the common celebration of the liturgy, especially of the Eucharist and the Divine Office as well as other prayer, assiduous in study, and persevering in regular observance....These elements are closely interconnected and carefully balanced, mutually enriching one another, so that in their synthesis the proper life of the Order is established: a life in the fullest sense apostolic, *in which preaching and teaching must proceed from an abundance of contemplation.*<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Here is the point of unity between the nuns and the friars. St. Dominic, founder of the Order and recipient of the charism that is shared by all his followers, had lived the contemplative life of the Canons regular before becoming a Friar Preacher. As Friar, he combined contemplation and preaching which made him the contemplative preacher, and it was this same heritage that he handed on to his followers. The founder’s establishment of the purely contemplative branch in the Order was his way of making sure that the contemplative character of the Order is sustained and nourished in a more concrete way, but it did not in any way denote a lessening of the contemplation that should be characteristic of the individual friar’s life. Humber of Roman’s commentary on the Constitutions of the Friars makes this point very clear:

The state of a religious is the state of contemplation... The office of the preacher is on the one hand to give himself to contemplating the things of God, and on the other to devote himself to activity on behalf of his neighbour... He must give himself to both the active and the contemplative lives, it since everyone is responsible first of all for himself, the preacher must devote himself much more to contemplation than to works of the active life.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The difference between the friars and the nuns, therefore, seems to lie mainly in their lifestyles: the “evangelical brotherhood” for the one, and monastic life for the other. For the one, contemplation issues in the active apostolate; and for the other it reaches out in supplication for both the preacher and the preached, and the proclamation of God mainly by the witness of one’s own life.

We have seen so far that the Dominican nun’s contemplative life is founded on traditional monastic life, and have also alluded time and again to the fact that the new element given to her contemplation by her Dominican vocation is its apostolicity, but this latter affirmation does not in any way imply that Dominican contemplation alone has an apostolic dimension. Fr. Anselm Moynihan’s explanation on these two dimensions in the Christian life is very helpful here. The church, says Moynihan, is both contemplative and proclaimer and every believer is called both to seek God revealed in Christ by penetrating ever more deeply into the mystery of faith and, to offer praise and thanksgiving with intercession.

“The Church’s own preaching of the gospel,” he says, “is not of speculative truths but it is the proclamation of what has been heard and touched even when it takes on the form of dogmatic.”<sup>xxxviii</sup> Contemplation enables the whole Church to arrive at the consciousness of Divine realities which the Church’s teaching mission empowers to proclaim and teach. It is therefore the vocation of every believer to be a contemplative apostle. But the Dominican Order has received this mandate as a special charism,<sup>xxxix</sup> which the often repeated motto, “Contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere”, best expresses. It is its particular vocation, which it is expected to pursue, for the good of the whole Church with a single-minded devotion.

### **3.3.2.1 Special nature of Dominican contemplation**

Some particular insights of Fr. Moynihan once again throw light on the special nature of Dominican contemplation in relation to the apostolate. The Order was founded to counter the doctrine of the Catharists, which denied the value of the material world and the reality of the Word made Flesh. Dominican contemplation affirms both realities. It recognizes the value of creatures as reflecting God and leading to God because they have been transformed by God through the action of the Word of God Incarnate. These affirmations have particular implications for Dominican contemplation. Its scope is broad and incarnational, and it is alert to the movement of the Holy Spirit in all human affairs. The proclamation of the Word that results from such contemplation has similarly a wide dimension and a less hidden character.<sup>xl</sup>

By its nature, Dominican contemplation embodies the full contemplative dimension of the Church.<sup>xli</sup> Dominican monastic life then, which incorporates into itself both traditional monasticism, and the specific contemplation of the Dominicans, which in turn is very bound up with the apostolate, is a unique vocation. Its idea combines both the monastic ideal and the Dominican ideal. Its monastic life is bound to be affected by its specific apostolic orientation; an orientation, which is itself, influenced by the broadness of Dominican contemplation.

## Chapter 4

### Spirituality of Dominican Monastic Life

**Introduction:** In the previous chapter we had a general view of the specific character of Dominican monastic life, and we saw what I now call the specific charism of the Dominican Order i.e. Preaching for the salvation of all peoples realized in a contemplative apostolate.

Ancient monasticism had aimed at a total following of Christ, but a similar quest for the evangelical life manifested itself in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, which witnessed the birth of the Dominican Order. Yet, whereas the monastic focus had been, to a great extent, one's personal reformation in Christ, the sanctification of the whole world became the primary objective of the Order of Friars Preachers. The latter recognized the right of every one redeemed by Christ to have the image of God formed and reformed in him/her, and they (the members) felt called to be the instruments by which that process of sanctification would become true for everybody. Although the contemplative apostolate is the call of all Christians, in so far as the Dominican Order received approbation as an Order of Preachers in the specific way St. Dominic envisioned it, it received this charism as its particular charism.

In the quotation that follows, which is taken from the Fundamental Constitutions of the friars, the precise reason for the foundation of the Order is clearly expressed.

...The Order of Friars Preachers founded by St. Dominic, is known from the very beginning to have been instituted especially for the salvation of souls."<sup>1</sup>

This same Order is likewise known to have been made up of two institutions from its very beginning. The following is what the other institution says about itself:

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 with his 'holy preaching' by their prayer and penance... Finally, he entrusted them as part of the same Order to the fraternal concern of his sons.<sup>2</sup>

This statement is an indication that the charism of the Dominican Order is shared in by members living different life-styles. In the intervening years following its foundation, the Order of Preachers incorporated into itself new groups, each with its own lifestyle yet sharing equally in the charism of the Order. The living out of the common charism is affected in diverse ways as the Fundamental Constitution of the nuns state:

By their way of life both the friars and the nuns press onward to that perfect love of God and neighbour which is effective in caring for and obtaining the salvation of all people... There is indeed a diversity of gifts, but one and the same Spirit, one charity, and one mercy. The friars, sisters and laity of the Order are to 'preach the name of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world'; the nuns are to seek, ponder and call upon him in solitude

so that the word proceeding from the mouth of God may not return to him empty, but may accomplish those things for which it was sent.”<sup>3</sup>

From the above citations we gather first of all that, there is one charism shared equally in by all the members, and consequently allows us to speak generally of a Dominican spirituality. Secondly, the members utilize different means to realize their common goal according to their particular lifestyles, (although, I must hasten to add, the means are not mutually exclusive). Here the implication is that there is even within the Dominican Order itself, diverse spiritualities. The endeavour to live out a common charism in different life-styles spells a particular spirituality for each group of persons. This is in fact why we are able to talk about the spirituality of the Dominican Monastic life, referring properly only to the nuns.

#### 4.1 Definition of Spirituality

At this juncture it is convenient to consider what we mean by *spirituality*. What is spirituality? Fr. Claude Peifer defines the term thus:

It may be defined as the organization of a complex of means for the attainment of supernatural perfection.<sup>4</sup>

Another definition given by Fr. Fabio Giardini has it as follows:

...A way of spiritual existence, a way complex and variegated at the same time. A Christian spirituality is a kind of mix or blend of all the essential elements of Christian life, organized in a particular way of spiritual existence.”<sup>5</sup>

We can gather certain insights from these definitions for our purpose. The fundamental characteristics of both the monastic and Dominican lives, which have been outlined so far in this study, are shared in some measure by all religious. The ideal of Christian perfection is indeed the ultimate purpose of all religious institutes and of all Christians, as a matter of fact. This being so, the differences that set off one spirituality from another cannot be defined in terms of the ultimate goal but only in terms of the means employed in attaining the goal. That is why our two authors above define a spirituality as “an organization of means” or a “blend of essential elements of Christian life, organized in a particular way.” While the elements of our spiritual life are the same, their composition may vary from one institute to another. Members of religious institutes are called to be holy in a special way which accords with the specific spirit and mission of their religious families.

Here I would like to point out certain nuances in the above definitions. Fr. Claude Peifer makes reference to “a complex of means” in contrast to Fr. Giardini’s “essential elements of Christian life.” The first author holds that we cannot look for the principle of distinction of spiritualities in the use of different means to perfection when it is a question of basic or essential elements of Christian life such as prayer, the liturgy, asceticism, the apostolate, love of God and neighbour.<sup>6</sup> He proposes “secondary elements” such as the different means we employ to exercise love of God, e.g. in the classroom, in the religious community or in solitude, as better criteria for determining differences in spirituality.

Contrariwise, Fr. Giardini names those elements, “essential” whose special blend is organized to form a spirituality. As a matter of fact, we cannot exclude the essential elements when trying to distinguish a spirituality from another. The secondary means are only modes of implementing the primary elements as Peifer himself holds. The apostolate of preaching, for example, assumes, a greater proportion in the lifestyle of the friar than that of the monk, even though it is by itself an essential element shared by both.

It can be seen, nevertheless, that there is no real difference between what these two authors say. Fr. Peifer’s term “complex of means” says all that can be said. The role of all the means, essential and secondary, is understood in relation to the total organized whole-the ideology they are meant to serve.

Peifer concludes by saying (and here he agrees perfectly with Giardini):

What is of greater importance in distinguishing one spirituality from another is the varying proportion which the component elements may assume in the total complex... While all the primary elements will be the same in every spirituality, they may be present in different proportions, so that there is room for almost infinite variation in the balance which is struck among them.”<sup>7</sup>

A spirituality can be understood under a static or dynamic aspect. In the first case, it is a model of Christian perfection by which all who follow it are formed. They acquire an identity entirely theirs. Yet, even within this broad pattern that constitutes a spirituality, there is room for the personal realization of the individual members as unique persons. A spirituality does not stifle the work of the Holy Spirit in each individual. It predisposes the person for it. It is the framework that provides the ideology and form of life into which each individual channels his personal effort.<sup>8</sup>

Viewed from its second aspect, a spirituality is an orientation towards a special type of perfection. The members tend towards perfection in a manner especially theirs. In the static aspect, the emphasis is on what the members become, their spirituality being recognized by its traits on them. The emphasis in the second instance is on how the members tend towards perfection. Spirituality here is recognized by the special efforts and orientations of certain Christians in their thrust towards sanctity.<sup>9</sup>

## **4.2 Rule and Constitutions**

Every religious institute has rules and constitutions which act as sure guides to the attainment of the goal of the particular institute. In them is found in their right proportion those basic elements that constitute the spirituality of the religious group. Constitutions may be revised to bring the life of the institute in conformity with the needs and expectations of every new age, but their essential spirit remains invariable. It is the inspiration given to the founder at the beginning and which acts as the force and source of life of the religious family throughout the centuries.<sup>10</sup>

When our present Master General wrote to the nuns that their 1987 Constitutions had been revised according to the mind of Vatican II and at the same time according to the centuries-old traditions of our Order<sup>11</sup> he was implying that the spirit inspiring the present constitutions has not changed. In the study of our ideal and spirituality, the past is taken into consideration, because it reveals the mind of the founder; but the present and future are also considered because it is only in this way that our life can conform both to

the Church's and the Order's self-understanding today. This is especially important in view of the adaptation of our Dominican contemplative life to new peoples and diverse cultures.

It is not the intention here to make a critical study of the primitive Constitutions. I have already tried to show the mind of the founder on the place and role of the nuns in the Order in the previous chapter. Here I intend simply to illustrate how the primitive rules led up to our present Constitutions, and how consequently, a common spirit and observance have been retained even though our regulations try to answer the needs of our time.

#### **4.2.1 From The Rule of San Sisto to the 1987 Constitutions**

The oldest elaborate legislations of the nuns is the *Rule of San Sisto*. If we apply a more modern name to these legislations, we would call them Constitutions, for along with them the nuns observed the rule of St. Augustine. This rule of San Sisto was first given to the community of San Sisto in Rome. The document was based on the former rule of Prouille which provided the legislations on observance, customs relating to silence and the various faults and their penances. Its text, inspired by the early customs of the friars preachers, also made reference to both the rule of St. Benedict and the customs of Citeaux. In addition to the rule of Prouille, the San Sisto document also contained a series of texts on enclosure, work, prayer and monastic offices. M.-H. Vicaire observes that these texts were themselves inspired to some extent by the rule of the Canons of Sempringham (probably for their women religious).<sup>12</sup>

In 1232 Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) gave to the Order of Penitents of St. Mary Magdalene in Germany the Rule of St. Augustine and the *Institutions of the Order of nuns of St. Sixtus*. Vicaire holds that these "Institutions" were in fact the Rule of San Sisto. The word "Order" in the phrase, "Order of nuns of San Sisto," derives from *Ordo* which means *Observance*. This term does not refer to a centralized society observing the "Institutes of San Sisto," but to an observance followed by a large number of independent houses. By the time this rule was given to the penitents of St. Mary Magdalene, it was already being used by a number of monasteries in Rome and abroad. Gregory IX seemed to have been stressing the universality of that rule when he used the term "institutions." It wasn't meant for Roman communities alone.<sup>13</sup>

What is of interest to us in the rule of St. Sixtus is the continuity of observance it ensures for the nuns of the Dominican Order at the early phase of their history. The rule borrowed from Prouille and was later taken over by the community of Bologna. It remained the standard and basic norm in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century although it was often modified, and new additions accrued to it. Between 1228 and 1232, for example, the sisters added new statutes to it to bring it in greater conformity with the life of the friars.<sup>14</sup>

Additional local statutes were nearly always included for newly affiliated communities, and the variety became so vast that Humbert of Romans found it necessary to unite these various statutes by drawing up new Constitutions for the nuns of the entire Order. Humbert's Constitutions were based on the so called *Rule of Montargis*, attributed to Humbert of Romans himself, and said to have been written for the monastery founded by the daughter of Simon de Montfort in 1245.<sup>15</sup> The unified Constitutions drawn up for

the nuns borrowed likewise from the Rule of San Sisto. A comparison of the two texts reveals uniformity of pattern and sameness of emphasis. Humbert's Constitutions remained the legislations of Dominican nuns till 1930, along with the Rule of St. Augustine.

In 1930 the nuns' Constitutions were revised to bring them in harmony with the Code of Canon Law. A later revision, which took place under the Master General Fernandez (the first in which the nuns themselves took part in preparing), in 1971, was undertaken to bring in the recommendations of Vatican II.<sup>16</sup>

In the development of our laws then, we can discern a continuity with the past as well as an endeavour to meet the demands of our present times. The spirit is retained in spite of revision and adaptations, although I should more rightly say, because of the revisions and adaptations. The spirit of the Order would die if it is not lived in a way that bears witness to every new age. Less important matters like their various faults and their penances found in the primitive legislations have been practically dropped to include new statutes more pertinent to our self-understanding today, such as those dealing with the place of the Word of God in our life. There is a clear indication here that the revision of our laws is geared to the conservation of the spirit and the effective living of our charism and realization of our ideal.

### **4.3 The Nuns' Ideal According to the Basic Constitutions**

The following statement stands out as the key statement in the basic (or fundamental) constitutions of the nuns of the Dominican Order:

By their way of life both the friars and the nuns press onward to that perfect love of God and neighbour which is effective in caring for and obtaining the salvation of all people. As the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of all, offered himself completely for the salvation of all, they consider themselves truly his members when they are spending themselves totally for souls."<sup>17</sup>

Briefly, the ideal of Dominican life is summarized in this statement for the nuns: perfect love of God and neighbour, effective after the example of Christ, in the care for the salvation of all peoples. Every other statement in the Constitutions is either an elaboration of this main idea, or a setting forth of the means by which it may more effectively be realized. It is the particular arrangement of means towards this goal as found in our Constitutions that constitutes our spirituality.

According to the Basic Constitutions of the nuns, the Word of God occupies a central place in the spirituality of the Dominican Order as a whole, and consequently in the life of the nuns. From the contemplation of the Word issues forth the apostolate of preaching in which every member of the Dominican Order is called. But the nun does not go out to preach as the other Dominicans do. She withdraws into solitude, in a contemplative monastic lifestyle, to enter more deeply into the mystery of the Word and to supplicate for those to whom it is sent. This activity is summarized in three words which the English translation of the Constitutions renders: *seek, ponder* and *call upon*. There is a certain gradation in the sequence of these words. Seeking denotes searching for, inquiring so to arrive at the truth. We begin by searching, seeking, inquiring after the truth. By this is understood study and the attentive reading of Sacred Scriptures, which

corresponds to what in monastic spirituality is called *lectio*. This search for God in the attentive reading of the Word then leads to pondering. To ponder (Latin “ponderare”) means to weigh or to assess. It is a mental review: thinking or considering quietly, soberly and deeply. The word suggests a prolonged and sober meditation,<sup>18</sup> which corresponds with traditional *meditatio*. By profound reflection, the nun enters into the mystery of God’s Word – *contemplatio*, she penetrates the Truth that is Christ, and surrenders to that Truth. It is in this personal experience of God that she calls upon Him for the salvation of all peoples. The short phrase, “call upon” means to appeal to, to request someone to do something. It implies the nun’s movement towards God in acts of prayer: the liturgy or *oratio secreta* (private prayer). Once again, her prayer is for the conversion of all people that they may share in the merits of the salvific action of Christ. This movement, traditionally known as *oratio*, is directed by the nun’s own profound experience of God’s mercy and his desire for the salvation of all. Sister Mary Kain put this idea in this way:

Penetrating more deeply into the mercy of God, we come to share in his own yearning to show mercy. God wills everyone to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Continually receiving his word of forgiveness and salvation in our own lives, we grow in compassion for other sinners. We become a plea for mercy for the world.”<sup>19</sup>

There are points I would like to indicate here. One is that evident connection between the quality of the personal life of the nun and her apostolate, as is evident in the foregoing. It is the measure in which one is drawn to God and united to him, that she is able to enter truly into the human situation and appreciate the need of all people for God. This is the basis of her reaching out to God in prayer for others. Our union with God is affected through the Word, the sacraments and one’s total conversion. Our Basic Constitutions are explicit that the call to sit like Mary at the feet of the Lord effects conversion, but it also establishes one in the process of ongoing conversion to Christ. An initial conversion is manifested in the nun’s withdrawal from “the empty preoccupations and illusions of the world” and her total consecration of herself to God through vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. But these vows in their turn create the context for ongoing conversion by which she attains to the purity and humility of heart, necessary for assiduous contemplation and by which love of Christ who is in the Father’s heart is experienced (cf. Basic Constitutions,III).

A second point I would draw the attention to is the evident identification, or rather, the close relationship between the Word and the Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In seeking and pondering, we do not remain on the words of Scripture, but through them we reach in search of the eternal Word of God himself. It is him we seek, ponder and call upon. The French translation of our Constitutions makes this fact clearer than the English. It states:

Aux freres, aux soeurs et aux laics de l’Ordre de proclamer par le monde la bonne nouvelle du Nom de Notre Seigneur Jesus-Christ, aux moniales, de *Le* chercher, de penser a *Lui*, de *L*’invoker – dans le secret...”<sup>20</sup>

The Word of God Incarnate has a special place in our spirituality. We seek to be united to him through out study and reading and meditation. We celebrate him in the liturgy. He is there when we call him in prayer, and remains with us perpetually in his Eucharistic presence. Study of the Word of God in the life of the Dominican nun is not just an intellectual pursuit. It is meant to lead to the totality of love: love of God and neighbour. Through Conversion of heart and deepening of faith it brings about the encounter with our Lord Jesus. If study of the word fails to bring us to this goal, it loses its purpose.

According to the Basic Constitutions, the Dominican nuns live out their contemplative vocation in a community modeled on the apostolic community. It is characterized by unanimity in the pursuit of a single goal. This community offers a sacrifice of praise while awaiting the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The life of the sisters is hidden yet it is fruitful to the growth of the Church and it is a sign that all happiness comes from Christ. There is an eschatological dimension to this life. Having set aside all that is ephemeral, the Dominican nuns press forward to the future, when God will gather all to his eternal glory.<sup>21</sup>

The above is what the Dominican monastic life is about. Its Basic Constitutions present to us in brief both the ideal and the effective means to its attainment. Even though the said means may be common to all monastic persons, and in fact to all Christians, in so far as the contemplative life of the nun of the Order of Preachers is specifically ordered to the salvation of all people, these means assume a special character for her. The importance of each one of them derives from its relationship to this particular goal. When the Master General, Fr. A. Fernandez presented the final draft of the 1971 Constitutions he wrote this regarding the particularity of the vocation of the Dominican contemplative nun:

*The contemplative life of the nuns is of greatest benefit to the apostolate of the Order, not only because like other contemplatives, they offer their prayers and their life to God on behalf of the apostolic needs of the Church, but also because their contemplation and their life, inasmuch as they are truly and properly Dominican, are from the beginning ordered to the apostolate which the Dominican family exercises as a whole, and in which alone the fullness of the Dominican vocation is found.*<sup>22</sup>

In practice then, the utilization of the means to our goal must always be conditioned by our Dominican vocation. This holds good even in the application of general norms for purely contemplative institutes, except when expressly stated otherwise. Failure to do so leads to loss of identity and to the consequent impoverishment of the Church as a whole. The Decree on the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, of the Second Vatican Council, states:

*It is for the good of the Church that institutes have their own proper characters and functions. Therefore the spirit and aims of each founder should be faithfully accepted and retained, as indeed each institute's sound traditions, for these constitute the patrimony of an institute.*<sup>23</sup>

This statement clearly implies that modification of common means by each institute, to the attainment of its proper goal and the conservation of its specific spirit. In

the Basic Constitution of the Dominican nuns (apart from the general norms for the purely contemplative life), the following means are given: enclosure and silence, for the maintenance of withdrawal from the world, work, study, searching of the Scriptures, prayer, penance, communion and sisterly concord.<sup>24</sup> These elements are not set out here in their order of importance. To find this order we will have to look elsewhere in the nuns' Constitutions. Number 35 of the Constitutions treats of regular observance. In section II of this number it is stated that all the elements that constitute our Dominican life and order belong to regular observance. These elements are listed under two distinct groups: the more outstanding ones that pertain directly to the life, and those that are helps to the faithful fulfillment of the former. The more outstanding elements are common life, the celebration of the liturgy and private prayer, the observance of the vows and the study of sacred truth. Under the second group is listed enclosure, silence, the habit, work and penitential practices. Using the terminology of Claude Peifer, I will call elements of the first group, "primary," and the others, "secondary," which means that the former assume a greater importance in the life than the others because of their immediacy to the goal or ideal of the institute. But although the other groups of elements (or means) are called secondary, they are not thereby meant to be considered unimportant. Their function, to dispose towards the effective implementation of the primary elements is important. Some of these secondary elements can themselves be related to the fundamental ideology of the institute itself so that abandoning them could result in changing the orientation of the institute. Yet even so, we have to be clear about the difference. To give the secondary elements an absolute value is just as detrimental to the spirituality of the institute. We must remember that a spirituality calls for a certain balance in the arrangement of its constitutive essential elements. Any exaggerated importance allotted to one, or a diminution of the importance of another, results in a disruption of the essential balance that gives a spirituality its identity.

The major elements of our spirituality (and some of the lesser ones), will be treated now, each in its own right, to give us an overall view of the spirituality of our Dominican monastic life.

#### **4.4 Basic elements of the Spirituality of Dominican Monastic life**

##### **4.4.1 Common Life**

The first chapter of the nuns' Constitutions is dedicated to religious consecration and its first article is on Common Life. This situates the sisters in the context in which their spirituality is created and lived. For the same reason, the vows are treated under common life, for even though they establish the nun in the consecrated life, they find their realization only within the context of community.

Community life is an all important aspect of the spiritual life of the Dominican Contemplative sister. It is the Augustinian notion of community we are dealing with here, derived from the rule of St. Augustine that we follow. In the first chapter, we saw that Augustine's understanding of community life is inspired by the example of the apostolic

Church, but this inspiration goes back to the Gospel itself. It is recorded that Jesus was once approached by a man who asked him,

Master, which is the greatest commandment of the law?' Jesus said to him, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets' (Mt. 22:35-40).

In accordance with this teaching, Augustine gives primacy to the law of charity in his rule: "Before all else, dear sisters, love God and then your neighbour, because these are the chief commandments given to us."<sup>25</sup> Then he stresses that a profound communion among those intent on that one purpose, is the means par excellence to its attainment. Yet to call this communion a means is to say very little about it. Community life for St. Augustine is both the concrete implementation of the double precept of love and, the sure means by which we continue to strive after the perfection of charity. Here, we live love, and here again, we are spurred on to wider horizons of love.

Perhaps a review of the notion of communion in Christian life will enable us to grasp the saint's emphasis on it. Communion is generally an act of sharing; it denotes intimate fellowship or rapport.<sup>26</sup> Although sharing can be conceived of in a more personal level, the term carries with it connotations of partaking in something external to oneself such as goods had in common with others. The latter phrase, "intimate fellowship or rapport" brings out the interpersonal relation implied in the notion of communion more clearly. *Communio* is a relationship between persons, not only on the level of actions and things had in common, but even on the level of being; a communication of that which is personal to oneself to others.

Christian communion has its roots in the relationship of communion in the inner life of the Blessed Trinity itself. The relationship between the three Divine Persons is a relationship of communication. There is within the inner life of the Trinity "a communication of life in a ceaseless self-giving."<sup>27</sup> The Father's eternal knowledge of Himself generates the Son, and the love between the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit. In this relationship of communication, there is eternal communion between the Divine Persons.

The human being, created in the image of God, was destined to be, in a measure proper to his creaturely condition, in relation with God. Humankind's fall, however, estranged the human person from his exalted destiny. It was not until the eternal Son of God became Man was humankind recalled by Christ's salvific action, to friendship with God and a share in the inner life to the Triune God. Through baptism, the Christian shares in the death and resurrection of Christ, and by the same act Sanctifying grace, the formal principle by which we participate in the life of God is poured into our souls.<sup>28</sup> God henceforth dwells in us and, through knowledge and love, we are introduced into the relationship of communion with the Trinity. But the indwelling of God within us and the union that is established between us and the Trinity by Christ's reconciliatory act calls for union with other Christians in God as well. Christ prayed for unity among his disciples, a unity that would be founded on the relationship of intimacy and communion within the Trinity (Jn. 17:20-23). Having been reconciled with God in Christ, we are reconciled also with one another. Our mutual relationship should therefore be one of communion.

It is against this teaching that we must understand St. Augustine's emphasis on *communio*. The religious, striving after the perfection of charity, and determined on the whole-hearted pursuit of the evangelical life, can do no less than live in total communion with those engaged in the same pursuit. Communion, which the rule expresses in terms of *oneness of mind and heart*, will mean in practice, self-communication, sharing on all levels. It is more than living under the same roof or sitting side by side in the same stall. It calls for active presence and a sincere self-giving to one another. The human person is a complete entity in herself, but she is also constituted by her relations;<sup>29</sup> if the latter is denied her or withdrawn she is greatly impoverished. It is in this relationship of *communio* that each individual sister acquires her full stature and her capacity to advance daily in her continuous quest for God. *Communio* demands accommodation, renunciations and sacrifices from each nun for the integral growth of all. Even when our religious structures fail to measure up the needs of our fellow sisters, it is the ingenuity of love to make good this lack. Community is there to build up, not to destroy. It is not a straight jacket into which everybody must fit.

The rule of St. Augustine quotes the following sentence from the Acts of the Apostles, "...they had all things in common and distribution was made to each one according to each one's need" (4:32, 35). Does this apply only to food and clothing in the monastery of the nuns, or does it extend to other areas such as work, prayer and the demands of the rule of enclosure? Even in these areas, not all the sisters have the same capacity, but in order that each one attain integral growth, there will always be a need to see that "distribution" is made according to the proper need and capacity. The Dominican principle of dispensation was intended by the founder to serve the ideal of the Order. This principle highlights the centrality of the goal over and against the means no matter the importance of the latter. Its application is always geared towards the protection of the goal. In the community of the nuns, if the principle of dispensation is rightly understood and correctly applied, it can be effective in achieving the integral growth of the individual notwithstanding the limited number of her native qualities (cf. Const. 1, a. 1, n. 5).

The main reason why, in community, we cannot be simple contented to live side by side without making the progress of our fellow sisters our immediate concern is that we are bound by a common vision and we are pressing forward toward a common purpose. According to St. Augustine, this is the reason why we are gathered together: *to have one mind and heart in God*. The comment on this statement by Adolar Zumkeller is worth quoting here. He says,

As Christian Religious...we are on our way to God, intent upon God. He is our goal toward which we are daily advancing both as individuals and as communities. This *intent upon God*, this shared seeking of God, therefore, sets its mark upon the whole life in community.<sup>30</sup>

Our bond of unity is this common intent on God. In our communal life, praying and celebrating the Eucharist together, this bond is nourished and strengthened, as love is poured into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:4). The soul of our community life is clearly Christ and the Holy Spirit. This ideal of a shared vision and a common purpose strengthened by love, is fundamental to the community life of the Dominican nuns. Goodwill alone lacks the force to sustain enthusiasm to the point of sacrifice for others, but the participation in a shared vision and unity in love makes that possible.<sup>31</sup>

To conclude this section, we must emphasize this fact: our community is not intended to be a closed in entity. When our Constitution state: “This unity transcends the limits of the monastery and attains its fullness in communion with the Order and with the whole Church of Christ,”<sup>32</sup> it negates any such idea.

#### 4.4.2 The Vows

The evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience are fundamental to any form of religious life. It is by the profession of these vows that one is established in that canonical state of life fittingly called the religious life. The term *canonical state* can be defined as, “any state of life within the Church which is recognized as one of the fundamental categories into which members of the Church are divided and for which there is a proper legislation.”<sup>33</sup> According to the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (n.44), the canonical state which is called “religious life” is that which is constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels; a statement which implies that religious life does not exist without the profession of these counsels. They are the centre, support, fabric, program and constant concern of this state.<sup>34</sup>

The spirit of the vows has been upheld throughout the history of monasticism even though the exact division itself was late in coming. What the religious professes through the counsels stems from the teaching and example of the life of Christ. Early monasticism had as its ideal the total following of Christ, which means that monks and nuns strove to live in imitation of Christ and in obedience to his teaching. They did not find it necessary, nor did they attempt to systematize the following of Christ into definite obligations; for as Claude Peifer rightly points out, “no classification according to logical and juridical concepts is capable of expressing the complete experiential reality of renunciation and consecration to God which are entailed in religious profession.”<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, this division of the content of our profession into three vows, which came through a slow and maturing process, was inspired by the ideal of radical renunciation evident in the lives of anchorites and virgins. The said division was accepted and justified by St. Thomas Aquinas who explained that the religious state may be considered in three ways: as a practice of tending towards the perfection of charity, as (a) quieting of the human mind from outward solicitude and, finally, as a holocaust whereby a man offers himself and his possessions wholly to God.<sup>36</sup>

Understood in any of these ways, the vows can be seen to serve the end of religious life. For the practice of charity, Thomas holds that the vows remove all of the hindrances which he enumerates as: attachment to goods, concupiscence of sensible and venereal pleasures, and inordinateness of the human will. They are simultaneously remedied by poverty, chastity, and obedience. In the same manner the three vows take away the disquiet occasioned by worldly solicitude: goods, wife and children, and the disposal of one’s actions. Finally, if religious life is seen as a holocaust, the same vows enable the religious person to offer to God three goods: external goods, goods of one’s body (the renunciation of bodily pleasures), and the good of one’s soul.<sup>37</sup>

The theology of the vows has since the time of St. Thomas Aquinas been developed, although his teaching still exerts a considerable influence. The matter of these vows is still respectively a renunciation of material possession, marriage and

independence; they are a “stimulus for the religious to overcome the three greatest temptations: ownership, self-enjoyment and power.”

As many other things, the content of religious vows can run the risk of losing its challenge when legislated. It should be remembered that early monks and nuns regarded their life as an existential whole which had its prototype in the gospels.<sup>39</sup> They threw themselves enthusiastically to the daily demands of this life without question. When the matter of our vows are carefully calculated and divided into three distinct obligations, we risk losing that whole-hearted fervour of our predecessors, or our own original fervour, by giving only what is expressly required. To retain their value, the vows must be understood in the light of consecration, which notion is at their roots. The spirituality of every religious institute is geared towards enabling the religious to live up to that consecration; and the profession of vows is at the center of that spirituality.

Religious vows establish us in a state of consecration by which our whole person is dedicated to the exclusive of service of God.<sup>40</sup> Following a definition by Gambari, “Consecration expresses the dynamic and religious aspect of belonging entirely to God.” It is a witness of faith in him and a homage to his divine sovereignty; and a sacrifice of the whole person by which all his actions are elevated to God.<sup>41</sup> There is inherent in this consecration, a threefold dimension: detachment from creatures, cleaving to God, and a freedom for service (a return to humankind). The first dimension can be designated ascetical, the second-mystical, and the last – aspotolic.<sup>42</sup> The renunciation inherent in this consecration was from earliest times regarded as a holocaust, a sacrifice that re-enforces that total offering of oneself. We have an example of this in the consecration of virgins in the early Church. It constituted the virgin a person set apart. She was, according to the teaching of the present Church documents, “a sign of the Church’s love for Christ and an eschatological image of the world to come, the glory of the heavenly Bride of Christ.”<sup>43</sup> This renunciation led to more fervent love of Christ and attachment to him, and real freedom for the service of other people.

Religious vows effect a similar consecration by which a person is rendered free for the service of God, free to pursue the perfection of charity. Every Christian, in whatever state of life, is bound to tend to holiness, yet not all are obliged to make the triple renunciation of the vows even though the spiritual attitudes of all must be inspired in some measure by their content. Religious life is not detached from ordinary Christian life. The consecration by vows simply renders the religious free to live her Christian life more fully and to strive after this single purpose.

In the Constitutions of the nuns, the vows are treated under religious consecration together with common life and regular observance. Here the connection between the evangelical counsels and the other areas of our life is demonstrated. The vows are lived within the context of community, and regular observance itself is the concrete way of implementing the content of community, and regular observance itself is the concrete way of implementing the content of the vows. On the other hand, it is through the profession of these vows that the religious community is created. There is a link between all the elements of our life. Not even the vows we profess are the private business of the individual. They have relevance to the other members of the community:

The nuns first build in their own monasteries the Church of God which they help to spread throughout the world by the offering of themselves. They accomplish this by being of one mind through obedience, bound together by love of things above (cf. Col.

3:1) through the discipline of chastity, and more closely dependent upon one another through poverty.”<sup>44</sup>

Communio extends to all the areas of our life.

#### 4.4.2.1.1. Obedience

Obedience has a unique importance among the vows. We understand it to imply the matter of the other two vows and consequently, it is the only vow we pronounce at our profession. For this reason too, it is treated first in our constitutions.

According to the Constitutions, obedience supplies the principle of unity both in the community and in the Order, and because of that, we not only promise obedience to the prioress but to the Master of the Order as well. In this way, we conserve the unity of the Order and profession, since both depend on our common obligation of obedience to the one head.<sup>45</sup>

In accordance with the teaching of the Church, obedience for us is a special way of imitating Christ’s submission to the Father’s will for the salvation of the world. By the same act we are dedicated more fully to the Church and the Order. This same teaching is found in the Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelica Testificatio*.

Through this profession, in fact, you make a total offering of your will and enter more decisively and more surely into his plan of salvation. Following the will of Christ who came to do the will of the Father, and in communion with him who “learnt to obey through suffering” and “ministered to the brethren,” you have assumed a firmer commitment to the ministry of the Church and of your brethren.<sup>46</sup>

The nuns of the Order of Preachers are also called upon, in their practice of obedience, to imitate Our Blessed Lady who “through her obedience became a cause of salvation both to herself and to the whole human race.”<sup>47</sup> Here again, our Constitutions echo the doctrine of Vatican Council II. Mary cooperated through her obedience, faith and hope in the same work of salvation of Christ.<sup>48</sup> Having set before us then the models of obedience, we are called upon to emulate them. Christ’s example has revealed to us the true significance of obedience: a total and wholehearted conformity to the communion with God’s will, whenever and however it is presented. The renunciation which this vow entails continues Christ’s self offering, and is a sacrifice for ourselves and the Church.<sup>49</sup> Elio Gambari develops this idea further in this way:

The sacrifice of the will like the sacrifice of the Calvary, is a death which brings forth life; it is detachment from self. Our fragile and inconstant wills, which so often make wrong choices, are strengthened and raised up to the level of God’s will and to his plan of salvation.<sup>50</sup>

Our religious vow of obedience also involves the question of authority. While our Constitutions call on the nuns to listen to the prioress and to one another, they likewise exhort the prioress to listen willingly to the nuns and seek their view, even though it belongs to her authority to make the final decision.<sup>51</sup>

The purpose of this mutual listening is the goal of obedience within the community, which is the preservation of the common good. Because the prioress seeks the will of God and that of the community, she is recommended to set her pleasure in

serving rather than ruling.<sup>52</sup> Once again, our particular regulations accord very well with the teaching of the Church on the matter of authority. In the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelica Testificatio* it is stated regarding the relationship between authority and obedience:

Consequently, authority and obedience are exercised in the service of the common good as two complementary aspects of the same participation in Christ's offering. For those in authority, it is a matter of serving in their brothers the designs of the Father's will; while in accepting their directives, the religious follow our Master's example and cooperate in the work of salvation.<sup>53</sup>

For the best functioning of authority and obedience, a spirit of faith and love and an attitude of cooperation is required.

A final point brought up in our Constitutions is the obedience we owe to the Roman Pontiff as head of the Church. Our vow is not limited to the community and the Order, but like all other religious, we are all subject to the Roman Pontiff. Once again, united in authority under one head, we are one with the entire Church.

#### **4.4.2.2 Chastity**

By the vow of chastity, the nuns are dedicated to God with an undivided heart, and by their renunciation of marriage they are more disposed to co-operate in the work of human regeneration.<sup>54</sup> It evokes the union between Christ and the Church symbolized by marriage, in a more immediate way and brings that surpassing excellence to which all human love should tend.<sup>55</sup> Chastity is a vow to love. Pope Paul VI stressed this positive aspect of the vow, affirming that it witnesses to the preferential love for the Lord as well as bringing about a transformation of the religious person's inmost being, and imbuing it with a mysterious likeness to Christ.<sup>56</sup>

Our Constitutions name among the benefits of this vow to ourselves, purity of heart, freedom of spirit and depth of love which enable us to achieve greater control of mind and body and to give ourselves to God with greater energy, serenity and fruitfulness. By freeing our hearts for God alone, the evangelical vow of chastity makes us spiritually fruitful. We become a "sign and stimulus of charity" in the world.<sup>57</sup> The point to be stressed here, is that, far from making us closed in within ourselves, chastity opens us up to all of God's children. We are closer to them, and recognized their dignity as children of God, the closer we are to God by virtue of our vow of chastity.

Chastity is a virtue to be cultivated. In the early centuries of the Church, virginity was regarded as a martyrdom among other things because it involves a struggle, touching as it does on the deepest instincts of the human person. It is for this reason that psychological and moral maturity is demanded of our candidates. For the cultivation of this virtue, the sisters are exhorted to have a close communion with God through prayer, the word and sacrament; and devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Serene friendship among the members of the community is likewise recommended.

It is necessary to state that the struggle involved in the practice of the vow of chastity (as in all the vows), makes it possible for the nuns to relate with the rest of humankind in its daily struggle to remain faithful to the Lord. When we utter the

compassionate cry of St. Dominic in our prayer: “What will become of sinners?” we will be praying as (indeed we are) people who are part of that human condition.

The practice of chastity is very closely linked with community. It is in this environment that the vow is more effectively lived; for here, the individual nuns are sustained, supported and spurred on both by the community and by one another.

#### **4.4.2.3 Poverty**

To preach the Gospel, both the apostles and the first Dominicans had to forego riches. Christ Jesus himself became poor that he might bring salvation to the poor. In imitation of these, the nuns of the Sacred Order of Preachers are exhorted to practice voluntary poverty. Cooperating in the ministry of the brethren to draw people from the tyranny of riches, they endeavour first of all to conquer greed in themselves.

Poverty is understood in terms of community – having all things in common; the daily practice of which involves the receiving of what each one stands in need of and no more. It rules out the acquisition of superfluity both on the individual and communal levels. This vow enables the nun to associate with the poor to whom the gospel is preached, and because it excludes the amassing of wealth on any level, personal or corporate, the community is able to practice liberality to the more needy.<sup>58</sup> Poverty, more than any of the other vows, banishes any idea that the community of the contemplative Dominican nun is a closed in entity. We are able to feel the pinch of human deprivation through the vow of poverty, and the same experience moves us to reach out to the needy, for it is the truly poor who know how to share.

#### **4.4.3 Prayer and the Word of God**

My treatment of prayer and the word of God here disrupts the order in which these elements of our Spirituality are treated in our Constitutions. Regular observance comes first. Yet, even though it is stated that to regular observance belong all the elements that constitute our Dominican life, only what I termed secondary elements are treated under that section. This is due to the fact that all of the other elements are treated in distinct chapters of their own. Following my own arrangement of primary and secondary elements, I take up prayer and the word of God before going on to elements like the enclosure.

Prayer is central to the lifestyle of all contemplative nuns, and everything else revolves around this focal point and is subordinate to it. But prayer for the Dominican nuns also has a special association with the word of God. All of the Dominican prayer and contemplation springs from the word and is nourished by the same. It is true that earlier constitutions did not bring out this essential link between the word and prayer in the life of the nuns as the present ones do. There was never a distinct chapter on hearing and reading the word as we have today. This new development, betrays a growing self-understanding of the nuns themselves in the Order of Preachers; and this especially because, those Constitutions which first allotted a distinct chapter to the word of God were the first in which the nuns took part in drawing. The special emphasis on the place of the word in the life of the nuns of the Order of Preachers should be a distinguishing mark, for their very vocation is defined in the basic Constitutions in terms of listening,

pondering and called on the Word of God. It is assumed therefore, that the Dominican nun's prayer and contemplation has its basis sound doctrine and sound knowledge of Sacred Scriptures. That is why study must have a place of honour in our lifestyle. Apart from the disciplinary value of study, and the mental stimulation and intellectual development it effects, Sister Mary Wiercinski points to the fact that in our lifestyle, study leads to an understanding and appreciation of both Scripture and theology. It provides as well the basis for *lectio divina* and contemplative life.<sup>59</sup>

Since much has already been said about prayer in this whole study, I will limit myself to the subject as it is presented to the nuns in their Constitutions. The chapter opens with the description of two models of prayer: Our Lord Jesus Christ who "during his life offered prayer and supplication to God with loud cries and tears" (Heb. 5:7), and St. Dominic who, in imitation of Christ spent the night in prayer and vigils.<sup>60</sup> Then with the words of St. Paul the nuns are reminded to pray always (I Thes. 5:17), and to emulate both the example of Christ and that of St. Dominic.

Certain characteristics of the prayer life of St. Dominic are particularly mentioned: devotion in celebrating the Divine Office, tirelessness in prayer, both by day and night. What seems at first sight insignificant is the mention made of the holy father's habit of praying behind closed doors. The significance of this statement will emerge when we look at the two divisions of prayer: liturgy and secret (private) prayer found in our Constitutions. In their imitation of St. Dominic, the nuns are particularly recommended to remember his cry to the Lord, "what will become of sinners?"

The last section of number 74 of our Constitutions, summarizes what characterizes the prayer life of the Dominican nun from the example of Christ and St. Dominic given above. Briefly, the life as a whole is harmoniously ordered to preserving the continuous remembrance of God. The *whole life* certainly includes everything; even activities, such as the work of the sisters, which are not directly touching on prayer. But the celebration of the Eucharist and the Divine Office, reading and meditating on Sacred Scriptures, private prayer, vigils and intercessions are especially mentioned. Through these spiritual exercises, we strive to have the same mind as Christ Jesus.

Secret prayer in our life, which takes place in "silence and stillness," is directed towards the search for God's face, and intercession for the salvation of all people. Finally the prayer of thanksgiving and a constant remembrance of Christ crucified are enjoined on the nuns. According to our Constitutions, the fulfillment of all that is presented to the nuns here, is what constitutes them truly nuns of the Order of Preachers.

This is indeed a very significant statement for us. A look at the spiritual elements of our life set out in our Constitutions and the emphasis laid on the liturgical celebration and the practice of secret prayer, reveals a characteristic monastic emphasis. The fact is that Dominican monastic life is firmly established in traditional monasticism albeit having its own specifically Dominican character. By stating that the whole of the nun's life is harmoniously ordered to preserving the continual remembrance of God, the Constitutions are simply affirming the monastic lifestyle of the nun. A major aspect this lifestyle, one which clearly distinguishes it from that which is called *active*, is this whole harmonious organization of the elements towards the contemplation of God. The celebration of the liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharist and all private prayer resulting from the same has a clear and decisive primacy in this monastic lifestyle.<sup>61</sup> It determines the whole arrangement of all other activities undertaken within the monastery, because

the life of monastic religious is ordained primarily and thoroughly towards the contemplation of God.<sup>62</sup>

In his whole approach to prayer, St. Dominic drew inspiration to a large extent from ancient monastic tradition. The Benedictine rule had organized the monastic day around the recitation of the Divine Office, making it clear that no other activity performed in the monastery should be preferred to this *opus Dei* (work of God).<sup>63</sup> It was this emphasis that Cluniac monks took up, to the extent of leaving aside all other manual labour to their oblate brothers. The Cistercians brought back the balance between the necessary performance of the *opus Dei* and manual labour, while still retaining the important place of the former. The practice of the solemn recitation of the Hours was likewise taken up by the Orders of Canons regular. From this background, it became part of the Dominican heritage through the founder, who himself had been a canon.

Fr. Giardini has pointed out that the monks' original purpose of structuring the Divine Office the way they did throughout the day and night, was to realize the observation of the Lord's injunction to pray always. By reading, reciting and praying Holy Scripture they could fulfill the obligation. However, due to the limited capacity of the human psyche, the times of formal prayer were brought to seven, the perfect number. Through these times of prayer, interspersed with work (*ora et labora*), the Benedictine rule realized the monks' aspirations.<sup>64</sup>

The celebration of the liturgy also led to contemplation. Guigo (or Guy) II, a twelfth-century Carthusian monk, in his work, *Scala Caustralium* (The Ladder of the Cloistered), listed three steps to contemplation: *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*:

Reading, you should seek...meditating you will find...praying you shall call and contemplating, the door shall be opened to you.<sup>65</sup>

An earlier tradition of the Latin Fathers had the list as follows: *lectio*, *oratio*, *meditatio* and *contemplatio*, and thus it is found in St. Dominic's nine way of prayer.<sup>66</sup> But what is important here is that in monastic tradition, prayer and contemplation flow from the attentive reading of Sacred Scriptures, *lectio divina*. Usually *lectio divina* should involve the whole movement from lection to *contemplatio*,<sup>67</sup> although the term, refers properly only to *lectio* and *oratio*. But these are meant to lead on to *meditatio* and *contemplatio*. It is in this way that our Constitutions present *lectio divina* to us. It states:

*Lectio Divina* is ordained to a real dialogue with God, for "we speak to God when we pray, we hear him when we read the divine sayings" (St. Ambrose).<sup>68</sup>

Fr. Giardini indicates the essential unity found between *lectio divina* and *Opus Dei*. He points to the fact that the community does also engage in *lectio divina* when celebrating the Divine Office (*Opus Dei*). *Lectio* is engaged in here on a communal level and should lead the individuals to meditation and contemplation, a thing that is best achieved if time and space is provided in the performance of this exercise for meditation and contemplation.<sup>69</sup>

In our Constitutions, we are presented with two forms of prayer: liturgical and private. It is essential that we understand the connection between the two. Our spiritual exercises are not divided into two water-tight compartments, the one public and the other

private, but the one leads on to the other. Although in the life of St. Dominic, something is told of his devotion in celebrating the Eucharist and the Divine office, greater details are given us about his personal prayer. He always remained in the chapel late after the celebration of the Divine Office for *orationes secretae* (private prayers). It is to be understood that meditation and contemplation were thus issuing from his liturgical celebration. Our own liturgical prayer should likewise inform our private prayer, and from that intimacy with God in our private prayer, we should move on to celebrate his praise and glory in the liturgy. It is one and the same movement.

I would like to point out that both the liturgical celebration and the practice of private prayer, although traditional to monastic life, occupy a special place in Dominican spirituality. This is due to the special place of the Word of God in our life. It is the same Word Incarnate that we search for in Scripture, that we celebrate and we preach. Dominican devotion to the Blessed Eucharist is founded on this intimate relationship of the members of our Order to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Word of God. This intimacy is nourished both in the liturgy, and in that secret prayer within each one's heart which our constitutions say Dominic practiced behind closed doors.<sup>70</sup> The phrase *closed doors* can be understood as the intimacy of one's heart; but the use of it in our constitutions seems to emphasize the concept of secret prayer and its particular importance in our spirituality.

To conclude, I would like to say a word about the recommendation in our constitutions that the nuns should remember Dominic's cry of concern for sinners. This cry demonstrates our holy founder's compassionate nature, but it also has real relevance to the members of the Order and especially the nuns. Our contemplation is geared towards a purpose -- the salvation of all people. It embraces the whole universe because redeemed by Christ. We must share this deep sense of compassion of our holy father for our fellow human beings, and bring them daily before the Lord.

#### **4.4.4 Work**

In our constitutions, work is considered among the secondary elements yet it is allotted a distinct chapter of its own. There is something in the nature of monastic work that constitutes it a very important element, albeit secondary. From the very beginning the monk has engaged in manual labour alongside his life of prayer. Work was valued for many reasons: as a spiritual exercise, a form of discipline, a penitential practice when it was particularly burdensome. Monastic persons also regarded manual labour as a means of allaying concupiscence and preventing temptation.<sup>71</sup> But apart from the good to oneself, the work of monks also contributed to the development of others, especially through agriculture and teaching. The Dominican nun's Constitutions treat work very briefly, but the treatment includes all of the main ideas of the theology of monastic labour. First of all, we have a passage quoted from the primitive Constitutions of San Sisto (ch.XX) which has work as the enemy to idleness. Then quoting from the passage in Genesis in which man is cursed to eat bread in the sweat of his brow (Gen. 3:19); St. Paul's statement that the one who refuses to work should not eat (2 Thes. 3:10); and finally, from the psalmist, that one shall eat bread from the palm of his hand and be satisfied, the nuns are exhorted to engage in manual labour when they are not praying, reading, studying or preparing for the Divine Office.

In the other numbers, the ideas of work as a participation in the work of the Redeemer, and a fulfillment of the designs of the creator, are mentioned. Further mention is made of the ascetical nature of work and its particular connection with the state of the poor. In this way the whole theology of work is covered briefly.

There can sometimes be observed in communities of monastic persons, a tension between work and prayer. While prayer has the central place and everything else is arranged accordingly, there do arise occasions in which the demands of work, in the form of service, or the fulfillment of the demands of charity are more urgent, even at the cost of prayer. The tendency in some cases is to think that one is being unfaithful to one's life of prayer, and that one has to "make up" the time lost in working. This solution may be quite laudable in itself but, when such an attitude becomes obsessive, it definitely betrays a lack of understanding of the place of work in its own right in our overall spirituality.

Monastic labour is not something that should be done only when there is nothing else to do. It is an essential element of the lifestyle. Early eremitics engaged in work. Out of the raw material available in their regions, they wove baskets, mats, ropes and linen to sell or exchange for their basic necessities.<sup>72</sup> When Pachmius came into the scene, manual labour took on a prominent place in his monastic lifestyle. The products of the monks would be sold to support the communities and to assist the poor. On the everyday practical level too, "work was a sovereign remedy for the mental state of *accidie* – that insidious demon of the burning noonday which tempted solitary and cenobite alike to abandon his vocation through boredom and disgust."<sup>73</sup> Much later, when the Benedictine rule prescribed manual labour and prayer, work was regarded not just as a means of living poverty, but above all as a help in reducing the psychic strain caused by lengthy prayers.<sup>74</sup> The Church Fathers saw the exercise of work as imaging the creative activity of God in Genesis, chapter 1. The human person created in the image of God, utilizing his talents for good, works with the creative power of God.<sup>75</sup>

Another traditional view of human labour is as a participation in the redemptive activity of Christ. When our Lord Jesus declared that his Father goes on working and so does he (cf. Jn. 5:17), he reversed the whole notion of work as the curse of Adam in Genesis, 3:17-19. In our redeemed state, work has become a participation in the redeeming action of Christ. As he went about doing good to people and bringing them God's love and salvation, our work of service images his. In all of traditional teaching on work, the human person is the master of work and not subjected to work. Work serves the person for the glory of God for it is to the human being that the power was given to subdue the earth and this is accomplished through human labour.<sup>76</sup>

The notion of work in religious life, as presented to us by the Church's teaching today, remains within the ambient of tradition. Work and the evangelical counsel of poverty are shown to be especially connected as is clearly seen here:

It will therefore be an essential aspect of your poverty to bear witness to the human meaning of work which is carried out in liberty of spirit and restored to its true nature as the source of sustenance and of service.<sup>77</sup>

It is the lot of the majority of people to earn their living through manual labour and especially the poor. By work, the religious associates with the poor. Today work is envisaged more as a form of poverty and solidarity with other human beings, most of them poor, then merely as penance.

The document quoted here asks of religious to bear witness to the true meaning of work. The allusion is to a false ideology which puts work at the first place and the person as the servant of work. Labour then becomes a form of oppression rather than a way of expressing human dignity. Religious are expected to have the right attitude to work, regarding it as a means of sustenance and service, yet never allowing themselves to be enslaved by the desire to gain which is the source of all oppression associated with labour. It is for this reason, therefore, that the document continues to warn against allowing work to derogate their religious vocation and leading them to secularization. They exhorted to be watchful of the spirit animating them lest they find themselves valued solely by the payment they receive for worldly work.<sup>78</sup>

Although such warning and exhortations may apply primarily to religious institutes engaged in the active apostolate, they apply likewise to monasteries of contemplative religious. Their need to earn their living should not make the nuns and monks enslaved to labour. While we must keep in mind the essential place of work in our monastic life, we must also beware of activism, lest in spite of withdrawal and enclosure we become likewise secularized. In many monasteries there are always two opposing trends: that which holds all for prayer, regarding work as a mere disturbance, and the other which holds all for work, because the nuns are poor and must earn their living. None of the two trends show a mature integration of their monastic values. We have one single lifestyle with various elements that serve the one purpose – our religious ideal. Only the harmonious arrangement of these elements can bring about that goal. It is neither served by the exaggeration of one, nor the ignoring of another. Work is part of our Dominican monastic heritage, but it must be consonant with our monastic vocation, best adapted to the develop in each sister an interior freedom and a sense of responsibility.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Notes

- <sup>i</sup> Gannon and Traub, *The Desert and the City*, op. cit., p.82.
- <sup>ii</sup> Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, op. cit., p.149 ff.
- <sup>iii</sup> For the distinction between the form of the *vita apostolica* lived by Canons Regulars and that lived by the Friars, see Simon Tugwell, O.P., *The Way of the Preacher* (London, 1979) pp.100-101.
- <sup>iv</sup> Cf. P. Jiri Maria Vesely, O.P., *Il Secondo Ordine di S. Domenico*, op. cit., p.9 (free translation mine).
- <sup>v</sup> Vesely, op. cit., p.10.
- <sup>vi</sup> Called Albigensians after the little town, Albi, in France in which the sect was concentrated.
- <sup>vii</sup> M.-H. Vicaire, *St. Dominic; His Life and Times* (London, 1964), pp.122-123.
- <sup>viii</sup> Vesely, op. cit., p.15 (Free translation, mine).
- <sup>ix</sup> Id., op. cit., pp.27-28.
- <sup>x</sup> Id. op. cit., p.16.
- <sup>xi</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xii</sup> See Herbert Scheeben, *Der Heilige Dominicus*, Herder, n.d.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Cf. Bede Jarret, *Life of St. Dominic*, (New York, 1964), p.47.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Vicaire, op. cit., p.274.
- <sup>xv</sup> Vicaire, op. cit. p.118. Note that Bede Jarret does not hold this view. According to him it is not clear that Dominic gave a definitive rule to the sisters before 1216. He writes "...it would seem that so long as he was near them he (Dominic) trusted to his personal influence to direct them and to his spiritual discretion to secure for them eventually a written Constitution" [Bede Jarret, *Life of St. Dominic*, (New York, 1964), op. cit., p.43]. Regarding St. Dominic's intention to hand over the nuns to the Cistercians, Bede Jarret is silent, but he does record that "Long after St. Dominic's death, William Claret, their procurator and prior, himself a Friar Preacher, left that Order to become a Cistercian and tried to persuade the sisters to follow him but they stoutly refused all his efforts and would not accept the absolute seclusion he planned for them" (id., op. cit., p.48). Jarret is supported by Vesely, who states: "UP till 1217 the sisters of Prouille had not acquired any of the rules of the older Orders, but were united alone by the regulations of St. Dominic" (Vesely, op. cit., p.32). Regarding the Cistercians and the intention to hand over the nuns to that Order, Vesely cites P. Otmar Decker, O.P. who says that documentation is lacking to support the theory (Vesely, op. cit., pp.32, 33).
- <sup>xvi</sup> Jarret, op. cit., p.44.
- <sup>xvii</sup> id, op. cit., p.48.
- <sup>xviii</sup> id. op. cit., p.47.
- <sup>xix</sup> Constitutions of the Nuns of the Sacred Order of Preachers, 1930, ch. 1:5, cited in *The Cloistered Dominicans Yesterday and Today* by Summit Nuns (New Jersey, 1969), p. 8
- <sup>xx</sup> Fr. Anicetus Fernandez, O.P., "Letter to the Nuns", General Chapter of Tallaght, 1971, reprinted in the *Book of Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order of Preacher* ([n. c.], U.S.A., 1987), p.3.
- <sup>xxi</sup> For this letter, see Tugwell (ed.), *Early Dominicans*, op. cit., p.394.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Cf. Vesely, op. cit., p.62.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Power, op. cit., p.90.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Vesely, op. cit., p.63 (free translation mine).
- <sup>xxv</sup> Vicaire, op. cit., p.346.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Cf. Vesely, op. cit., pp.63-64.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Guy Bédouelle, O.P., "Dominican Nuns: Highlights" in *Dominican Monastic Search*, Vol. 9, 1990, p.79.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Vesely, op. cit., p.107 (free translation mine).
- <sup>xxx</sup> Cf. Bédouelle, op. cit., p.81.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Cf. William Hinnebusch, *The Dominicans: A Short History* (New York, 1975), p.24.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Cf. Bédouelle, op. cit., p.79.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Const. 1:I.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Jarret, op. cit., p.45.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> I avoid the use of this term because it gives a negative tone to the life of the nuns. The cloister, one of the means utilized to realize the contemplative life can, in my judgment, not be identified with the life itself. Besides, the term, though popular, is not official. The official term is *moniales*.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> "Fundamental Constitutions of the Order," IV, in *Cont.* p.23 (emphasis mine).
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Opera, I, 58-59, cited by William Hinnebusch, O.P. in *Renewal in the Spirit of St. Dominic* (Washington, 1968), p.51.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Anselm Moynihan, O.P., "Dominican Contemplative life in the Church," in *Dominican Ashram*, Vol. 1, n.4, Dec. 1982, p.2.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> "Charism" here should be understood as a particular gift of the Holy Spirit received by the founder and shared in by his followers for the good of the Church.

<sup>xi</sup> Fr. Moynihan compares the Dominican contemplative dimension to that of the Carmelites. Whereas the latter's contemplation stems from the hermit's desire to leave the world and to be alone with God and emphasis is laid on forgetting the world and all that is in it, the former brings that very world back to God in her contemplation. Her concern is for the salvation of all redeemed by Christ. Moynihan explains this idea well, but personally, I consider any such distinction superficial because the hermit forgets the world only in order to best appreciate its true worth before God. Yet, I think that Moynihan's reflection on Dominican contemplation can help the Dominican nun to see the unity between her specific Dominican apostolic vocation and her purely contemplative life. Her contemplation should make her more aware of the world and its needs, and like St. Dominic, be able to utter the cry: "What will become of sinners?". (See Moynihan, op. cit., pp.4-5).

<sup>xii</sup> Cf. Moynihan, op. cit., p.5.

<sup>1</sup> Prologue of the Primitive Constitutions (of the Friars) in *Book of Constitutions of the Nuns*, 1987, op.cit., p. 23. Henceforth, the present (1987) Constitutions of the nuns will be referred to as *Const.*

<sup>2</sup> Fundamental Constitutions of the Nuns, *Const. n. 1*, (emphasis mine).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Peifer, Op. cit., p. 23

<sup>5</sup> Fabio Giardini, *The Spirit of St. Dominic*, Unpublished Lectures given at the Dominican House of Studies (Rome, 1988), p.17.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Peifer, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Idem., op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Idem., op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> See Giardini, op. cit., p. 17 ff. for a fuller treatment of this subject.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Giardini, op. cit. p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. "Letter of Brother Damian Byrne, Master of the Order," in *Const.*, op. cit. p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Vicaire, op. cit., p. 350 (parenthesis mine).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., op. cit., p. 429.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. William Hinnebusch, O.P., *The History of the Dominican Order: Origins and Growth to 1500*, Vol. 1 (New York, 1965), p. 381.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Bédouelle, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Hinnebusch, *The Dominicans: A Short History*, op. cit. 169

<sup>17</sup> *Const. n. 1:II.*

<sup>18</sup> For the dictionary meaning of seek, ponder and call upon, see *Longman Dictionary of English Language*, Major edition (Essex, England, 1991), PP. 228, 1245, 1458.

- <sup>19</sup> Mary Kain, O.P., “Dominican Origins and Charism” in *One Mind and Heart in God*, op. cit., p. 53.
- <sup>20</sup> *Constitutions des Moniales de l’Ordre des Prêcheurs*, (Langeac, 1987), pp. 3-4, (emphasis mine).
- <sup>21</sup> Cf. *Const.* 1:IV, V.
- <sup>22</sup> “Letter of Fr. Anicetus Fernandez,” in *Const.* P. 2, (emphasis mine).
- <sup>23</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2, b, (emphasis mine).
- <sup>24</sup> *Const.* 1:5.
- <sup>25</sup> “The Rule of St. Augustine, 1” in *Const.*, p. 11.
- <sup>26</sup> Longman Dictionary of English Language, op. cit. p. 324.
- <sup>27</sup> Sister Mary of the Annunciation, O.P., “Communion as the Image of the Trinity” in *Dominican Monastic Search*, vol. 9, 1990, p. 5.
- <sup>28</sup> Cf. Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology*, (London, 1980), p.67.
- <sup>29</sup> Cf. Sr. Mary of the Precious Blood, O.P., “Some Reflections on the Metaphysical basis of Communio According to St. Thomas Aquinas” in *Dominican Monastic Search*, Vol. 9, 1990, p. 3.
- <sup>30</sup> Adolar Zumkeller, O.S.A., *Augustine’s Rule: A Commentary* (Pennsylvania, 1987), p. 24.
- <sup>31</sup> Cf. Thomas Dubay, *Caring: A Biblical Theology of Community* (New Jersey, 1973), p.31.
- <sup>32</sup> *Const.* 2:1.
- <sup>33</sup> Cf. Gambari, op. cit., p. 100.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> Peifer, op. cit., p. 179.
- <sup>36</sup> *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 186, art.7.
- <sup>37</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup> Cf. John Paul II, November 28, 1981, cited by Gambari, op. cit., p. 106.
- <sup>39</sup> Cf. Peifer, op. cit., p. 181.
- <sup>40</sup> *Const.* 1:III.
- <sup>41</sup> Cf. Gambari, op. cit., p. 91.
- <sup>42</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Sacred Congregation of Divine Worship, *Mos Virgines Consecrandi: Introduction to the rite of Consecration to a life of Virginity*, May 1970, in *Vatican II, Post Conciliar Documents*, Vol. II, gen. ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Bombay 1988), p. 193.

<sup>44</sup> Const. 3:II.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Const. 17:II.

<sup>46</sup> Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life: Evangelica Testificatio*, 29 June, 1971, n. 23.

<sup>47</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Heareses*, III, 22, 4. See Const. 19:1.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium*, 21 November, 1964, n. 61.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Const. 19:II

<sup>50</sup> Gambari, op. cit., p. 313.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Const. 20.

<sup>52</sup> Const. 20:III.

<sup>53</sup> *Evangelica Testificatio*, 25.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Ibid. 24:I

<sup>55</sup> See *Evangelica Testificatio*, 13.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 42.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Const. 28:II.

<sup>59</sup> Mary Wiercinski, "The Word of God in the Life of the Dominican Nuns: Lectio and Study," in *One Mind and Heart*, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>60</sup> Const. 74.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. George Aschenbrenner, S.J. "Active and Monastic: Two Apostolic Lifestyles" *Review for Religious* Sept.-Oct., 1986, p. 657.

<sup>62</sup> In this statement, the term *monastic* seems to refer properly to contemplative institutes. Some monastic institutes of men today (especially of the Benedictine family) are also engaged full time in the active apostolate, which fact hardly makes their life ordained primarily to contemplation.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Giardini, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Giardini, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>65</sup> cited by Michael Chester and Marie Norrisey, *Prayer and Temperament*, (Virginia, 1984), p. 32.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Giardini, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>67</sup> See Sr. Mary Wiercinski, O.P. “The Word of God in the Life of the Dominican Nuns: Lectio and Study,” in *One Mind and Heart*, op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>68</sup> Const. 97:I

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Giardini, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>70</sup> Const. 74:III.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. “Theology of Work,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 14 (New York, 1967), p. 1016.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, op. cit., p.6.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Giardini, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Sr. Maria Agnes Karasig, O.P., “The Dominican Nuns at Prayer” in *One Mind and Heart*, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Eduardo Crawley, *This is Human Work*, Simplification of *Laborem Exercens* of Pope John Paul II. (London, 1982), p. 13.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life, *Evangelica Testificatio*, 29 June, 1971, n. 20.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Karasig, in *One Mind and Heart*, op. cit., p. 122.