



- **Laudare, Praedicare, Benedicere: Letter on the Liturgical Celebration of the Hours**
- **DSI 2.0: Connecting Dominican Sisters**

Social communications seem to encircle the world somewhat like a current of dehumanizing relationships among persons, peoples, and countries. I sense that in this context, the world of women religious can have a strong role in nourishing and strengthening the relational dimension of life. Bringing the good news of the Gospel can be reduced to a discreet and compassionate contribution to the weaving of a more humane fabric in the private, social, political, or economic sector.

The world of digital communication with its flexible and adaptable instruments can promote the process of diffusion of a compassionate and loving culture. What we call the “Web 2.0” can facilitate this process. But it is necessary to learn digital communication, familiarize ourselves with its language, learn the rudimentary uses it can have, and become aware of the many resources and limits it presents.

What do we mean when we speak of Communication 2.0? We mean all those social spaces which the internet has birthed and has permitted to develop. Therefore, not just web sites on which to make ourselves known but also digital spaces to be used with awareness for meeting friends, exchanging information and news, editing documents in common, participating in the creation of news (formerly a prerogative of traditional journalism), organizing and promoting events, making decisions by consensus. One can synthesize by affirming that world 2.0 is composed today of numerous Social Networks at the disposal of their users. There is a social network for every necessity. We are not speaking only of Facebook, Picasa, Flickr, Twitter, Google plus, LinkedIn These are only the best known.

At DSI we have begun a reflection on Communication 2.0 because we believe it can nourish and strengthen knowledge and collaboration among the world’s Dominican sisters. We believe it can make them feel more in control of how people speak of Dominican sisters and what is said of them in different places. Making ourselves known is also a vehicle for intercepting the spiritual thirst of so many young women.

“A large part of the dynamic of communication is oriented to questions seeking answers. The motors of research and the social networks are the starting point of communication for many people who are seeking advice, suggestions, information, and answers. Today the network is becoming more and more the place of questions and answers. In fact, often contemporary men and women are bombarded by answers to questions they have never asked and needs they do not feel. Silence is precious for favoring the necessary discernment among so many stimuli and answers we receive; for recognizing and focusing on the truly important questions.” Message for World Day of Social Communications 2012 (www.vatican.va)

We are following with attention the continual invitations of the Pope to religious men and women to be present in the network. The excerpt of the message we have chosen is only one of these examples. It’s necessary to be where the young and older people meet and where they express their personal anguish and their personal values. Social networks can facilitate their sharing because users feel “protected” by a sort of anonymity.

DSI is concretizing this debate on Communication with project “DSI 2.0: Connecting Dominican Sisters.” It’s a project composed of various phases: research, analysis of data, selection and implementation of several results, and formation. Prioresses General have already received a questionnaire to be compiled. That information will be very useful to us in better responding to the objective we have before us: “Facilitate Communication and Networking among Dominican sisters at the national, regional and international level.”

- **Towards the Seventh DSI General Assembly (May 2013)**

Within exactly one year in the month of May, we will be realizing our 7th General Assembly. What a happy coincidence is the number 7; with it we can remember that in the Bible this number signifies “fullness”... It is my wish from here on that, accompanied by the Spirit of the Lord; we can live with this biblical sense.

In the preceding Assembly that took place in Rome between the 14th and 19th of May 2010, the theme: “Preparing our future with realism, audacity and hope” occupied our attention. It is true that as apostolic Dominican women we were created to love the mission of Announcing of the Word. Each day I am more convinced that only if we live the mission of preaching, under its different forms, with spiritual mystique and human closeness, knowing how to share with others the fruit of a profound experience of God, a true contemplation in the sense that St Dominic understood “To contemplate and give what is contemplated”, can we relight in ourselves and in others a burning missionary fire to live fully our commitment en the New Evangelization.

As we come to it discerning and dialoguing through different media, that preparation of our future with audacity, realism and hope has no other end, no other reason for being than that of placing ourselves face to face with “The New Evangelization and Our Dominican Mission Today”.

One cannot deny that today we find ourselves in an historic moment of great changes and tensions, of loss of equilibrium and of different points of reference at different levels. The task of evangelization finds itself facing new challenges that question us about practices already in place that weaken habitual and standard paths and that oblige us to ask ourselves about the significance of our actions and about the transmission of the Good News.

The guidelines for preparing the new Synod of Bishops that will take place in Rome in October, over the theme “The New Evangelization for the transmission of the Christian Faith”, speaks to us of new scenes for the New Evangelization and signals in the first place an underlying cultural scene - that of a profound secularization. The second scene is the migratory phenomenon. In third place is mention of the social media. A fourth scene that marks evangelical action with its changes is that of the economy. As a fifth scene we have that of scientific and technological investigation. And finally they speak of the political scene.

We, as Apostolic Dominican women are convinced that the New Evangelization in which we dedicate ourselves with all our energy, has to respond to that deep desire for spirituality, that beginning with new generations emerges with a little renewed vigor for all those places where we find ourselves; the important thing is to know it and discover it and place the media within our reach in order to satisfy the thirst of so many persons who carry within themselves deep desires for something more beyond what they see and touch.

Happy coincidence for us, is the fact that the Synod of the Bishops happens in October and that our 7th General Assembly will be celebrated 9-16 of May with the theme: “The New Evangelization and Our Dominican Mission Today” .. How will the Holy Spirit inspire our Synod Fathers? How will it inspire our Apostolic Dominican Women? May we be attentive to its creative and renewing action in the announcing of the Word of Life...

- **Dominican Young Adults – USA**

On a beautiful Saturday morning (June 9), a wonderful thing happened. Local chapters of the Dominican Young Adults (DYA) met in New York at Molloy College, in Puerto Rico at University of P.R. Aguadilla, in Wisconsin at Edgewood College, in Chicago, in Kentucky at St. Catharine's College and in Indiana. Thanks to technology, over 20 young adults were able to connect in ways they never thought possible. The best part—it didn't cost any money!

Five years ago, DYA-USA began. A nation of college students who had attended the College Preaching in Action Conference had met in Columbus, OH to plant the seed of a national group of young Dominicans. They met again in 2008 in Madison, WI, and DYA-USA officially formed and launched a web site. In 2009, DYA was officially recognized by the International Dominican Youth Movement (IDYM).

Some DYA-USA members were able to attend the International Gathering in Fatima, Portugal in 2009, and IDYM held its International Gathering in Bogota, Columbia in 2013. Many members and future members have been getting excited about the possibility of representing DYA-USA at the next IDYM venture abroad. The DYA Executive Board felt that it was necessary to find a way to meet nationally, yet allow for young adults to attend without incurring travel expenses.

Kevin Sullivan, the Formations Chair of the DYA Executive Board, had a brilliant idea: "Why not use Google+, Google's newest foray into the social networking sphere." Google+ has designed a way for people in different locations to "hangout" in a video chat room (with numerous other features, including chat, Google Docs integration, screen sharing capabilities, the ability to watch a common YouTube video right in the chat room, and more). With much tech preparation by Sean Mundy, the DYA Executive Board Communications Chair, each local chapter or region was able to connect. Michelle Schultz of the Chicago Chapter said, "It was so amazing to connect with other Dominican young adults like myself using the Internet, it was a great way to build community and pray together despite the distance between us!"

The Google+ Hangout allowed the DYA members to do just that. The National (Digital) Gathering began with Andrew Vivian, the DYA Executive Board National Coordinator, sharing the history of DYA and the structure of the national organization. Kevin, who also happens to be on IDYM leadership, gave a brief overview of IDYM and the International Gatherings, which segued nicely into a presentation of materials submitted by Andres Riveira, a Mexican young adult who is also on the IDYM leadership team.

Unfortunately, Sean was unable to present his video of Fr. Andrew Carl Wisdom, Director of Vocations for the Central Province of Dominican Friars, due to technical difficulties, but the material was shared with the group the next day via the DYA YouTube page. We were then lead in a discussion by Allie Jeffs, the DYA Executive Board Social Justice Chair, about what service the local chapters have done so far, what they are embarking upon in the future, and ideas for other chapters that may be struggling to find service ideas.

After this, the voting for the 2012-2014 board was held via an online form on Google Docs. Applicants sent in a short video introducing themselves and why they want to be on the Executive Board. These were posted on the YouTube page and the DYA-USA blog so the local chapter members could learn about each candidate. The members elected two existing members and two new members onto the new Executive Board: Andrew Vivian of Wisconsin (outgoing DYA National Coordinator), Sean Mundy of NY (currently a Dominican Volunteer at St. Pius V School in Chicago and outgoing DYA Communications Chair), Katy Somerfield of Illinois (will be a Dominican Volunteer at Immaculate Conception Academy in San Francisco), and Lyamar Rodriguez of Puerto Rico. The four elected officials will meet soon to mutually decide which of the four positions to assume: National Coordinator, Communications Chair, Social Justice Chair, and Formation/Membership Chair.

Most importantly, the DYA members then celebrated the everlasting presence of God among them. They joined together for a prayer service, featuring prayers, a reading from the Gospel of Matthew, a reading of Psalm 103, petitions from the board and the national group, and a unique variation of the “Our Father.”

Tina Cruz of the Puerto Rico Guatibirí Chapter said, “Knowing that our group isn’t alone and being able to communicate with people from different places is extraordinary. Even on a national level, each group has its own culture that’s unique to its location, whether the chapters are separated by a 15-minute drive or by a 15-hour flight. Can we do this every month?!”

Overall, the event was a huge success, and we are so excited to venture on to greater things in the future!

For more information about Dominican Young Adults USA, visit their web site at www.dya-usa.org.

by Sean Mundy, DYA Communications Chair and Dominican Volunteer

- **Racine Dominican Sisters Celebrate 150 Years**

“The year was 1858. Three brave women religious – Maria Benedicta Bauer, Thomasina Ginker, and Cunigunda Schell – leave Germany by boat for the new world with a mission of teaching German immigrant children and eventually caring for elderly women,” noted Racine Dominican Vice President S. Agnes Johnson as her community began a year of sesquicentennial celebration. After traveling the U.S., the three pioneer women settled in Racine, WI, on May 12, 1862, to start a new community.

“During these 150 years,” S. Agnes continued in her welcome to guests for liturgy this May 12, “1084 women have lived as vowed religious in this community of sisters and influenced countless lives.” Retired Bishop Richard Sklba, a Racine native and product of Racine Dominican education, presided at the special anniversary Mass.

Two cloistered sisters from Regensburg – the 779 year-old German community from which the three founding sisters came – traveled to Racine for the celebration.

“The Racine Dominicans derive from the community to which S. Lydia and I belong,” S. Dominika Geyder said. “While we are here to represent our community, the rest of our sisters have been anticipating this celebration with their special prayers for Racine.”

“We are remembering past events because this remembrance gives us an understanding of the present; it tells us where we have come from and why we are here now... So, the past is prologue, and it is part of the all-encompassing salvation history. To keep this in mind opens the horizon for the future which will be different from the past and different from the present,” S. Dominika said.

Racine Mayor John Dickert highlights the historical time line as he speaks of the sisters' contributions to the community

Local Mayor John Dickert, who was educated by the sisters, spoke of the Racine Dominican mission: committed to Truth, compelled to Justice. “The sisters were ‘compelled to justice’ when having slaves was the norm, before women’s right to vote, before civil rights... What the sisters have been doing for 150 years is that they have been compelled to do the right thing for the right reasons when it’s not simple. That is God’s grace on this group.”

Throughout the anniversary year from May 12, 2012, through May 12, 2013, the Racine Dominicans will honor their history in various ways. Among the celebrations will be a special reunion with former members; sisters and associates will have a float in Racine’s 4th of July parade; they will work with Habitat for Humanity this fall to

rehab a local house; they will celebrate with their six sponsored ministries at a Racine Symphony Orchestra concert; they will host a celebration of the arts; and more.

The Racine Dominicans are a community of sisters and lay associates living according to the mission: committed to truth, compelled to justice. Since 1862, our "motherhouse," or home, has been located in Racine, a city on the shores of Lake Michigan in southeastern Wisconsin.

The Racine Dominicans are a community of vowed women religious (sisters) and lay associates. We live according to the mission: committed to truth, compelled to justice. Our sisters and associates work in a variety of ministries: prison ministers, counselors, chaplains, social workers, teachers, pastoral associates, musicians, health care workers, bakers, spiritual directors, writers, neighborhood outreach coordinators... to name a few. Sisters and Associates serve throughout the Americas. Prayer and study are integral to the life of all Racine Dominican Sisters and Associates.

Check out this short video of the beginning celebration! Get more on the history of the Racine Dominican Sisters from <http://www.racinedominicans.org/500years.cfm>. Each week until May 2013, the Racine Dominican home page (www.racinedominicans.org) will offer a new "fact of the week" about the community.

- **Honorary Doctorate Bestowed on Queen of Peace Monastery, Squamish, BC, Canada**

The Doctor of Sacred Letters will recognize the community of Queen of Peace Monastery for their formation as Catholic religious women in the Dominican intellectual and monastic tradition. It also recognizes their extraordinary work in establishing a new monastery near the Vancouver-Whistler corridor in the Upper Squamish area of the Archdiocese of Vancouver. This community is a prophetic witness to the integration of the Catholic intellectual tradition within a stable monastic community of prayer, work, learning, fraternal charity, and monastic hospitality.

This community of Dominican Nuns is an integral part of the Order of Preachers, an ancient Catholic Order that goes back to 13th century France, and one which claims a long tradition of intellectual and influential members, including St. Dominic (de Guzman), St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Martin de Porres, Meister Eckhart and several canonised popes. These Nuns of the Order of Preachers began in British Columbia in 1999 with five members, and today there are nine professed nuns, along with two members in formation. By 2009 the steady growth in the maturity of this foundation in Western Canada was formally recognized and affirmed by the Holy See, the Order of Preachers and the Archbishop of Vancouver, and thus it was "given the privileges and spiritual favours and obligations which all Monasteries of the Dominican Order legitimately enjoy."

The community comprises members from different parts of Canada, the United States, Europe, the Philippines, Australia, and Africa. They also bring with them various academic and artistic credentials, as well as work and service experiences. From temporary homes in South Surrey and Fort Langley, the community has secured 82 acres of land in the Upper Squamish River Valley. The building of a 23,000 square foot monastery, nearing completion, will be the home for their monastic life and presence, a life of freely chosen withdrawal by enclosure and silence. An integral part of the community's mission of monastic welcome is its liturgical prayer – open to all, the provision of meeting space in a contemplative setting for the wider local community, and in due course, a small guest house.

Canada's only other Dominican monastery is in French-speaking Berthierville, Quebec, founded in 1925.

- **VOICE LESSONS – in the Desert: Birth of St. John the Baptist**

I share these reflections for the Birth of John the Baptist from a monastery of contemplative Dominican nuns in Spain – just one of the many monasteries of our nuns around the world that my present ministry takes me to. It is always curious that one of the questions that people frequently ask me is, “How can the Dominicans, an Order of Preachers, have contemplative, cloistered nuns in it? Isn’t that a contradiction? Cloistered nuns in a preaching Order?!”

Well, I actually think that it isn’t a contradiction, but in order to answer the question, I’d like to look at today’s liturgy and readings, because I think that the question that people ask about the nuns is really a question about our life as disciples of Jesus in general.

Isaiah, the prophet says in today’s first reading, “The Lord called me from birth, from my mother’s womb God gave me my name.” A mother’s womb is an enclosed space of deep silence. Today’s scriptures speak about our being formed and called – in God’s mysterious plan – while we are still immersed in this deep, maternal silence. The mystics would go even further and say that this period of silent gestation happens in the very womb of God. The Psalmist sings, “Truly you have formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb. I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made; wonderful are your works.”

John the Baptist, the great, fiery prophet and preacher, was prepared for his preaching mission in the silence of his mother’s womb, but that silence was made even more radical when his father, Zechariah, was struck mute during the nine months of pregnancy. That’s a lot of silence! Dare we say that the words of a real prophet can only be born from a place of silent gestation? John himself goes into the arid silence of the desert to listen to God, to discover the Word deep within – the final step in the preparation for his prophetic ministry.

In a famous sermon of St. Augustine, we hear these words: “John is the voice, but the Christ is the Word ... John is the voice that lasts for a time ... Christ is the Word who lives forever. Take away the Word ... and what is the voice? ... only a meaningless sound. The voice without the Word strikes the ear but does not build up the heart.”[i]

Could we not also say that John is the silence and Christ the Word ... that John the Baptist discovers his prophetic voice in the silence of the desert? Isn’t it true that many of the great prophets and mystics – Etty Hillesum and Martin Luther King, Jr being a couple of examples – found and clarified their prophetic voices in the silent desert of prison cells?

Take away the maternal silence where God’s Word takes root in us – and what Good News will we be able to speak? Even St. Paul says that we can say lots of fancy words, but if those words are not rooted in the love of God, they’re not much more than a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal (1 Cor 13:1). Maybe a lot of our God-talk is just noise sprinkled with holy water! And add that to all the political and commercial clamor that bombards us everyday, and we live in a pretty noisy world! Our Dominican brother, Timothy Radcliffe, said in a talk several years ago:

Only if we learn to remain in the silence of God will we be able to discover the right words, words that are neither arrogant nor empty, words that are both true and humble. Only if the center of our lives is the silence of God himself, will we know the when language ends and when silence begins, when to proclaim and when to be silent.[ii]

Now back to the question concerning the contemplative Dominican nuns that I visit around the world. “How can an Order of Preachers have contemplative, cloistered nuns in it? Isn’t that a contradiction?” My answer is: How can we not? As I said earlier, “A mother’s womb is an enclosed space of deep silence.” We need those who care for the silence, who tend it like a fire that brings us life. What will happen when the silence disappears? What

will we preach then? How will we learn to say, “I love you”, “I forgive you”, “Peace be with you” if there is no more silence? Maybe it’s time for all of us to take a stroll through the desert or a Sabbath rest from busy-ness so that we can learn again to speak the language of God.

-Brian J. Pierce, OP

[i] This reading on the birth of John the Baptists is from a sermon of St. Augustine (Sermo 293, 1-3; PL 38, 1327-1328) which is included in the Roman Office of Readings for June 24, the Solemnity of the Birth of John the Baptist.

[ii] Timothy Radcliffe, OP, (Misión en un Mundo Desbocado: Futuros Ciudadanos del Reino, Rome: Assembly of SEDOS, 5 December, 2000).

- **A Fraternal Visit from Bishop Cardone, OP to the Dominican Nuns of Summit**

This afternoon (June 19) we had the joy of welcoming our brother, Bishop Christopher Cardone, OP, bishop of the Diocese of Auki, Solomon Islands. Bishop Chris, as we fondly call him, is a native of Long Island, NY and from the Province of St. Joseph. He was home visiting after his ad limina visit with our Holy Father. He shared with us the experience of his visit to Rome and then enthusiastically shared with us the growth of the Church in the Solomon Islands and the people that are so dear to him!

Bishop Chris told us that the diocese of Auki has a population of about 150,000 people and that this year 7 men were ordained to the priesthood! Families are large and Bishop Chris says the children are always so well-behaved and happy! Unfortunately the WHO is trying to make inroads, trying to convince the families to have less children. Currently abortion is illegal. Families love having children.

Bishop Chris hopes that someday there will be a monastery of cloistered Dominican Nuns! Already there are Poor Clares and Carmelites. Of course, his wish is a BIG HINT to us and who knows if someday it will be God’s will that we go to the Solomon Islands!

After visiting in the community room we gave Bishop Christ a tour of our garden. Finally, we got a photo with him just before he left!

As contemplative, missionaries have a very deep place in our hearts and their visits encourage us in our hidden life of prayer. It is such a great grace to have our missionary brother with us. May the Lord bless Bishop Chris and may he know the strength of our prayer in his pastoral care of his people.

- **The Latest Sacrae Theologiae Magister Awardees**

The Master of the Order, Fr Bruno Cadorè has just confirmed the Sacrae Thologiae Magister on some brothers in the Order.

The Sacrae Theologiae Magister (STM) is an honorary title granted by the Master of the Order on the recommendation of the General Council. Today, the prerequisites are ten years of teaching at the graduate level and the publication of at least one book positively reviewed in international journals and several articles in refereed academic journals. A brother with this qualification can be nominated by his prior provincial and council.

The title dates back to 1303 when Pope Benedict XI, himself a Dominican created the rank so that the Dominican Order could independently grant the faculty to teach theology, without having the candidate approved by a

university theology faculty. In the past, the holder of the STM had privileges and rights in his province but most of these have been abolished by the General Chapter of 1968. The title remains honorary and solely academic with the right of the prefix “Very Reverend” and suffix “S.T.M.”.

The installation of a new STM has remained basically the same since the 1600s and it is very interesting because of the symbolism employed. At the ceremony, the individual to receive the honour comes and kneels before him who is to bestow the honour which is usually the last recipient in the province. The candidate makes a Profession of Faith and the ring is placed upon the ring finger of the left hand of the candidate with some prayers. He then sits in the chair and his appointment as a Master is announced. Then, placed upon the new Master's head is a Master's biretta with further prayers. Current Dominican practice is to use a black biretta with red-purple piping and pom-pom. Being that it is the biretta of a doctor, it has four fins, not three as in the case of those who have the licentiate, or the typical clerical biretta. The new Master then rises and delivers his inaugural lecture.

The following brothers received the STM;

From the Province of Toulouse, we have:

fr. Benoît-Dominique De La Soujeole: He is a Doctor of Theology, Civil and Canon Lawyer and also a Professor Faculty of Theology, Fribourg.

fr. Jean-Luc Vesco: He is a Doctor of Theology, had a Degree Philosophy and Scripture and also a Professor of Old Testament Exegesis.

fr. Serge-Thomas Bonino: He is a Doctor of Philosophy and Theology, member of the International Theological Commission, Director of the Revue Thomiste and Professor at the Institute of St Thomas Aquinas (ISTA) and the Catholic Institute, Toulouse.

fr. Jean-Michel Maldame: He is a Doctor of Theology, member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Catholic Academy of France and the International Academy of Religious Sciences.

From the Province of Spain, we have:

fr. Alberto Escallada Tijero: He is a Doctor of Theology, a Doctor in Oriental Ecclesiastical Sciences and a member of the Pontifical Academy of St Thomas Aquinas.

fr. Gregorio Celada Luengo: He is Doctor of Theology, a Degree in Patristic Sciences and a Professor at the Faculty of St Stephen.

From the Province of Switzerland, we have:

fr. Gilles Emery: He is a Doctor of Theology, Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the University of Fribourg, member of the International Theological Commission, Academy of European Sciences and Arts, Committee for the Promotion of Studies in the Order and the Board of the Revue Thomiste.

We say congratulations to these brothers. May this be a source of inspiration and graces for them to work even harder in their different fields.

- **‘Adoro Te Devote’ - Eucharistic Adoration in the Spirit of St Thomas Aquinas**

Some of the best loved Eucharistic hymns - Adoro Te Devote, Tantum Ergo, Panis Angelicus - were written by one man, the Dominican friar St Thomas Aquinas. The Dominican friars of St Saviour's Priory (Dublin), which has been in existence for nearly 800 years, will mark the International Eucharistic Congress by inviting renowned preachers to explain the rich delights of these Eucharistic hymns, all in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, exposed for our veneration.

First Session: Fr Wojciech Giertych OP, the Pope's personal theologian preached a homily on the text of one of the best-loved Eucharistic hymns: the Pange Lingua, composed by St Thomas Aquinas OP for the feast of Corpus Christi.

Second Session: Fr Paul Murray OP, Professor of Spiritual Theology at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas (Angelicum), Rome and a celebrated spiritual writer preached on the text of the Adoro Te itself. As a poet and a theologian, Fr Paul shares with us some insights into St Thomas as poet and theologian.

Third Session: Fr Terence Crotty, OP, a Scripture Scholar spoke on the Lauda Sion, the sequence for the feast for Corpus Christi written by our brother St Thomas Aquinas.

Fourth Session: Fr John Harris OP, who is well-known for his ministry to young people is also the Regent of Studies of the Irish Province of Dominicans. He spoke at the final evening session on the Verbum Supernum Prodiens, the hymn written by St Thomas Aquinas for Lauds of the feast of Corpus Christi.

The evening events started on Monday 11th June with music and silent adoration and also concluded with the Office of Compline, sung by the Dominican community, and the ancient tradition of the Salve Regina procession. Finally, on Saturday 16th June, St Saviour's hosted a day-long festival of Eucharistic adoration.

- **Spirituality for Today, Suffering and Healing**

Father Timothy Radcliffe OP argues that a spirituality of suffering should not seek to explain what the person is enduring. First we must be with them, as Mary and the beloved disciple were with Jesus on the cross. Our prayers, like the psalms, give voice to the anger and distress we may feel when in pain and so overthrow our feeling of isolation. The Christian life has the dynamism of a drama, which carries us beyond the tyranny of the present moment of suffering towards relief and healing. Thus we may be able to rest in the pain and discover God there. The sick and suffering offer us special gifts and hope.

Fr. Timothy Radcliffe OP was born in London in 1945. He joined the English Province of the Dominican Order in 1965, and was ordained a priest in 1971.

He studied at Blackfriars and at St John's College, Oxford, and in Paris. From 1974-1976 he was a chaplain to the University of London before returning to Oxford, where he taught scripture and doctrine for twelve years.

Besides teaching and preaching, he was involved in the Peace movement and in ministry to people with AIDS. He was Prior of Oxford from 1982 – 88, when he was elected Provincial of the English Province. He was President of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors.

In 1992 he was elected Master of the Order, finishing his term in 2001. He was Chancellor of the Angelicum University in Rome, S.Tomas in Manila, the École Biblique in Jerusalem and the Theology Faculty at Freiburg, Germany.

He is now an itinerant preacher and lecturer, based at Blackfriars, Oxford. He spends two thirds of the year travelling, and is a Trustee of the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development. He sits on the Theological Commission of Caritas Internationalis.

The video is available on <http://www.icatholic.ie/videos/iec-2012-timothy-radcliffe-op/>

- **The Sacred Heart and St. Dominic**

“O Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto thine.” Today, on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Catholics throughout the world are making this petition. Our Lord Jesus was, of course, preeminently meek and humble, but, we may wonder, what other virtues are we asking for in this short prayer? In what other ways do we desire our hearts to be “like unto his”? I would suggest that the life of our Holy Father Saint Dominic can help us find an answer to this question.

In the biblical sense, the “heart” refers to the very depths of one’s being, where one decides for or against God (CCC 368). A heart that is purified is one that is given over to God alone, and to those who have such hearts eternal life is promised:

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?
Who shall stand in his holy place?
The man with clean hands and pure heart,
Who desires not worthless things” (Psalm 24:3-4).

In the Gospel, we hear this promise again from the lips of Christ himself: “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

To some, this might seem to suggest that one should keep the concerns of sinners far away from one’s own heart. Under this interpretation, the less one thinks about sins and sinners, the more pure one’s heart is. In the life of Saint Dominic, however, we see purity of heart manifested in a very different way. Blessed Jordan of Saxony, Dominic’s immediate successor as Master of the Order, wrote of him, “God gave him the singular gift of weeping for sinners, the wretched, and the afflicted, whose sufferings he felt within his compassionate heart, which poured out its hidden feelings in a shower of tears.”

Dominic, far from keeping sinners at bay, welcomed them into his heart and made of them an integral part of his prayer and contemplation. In his nightly vigils, he could often be overheard asking the Lord, “What will become of sinners?” Not only in his prayer, but also in his relationships with others, he was known for this solicitude: “All men were swept into the embrace of his charity, and, in loving all, he was beloved by all.”

Saint Dominic challenges our notion of what it means to have a pure heart, and it is a truly Christian challenge. His embrace of sinners is the manifestation of an authentic imitation of Christ. To be pure of heart is to have one’s heart so closely conformed to the Sacred Heart, that his concerns become ours. We do not need to search the Gospels for long to discover that Our Lord carried the concerns of sinners and the afflicted in his Sacred Heart: “At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). Here, in the Gospel and in the life of Saint Dominic, we find one more gift we might obtain by asking our Lord, “Make my heart like unto thine.”

Br. Raymund Snyder, O.P.

- **Oxford Handbook of Aquinas**

Oxford University Press has recently published its new Handbook of Aquinas. The book serves as an introduction to the writing of the Angelic Doctor and includes essays on most of the major topics in Aquinas's thought. Edited by Eleonore Stump (at St. Louis University) and Brian Davies (at Fordham University), each chapter is an essay written by a different expert in the thought of Aquinas.

Contributing to the book are two American Dominicans. Fr. James Brent, OP, of the Province of St. Joseph, has a chapter on God's Knowledge and God's Will. Fr. James is currently an assistant professor of philosophy at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. Fr. Dominic Holtz, OP, of the Province of St. Albert the Great, has contributed a chapter on Sacraments. Fr. Dominic is professore incaricato in the Department of Philosophy at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome (the Angelicum).

The publisher offers the following description of this new work:

"The book begins with an account of Aquinas's life and works. The next section contains a series of essays that set Aquinas in his intellectual context. They focus on the philosophical sources that are likely to have influenced his thinking, the most prominent of which were certain Greek philosophers (chiefly Aristotle), Latin Christian writers (such as Augustine), and Jewish and Islamic authors (such as Maimonides and Avicenna). The subsequent sections of the book address topics that Aquinas himself discussed. These include metaphysics, the existence and nature of God, ethics and action theory, epistemology, philosophy of mind and human nature, the nature of language, and an array of theological topics, including Trinity, Incarnation, sacraments, resurrection, and the problem of evil, among others. These sections include more than thirty contributions on topics central to Aquinas's own worldview. The final sections of the volume address the development of Aquinas's thought and its historical influence".

Fr Pius Pietrzyk, OP

- **Christians in Pakistan Are Still Persecuted Under the "Blasphemy Law"**

The issue of "blasphemy" is a "black hole" for the judicial system in Pakistan. The Pakistani judges are under pressure to condemn to death those accused under the "blasphemy law", while lawyers are reluctant to assuming the defense of the accused, because of intimidation. This is the complaint of Gabriela Knaul, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, at the conclusion of a 11-day visit to Pakistan, where she examined the country's judicial system.

The "blasphemy Law" consists of two articles of the Criminal Code (295b and 295c) that ask for death penalty for anyone who insults Islam, its holy book or the prophet Mohammed. The law is often misused to settle personal or family feuds. Victims of false accusations are often Christians and other religious minorities.

As reported to Fides, Gabriela Knaul remarked that "judges are forced to decide against the accused, without evidence to support" and that they fear "reprisals from the local community." The UN representative urged the Pakistani government to address the challenges that exist to ensure the independence of the judiciary system.

Fr. James Channan OP, Director of the "Dominican Center for Peace" in Lahore, confirms to Fides: "The pressure from radical groups exist and influence the judges in courts of first instance. We saw, for example, among the last cases of blasphemy, in the story regarding Asia Bibi. Sometimes the Christians accused are acquitted in the appeal to the High Court or the Supreme Court. But even the judges who acquit the alleged blasphemers come under fire by extremists. The central problem is the abuse of the blasphemy law. The government has repeatedly verbally

pledged to stop such abuses. The issue is not new, but we are happy that is raised at the United Nations. We hope that this position has an impact and that justice is guaranteed in Pakistani courts."

In 2011 two important political figures who criticized the law on blasphemy were killed: the Muslim Salman Taseer, who was killed by a bodyguard in January 2011, and Shahbaz Bhatti, the only Christian minister in the federal government, shot dead by militants in March 2011.

- **The New Executive Director of the Secretariat of Catholic Education in the U.S.**

Dominican Sister John Mary Fleming, a member of St. Cecilia Congregation in Nashville, Tennessee, has been named Executive Director of the Secretariat of Catholic Education of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). She succeeds Marie Powell, who announced her retirement earlier this year.

Sr. Fleming holds a licentiate in canon law from The Catholic University of America, a master's degree in theology from Franciscan University of Steubenville, a master of education degree in educational leadership and supervision from the University of Southern Mississippi and a bachelor's degree in education from Belmont University, Nashville.

Sr. Fleming was former principal of St Henry School in Nashville, director of education for her religious congregation (2000-2007), interim vice president of operations at Aquinas College, Nashville (2000-2001) and coordinator of her congregation's \$46 million mother house building project (2000-2006).

She served on the board of Aquinas College (2000-2007) and currently she is a board member of Providence Academy, Minneapolis. In 2012, she also served on the 10-member team to develop a program for the year of Faith for the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois. She is currently completing her second term as the principal of St. Dominic School, Bolingbrook, Illinois.

According to Sr. Fleming, she considers it an honour to her congregation that she has been appointed executive director of the Secretariat of Catholic Education of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. "I think what the USCCB is doing is reaching out to a community whose focus and passion is education,"

The Nashville Dominicans, in their traditional white habit, are one of the fastest growing communities of religious sisters in the U.S. with steady growth since the 1980s. The congregation was founded in 1860 and is dedicated to the apostolate of education. The sisters operate more than 30 schools in 19 dioceses and archdioceses in the U.S., as well as in the Archdiocese of Vancouver, British Columbia, and the Archdiocese of Sydney.

For more on the sisters - <http://nashvilledominican.org/Home>

- **Sacraments: Christ's Gift of the Spirit**

One of the ways we can think about sacraments is as God reaching down through history to apply the power of the cross to the present moment. Since Christ handed on to us the gift of His Holy Spirit through the cross, the representation of the sacrifice of the cross in our sacraments becomes the means by which Christ re-presents his offer of the Spirit. This is because, as has been discussed in previous posts, sacraments are signs that make real what they signify. Our sacramental signs, instituted by Christ himself, point to his Incarnation and thus perpetuate that Incarnation among and in the Christian community across all time and space. As the Spirit is received through Christ and therefore through the sacraments, we can also think of the sacraments as a kind of re-actualization of Pentecost. This points us to the complementary missions of the Son and the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, sent by Christ (who was himself conceived by the Holy Spirit), allows us to receive Christ in a new and deeper way.

The medieval scholastics tried to bring out this ‘Spiritual’ dimension of the sacraments by making a threefold distinction in their sacramental theology. Sacraments, as we have mentioned above, are signs that make real what they symbolize. They therefore distinguished that which is a sign only, for example bread and wine which symbolically remind us of Christ’s presence; from that which is a sign and a reality, for example the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist in which Christ is really present, but still pointing us to a deeper union with him which is to come; and, finally, the reality only: the ultimate goal of the sacrament which does not point beyond itself, the mystery of grace, our union with God in Christ and in the Holy Spirit.

For each sacrament the Holy Spirit comes to us under a particular aspect; in other words the work of the Spirit has a slightly different emphasis in each sacrament. Yet broadly speaking the work of the Spirit in the sacraments can be summed up as both binding us to Christ through the forgiveness of sins, the healing of wounds, and drawing us into his life; as well as conforming us to Christ so that we can become instruments of grace, so that we can help others to come to Christ, so that we can become the presence of Christ for other people.

This conformation and union allows us, so to speak, to worship within the Holy Trinity itself as adopted sons and daughters. In the Spirit, the bond of love between Father and Son, we share in the eternal and infinite outpouring of love between the persons of the Holy Trinity. The basic movement of the sacraments, then, is from God to us. In the Spirit we are bound to Christ who draws us back towards God. Yet this union with and conformation to Christ which the Spirit brings suggests that the love of the Trinity that we now share in ought to spill out into our lives: to pray in the Spirit suggests that we will also live in the Spirit. In a very specific sense, then, every baptized, confirmed, ordained or married person is a sacrament. That person’s life is potentially a sign and a channel of grace for others, our lives can be a gift of God to others.

A properly celebrated sacrament facilitates this sacramental life: that is, if we are open to all three dimensions of the sacrament: as a sign of Christ, as the sign and reality of his presence and action, and as a gift of the Holy Spirit, then we will become increasingly Christ like, increasingly able to live and pray as Christ did. However, it is possible to resist the grace of the sacrament. It is possible to resist or reject Christ’s gift of the Spirit and to refuse to allow the Holy Spirit to take root in our hearts. If, however, we allow the Spirit to work in and through us, we shall be transfigured.

By fr. Nicholas Crowe, OP

Official news

- **Fr. Anto Gavric is reelected in Croatia**

The brothers of the Elective Chapter of the Province of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Croatia have just reelected Fr. Anto Gavric as their Prior Provincial for the next four years.

Fr Gavric was born in 1968 at Gornja Vrucica-Bezlja. He made his first profession in the Order in 1989 and his solemn profession in 1994. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1995 at Zagreb.

He has a doctorate in theology and has been involved in teaching over the years. He was assistant lecturer for the Chair of Moral Theology and Ethics in the Faculty of Theology, University of Fribourg, Switzerland and also lecturer in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas in the Jesuit Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb. He is a member of; the International Society for the Study of Medieval Philosophy (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium), editorial board of the international theological journal, “Communio”, director of the Dominican website in Croatian on St Thomas Aquinas, the Catholic Croatian Journalists and the scientific council of the magazine, “Nova Prisutnost”.

From the curia, we wish him an even more successful second term.

- **New Provincial for Ireland**

Fr Gregory Patrick Carroll, OP was elected Provincial of the Irish Dominican friars on the 8th of June, 2012 during the Provincial Chapter held in Tullaght. His election has been confirmed by the Master of the Order. He replaces Fr Patrick Lucey, OP who has just complete two terms in office.

Fr Gregory, a native of Naas, Co Kildare was born in 1948, entered the novitiate in Cork in 1966, making profession the following year. After studies in philosophy and theology in the studentate in Tullaght, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1973.

Since then, he has served both in Ireland and in the Irish Dominican mission in the Carribean (Trinidad & Tobago), including as superior, parish priest, director of vocations, student master, novice master and provincial council secretary and bursar. He also been involved in giving retreats and marriage counseling. At the time of his election, he was the prior and pastor of St Saviour's, Dublin.

Fr Gregory's term of office is for four years. We wish him well as he begins work in this important position in the Irish Dominican province.

- **Promoter of the History and Heritage of the Order**

On the 22nd of December 1216, Pope Honorius III proclaimed a Bull which formally confirmed the foundation of the Order of Preachers. By 2016, it will be 800 years since the Order was founded. In 2009, the Master of the Order, Fr. Carlos Azpiroz Costa initiated a 6 years programme for the celebration of the 800th Jubilee of the Order.

To give the important highlight to the history of the Order in preparation for the Jubilee celebration in 2016, the Master of the Order, Fr. Bruno Cadoré has charged Fr. Augustin Laffay with the mission of promoting the knowledge of the History of the Order in conjunction with the Historical Institute of the Order.

Fr. Laffay was born at Mulhouse in 1965. He joined the Order in the Province of Toulouse and made profession in 1995. In 2001, he was ordained to the priesthood after his basic formation. Now he holds a Licentiate in Theology and a Doctorate in History. Both in his training and work, we can see his suitability for this mission. In his province, he is the archivist and also the promoter of the 800th centenary of the foundation of the Order. He is also a member of the Historical Institute of the Order.

Fr Laffay's mission is basically to promote the Order in the light of the forthcoming Jubilee by making her history and heritage more known and available to the entire Dominican family, the Church and the society. We wish him the best in this mission.

- **A New Appointment for Fr. Robert Christian, OP**

Fr. Robert Francis Christian, OP has just been appointed as a Consultor to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity by the Holy Father. This appointment will be for 5 years. He is of the Western Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, USA.

Fr. Christian is an associate professor for Sacraments and Ecclesiology at the Faculty of Theology at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), Rome. He is also the Vice Dean of the faculty.

Although he attended a Jesuit high school and college, Fr. Christian joined the Dominican Novitiate at Oakland after graduation from college. He made profession in 1971 and was ordained in the priesthood 1976. He started his

teaching career immediately after his ordination at Dominican College (now Dominican University) in San Rafael. He got his doctorate in dogmatic theology from the Angelicum in 1984.

For a year in campus ministry both at Riverside and Seattle, he returned to the Angelicum. He started teaching at the Angelicum in 1985 and was there until 1997 when he returned briefly to his home province to serve as socius and vicar provincial for two years. He came back to the Angelicum in 1999 and he is still there till date. He is also a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). From the Angelicum, Fr Christian has been at the service of the Church and humanity and we are sure he will continue to do such even in his new appointment.

The Pontifical Council for the Promoting of Christian Unity is entrusted with the promotion, within the Catholic Church, of an authentic ecumenical spirit according to the conciliar decree *Unitatis redintegratio*. At the same time, it also aims to develop dialogue and collaboration with the other Churches and World Communions.

Calendar of the Master – July 2012

1 -18: Canonical Visitation to the Southern Province, USA

19 – 24: Canonical Visitation to West Africa (Abidjan)

28 – August 7: On Vacation



Rome, 31/05/2012

Prot. n. 50/12/484 MO Letters to the Order

Laudare, Praedicare, Benedicere

Letter on the Liturgical Celebration of the Hours

My very dear brothers and sisters,

“Where are you going, Sir Henry?” “I am going to the house of Bethany, he replied.” As Blessed Jordan of Saxony recounts: When Brother Henry left his lodgings and one of his companions asked him where he was going he answered, “To Bethany.” He did not understand Henry’s reply after posing this question to him. Only later on did he understand, when he saw Henry enter Bethany, which means “the house of obedience.” It was Ash Wednesday and Brothers Henry, Leo and Jordan were entering the Order, the “house of obedience.” At that moment and in that place, while the brethren were chanting, they presented themselves before them, much to their surprise, and putting off the old man, they put on the new, thus fitting their actions to what the friars were singing. (Libellus 75) In this way, our brothers situated their vocation as Friars Preachers within the Paschal mystery and the journey towards Easter and rooted it in the common celebration of the liturgy.

I am writing this letter to you about our common celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours (ACG Rome 2010 n° 79). In so doing, I am mindful of this moment in the life of our first brothers and of our own experience as we begin that part of “Ordinary Time” which follows the great Feasts of Easter and Pentecost. I shall neither dwell upon the necessity of our celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours together, nor upon our promise to do so. Each of us knows the Constitutions of the Order and the Letters of Promulgation for the different liturgical books of the *Proprium OP*. What is more, each of us is aware of what it means when there is a lack of commitment to our common prayer. It is by building our regular life, personally and communally, upon this common celebration that we choose patiently to build the unity of our communities rather than to submit to the arbitrary subjectivism of the individual. Also, I have no wish to dictate the form of this celebration. Travelling around the Order the last year and a half, I can see how our customs differ. And yet, I can also see how much the unity of a community and a province can be fostered when care is given to our liturgical prayer. There is no doubt that we need well-prepared celebrations. We all know the delight of a beautiful liturgy, even when it is simple. At the same time, we all are painfully aware of the exhaustion, disappointment and tension that arise when our prayer is celebrated with excessive formalism or extreme casualness. At such times, the heart and reason for our celebration risks being displaced, causing us to turn our focus away from Christ and toward ourselves.

Instead, I would like to make two simple, yet radical points. The first is that our common celebration of the Hours is like a series of landmarks that direct our lives as we seek to give them over to our mission of preaching. Our prayer orients us on our journey of conversion, from Ash Wednesday to the Light of the Resurrection where we pass from the “old man to a man born anew” through the grace of that Breath of Life given by the Risen Lord. The second point recalls the expression used by Blessed Jordan: our common celebration of the liturgy allows us to encounter the source of our obedience and to draw from it. This obedience is to the mystery of the Word who comes to “configure himself” to

humanity, so that humanity might become configured to God. Our common celebration unites us in obedience to the Word to whom we have prayed for the grace of consecration (“Consecrate them in the Truth. Your Word is truth”). The liturgical celebration thus clearly leads us to the source of our obedience to the One who calls us to preach the Word of God and to participate in the work of evangelization.

As a “house of obedience”, our liturgical celebration invites us again and again to approach this call to unity, which I wish to consider from three points of view.

Celebration of unity in the Word

No doubt when each of us was moved by the deep conviction that we wanted to give our life over to preaching in the Order, we were also delighted by the joy of being able to pray with brothers and sisters. Together in listening to the Word of God, we become aware that this Word gradually comes to live in our own words. We bless and praise Him who unceasingly enters into the heart of humanity. Most often we pray in the choir which is arranged around a central empty and open space, open specifically to receive the One who comes. We do not go to the choir primarily to fulfill an obligation which we have assumed; but rather we assemble in choir to await together Him who comes, to welcome Him and, above all, to learn to recognise Him.

The liturgical celebration of the Hours, repeated several times a day in community, must be a time when the Word of God, and not ourselves, comes to be our center. It is when we allow the Word to seize us, to take hold of our desire to give our life and enable this desire to do far more than we could ever do ourselves. This celebration repeated each day and in each liturgical Hour gives us the courage to expose ourselves to the Word; to listen to the words of Scripture and the prayers of the tradition; to become accustomed to the familiarity that the Word wants to have with us; to discern through the words of Scripture the face of the Son that is revealed and who is the very source of obedience. We need constantly to regain our strength, to take heart. It is in this mystery of the liturgy that we learn how to do this, or better, in the liturgy we can implore the Lord to do it in us.

What is the work of grace that operates in us, both individually and communally, through the liturgy? I would venture to say first of all, that each celebration of the Office leads us once more to anchor our lives in those gestures of our profession. “What do you seek?” “God’s mercy and yours.” Who among us has not been touched to the core at the beginning of Compline, when placing ourselves in the presence of God, we echo that question and response by which we announced our desire to make profession? In the presence of our brothers, each of us is helped once again to receive assurance of that mercy and forgiveness which gives us the courage to raise our eyes. Each of the other Hours begins with the cry for assistance to Him who alone can support our life, our fraternity and our preaching. We all know those days of which we are least proud; the days when we would have liked to have been more just, more caring, more attentive, less complacent; those days in which we no longer expected anything from the Lord; those days when our enthusiasm to begin anew, the radicalism of response and the generosity of the gift of self were not brought to this daily encounter with Him. The Daily Office, the “sanctification of the hours”, is an act of faith for us that, despite our failings, brings us always into the Presence of God. It is this promise that we celebrate, doxology after doxology, bow after bow. “Rise, brothers”, is the response to us on the day of profession. “Rise”, heard Blessed Jordan, “and put off the old man in order to be clothed in that new man.”

The intuition of these young men going to the house at Bethany shows us the way that opened on the day of our profession, a way that leads to Easter. The liturgical celebration of the Hours writes this mystery of Easter on our heart even in the most ordinary part of our day. It envelops our own personal histories into a time that goes beyond us, and yet brings us into our true selves. It is the time of the promised covenant, heard in Scripture and sung in the Psalms, which gives us the words to tame and to be tamed by this Presence in every issue that confronts us and so enables us to respond to this call. It is the time of Christ present and recognised by those who were the first witnesses of his Presence and his mystery. It is the time of humanity who, recognising the Risen One, dares with the brothers of Emmaus to implore Him to stay with them. If we celebrate the liturgy of the Hours day after day and throughout the course of each day, it is so that our time is really, strongly, seized by this Presence and becomes a place to recall this mystery. To be clothed in the new man, it is best to let the mystery of Christ take the place of the clothes of the old man.

We know that the tradition of the Order stresses (and the Constitutions ask) that, at the heart of this celebration of the Hours, the brothers celebrate the Eucharist and that they do so together in the Conventual Mass. We must consider once more the strength of this demand, which many of us would emphasise in our retreat talks for religious communities. Fraternal communion is rooted and finds its vigour and joy in the communal Eucharistic celebration. On account of their ministry it may well be that brothers must offer Mass in their parishes or for particular groups. Nevertheless the communal Eucharistic celebration must not remain for us merely an occasion for each priest to celebrate Mass when he has not already said his Mass somewhere else. Rather, it should be a pressing invitation to each brother, priest or not, to receive the Lord's life in the Eucharistic sharing among his brothers. "Stay with us Lord..." we say together like those disciples on the road to Emmaus, and make our hearts burn, impatient to follow you in our apostolic journey! Our communal celebration of the Eucharist should make us impatient to live truly together, rooting our preaching in the unity of our community of brothers. This we receive day after day in the broken Bread and the shared Cup.

Celebration of unity in fraternity

The liturgical celebration of the Hours must be a fraternal event. With the passing years and centuries, perhaps the liturgical celebration has gradually taken on the appearance of an observance, an aspect of the regular life in which we are engaged, a formal rite that we must fulfil like ticking off an item on our daily *check-list*. But, if when celebrating the Hours we celebrate the approach to Easter, then we are far from formalism or an obligation to fulfil a rite, to 'say our office'. (Think of when we place the body of a brother who has died among us in the choir until his funeral. We do this less to indicate that the brother is still with us, than to return this brother, precisely because he is no longer with us, to Him who comes into our midst in order that He might bring this brother into His Easter.) It is Easter that urges us to hurry to the Office. It is the mystery of life always newly given that must make us impatient for this encounter. It is the joy of fraternity, sealed by the Eucharistic sharing, that unites us to celebrate together the hope of the coming of the Word of salvation.

Fundamentally, we celebrate the coming of the Word as that unseen source and foundation of our fraternity. Does not our coming together in choir several times a day give us the opportunity to recall the unfathomable mystery of grace? He comes to speak to the world and to us, giving us the strength and the words to dare to speak in our turn to Him. We

let go of our own discourse and wisdom and everything we think we know in order to let Him speak. Several times a day we should ponder the joyful mystery of the Finding of Jesus in the Temple: He alone is the teacher who opens the meaning of Scripture! Liturgical celebration is a constant thread running through our days so that we might be woven in our ‘consecration to the truth, which is the Word’. It is a consecration that we recall together, by which we are sustained together, and through which we are offered together. The liturgy of the Hours, tradition says, sanctifies our chronological time to God; in its repetition and duration, the liturgy consecrates our own interior “duration” to the truth that is the Word who comes.

It is in this perspective that our Constitutions invite us to base our communities around the common celebration of the Eucharistic mystery (LCO 3). We might have been particularly generous at the first or the sixth hour; we could have confronted apostolic or personal discouragement at the third or the ninth hour. But there is one hour, always favourable, when it is the right time to draw strength and joy from the source of life. There is the favourable hour to give in our turn the life that we have received with a firm heartfelt desire for the salvation of the world. Once again, of course, one can raise objections, such as the number of masses to be celebrated in certain apostolic and pastoral places, or the question of the rite one would like to celebrate. The Order is based upon the communal celebration of the mystery at the heart of all mystery and must lead us to renounce, absolutely, all temptation to relativism, which would favour our own work, choices or preferences over and above the One who is the source of our unity and the foundation of our community. There is a single unity between the celebration of the Liturgy that sanctifies the Hours and the Eucharistic celebration that brings communion. In the same way, when we live the apostolic life, there is a unity between our preaching about the issues we encounter in the world and the service of charity we give to the world. There is a single, profound unity that enables us to live within the liturgical celebration of the Hours our apostolic work and patient study. For it is always a question of our being ready to recognise and welcome the Word that comes. By seeking to live together in this unity, we celebrate the presence among us of Him in whose name we offer as the hope of salvation.

Celebration of a unity received for the salvation of the world

Into the heart of the community gathered for and through the celebration, it is not only Christ who comes, but also the world. The celebration is in fact the moment when love for the world is nourished in fraternity. We say of Dominic that he spoke either of God or to God; speaking of people to God or of God to people. We say of him, that he never ceased to intercede for the world. The liturgical celebration of the Hours is the place par excellence where our communities bring into the presence of God our aspirations for the world to which we are sent as Preachers.

We already bring these aspirations to Him by proclaiming the words of the Psalms that express man’s desires with so much insistence, his longings for salvation, and his frequent incomprehension at what makes up his story. We bring these aspirations for the world when, by singing the Psalms, we make the story of the people chosen by God our own story. It is in being in the world in this way that we are a sign of the promise that the world can become a ‘world for God’. Dare we say that, by singing the story of a people for God in the midst of the world, we can open a breach in our contemporary history? A breach that allows us to raise our eyes beyond what seems to be the limits of our destiny and beyond what appears as a ‘dead end’ or an absurd barrier from a worldly perspective? We sing of the promise of a Presence and a Coming that does not accept ‘dead ends’ from a human point of view, but on

the contrary, projects the Light of a promise of eternity onto ordinary situations. To sing the liturgy hour after hour calls us to be convinced that the world is saved and heard even in the midst of its own noise. For Preachers, therefore, the world is placed hour after hour under that sign which enlivens our consecration to the Word, namely, our desire for its salvation.

Of course, we again bring these aspirations for the world into the prayers of intercession, which are so important in our tradition. Since Dominic first cried “what will become of sinners” intercession has been a specific aspect of our spiritual tradition. The choice of the apostolic life brings with it as a consequence our acceptance of the sorrows and the joys of the world: its hopes and fears, certainties and doubts. Just as consecration to the Word invites us to let the Word take our lives, transform them and raise them up to the Father, so our shared destiny with the world must dwell in us and constantly invite us to new understandings of the Promise. It must teach us to raise our eyes to the Father, presenting him with the needs and concerns of the world. ‘I do not pray for them only, but for all those who have believed through them’. This is a double movement: the Word takes hold of us and in turn we speak a human word to God which recalls Christ’s concern for the world. This double movement “conforms” us to Him who has opened the way to apostolic life. It is one and the same thing to speak to the world the Word of God in which we want it to be consecrated and to speak to God the words of the world with its hopes and fears. Sometimes we are fairly timid in our intercessory prayer, or even quite formal. We should dare to engage more fully in intercessory prayer which is an essential aspect of the spiritual school of Dominic, because it was the prayer of the Lord whom Dominic wished to follow as a preacher.

Dominic asked his friars to celebrate the Hours publically. During the course of each day our communities are invited to open their prayer to the world. We recall in the presence of God the joys, hopes, pains and fears of the world. Liturgical celebration is thus a compelling part of our mission of evangelisation (to spread the Church to the ends of the earth). It is an aspect of our office of preaching. Glorify God and give thanks for the extraordinary love that He gave the world and by which, without ceasing, He sustains Creation. Humbly receive the grace God gives us to intercede with Him for the world and to speak to him of those whom we commend in our prayer. Accept as well that grace by which God touches our lives when we ask Him for the world’s salvation. Dare to believe that day after day through intercessory prayer the Spirit conforms us to the true image of the Son’s praying to the Father, despite the clumsiness and indignity of our words. ‘Father I desire also that those whom you have given me may be with me where I am.’ By our ordinary work being interrupted, by our ‘leaving’ the world to break into prayer, we give thanks for the sanctifying Presence of God who broke into our world. Are we not established as a community of preachers through the Spirit who patiently conforms us to the image of Him who is the only Preacher? Do we not allow Him to bring our awkward prayer to the Father and place in us that desire for salvation for which He gave his life and for which we wish in our turn to be preachers?

And so, with Him, let us proceed further each day towards Easter and let us ask for the Spirit, in order to preach.

On the Feast of the Visitation

Fr. Bruno Cadore, op

Master of the Order of Preachers