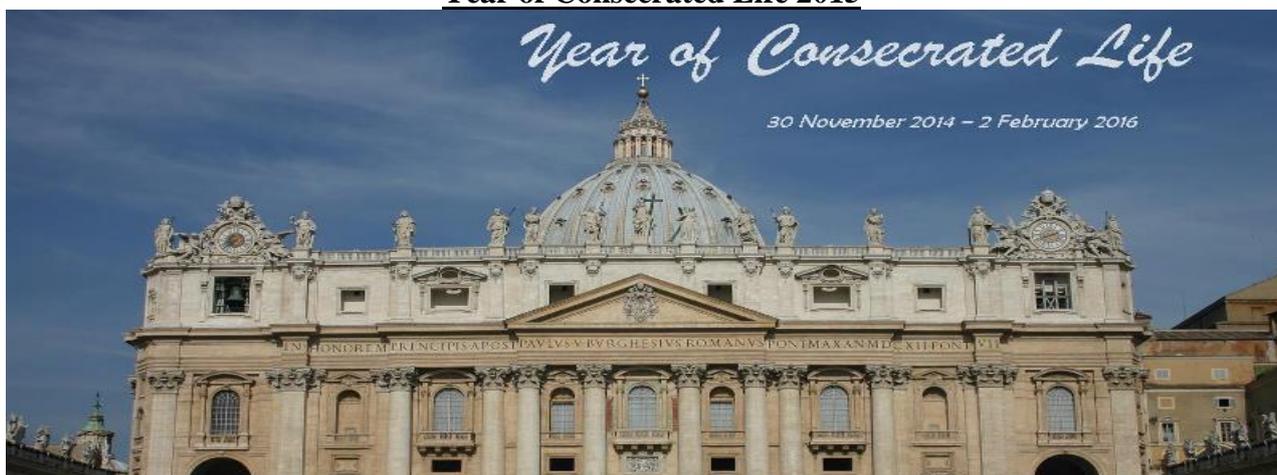




ORDER OF PREACHERS

**Year of Consecrated Life 2015****APOSTOLIC LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO ALL CONSECRATED PEOPLE ON THE OCCASION OF THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Consecrated Life,

I am writing to you as the Successor of Peter, to whom the Lord entrusted the task of confirming his brothers and sisters in faith (cf. Lk 22:32). But I am also writing to you as a brother who, like yourselves, is consecrated to God.

Together let us thank the Father, who called us to follow Jesus by fully embracing the Gospel and serving the Church, and poured into our hearts the Holy Spirit, the source of our joy and our witness to God's love and mercy before the world.

In response to requests from many of you and from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, I decided to proclaim a Year of Consecrated Life on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, which speaks of religious in its sixth chapter, and of the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis* on the renewal of religious life. The Year will begin on 30 November 2014, the First Sunday of Advent, and conclude with the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple on 2 February 2016.

After consultation with the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, I have chosen as the aims of this Year the same ones which Saint John Paul II proposed to the whole Church at the beginning of the third millennium, reiterating, in a certain sense, what he had earlier written in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*: "You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things" (No. 110).

I. AIMS OF THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

1. The first of these aims is to look to the past with gratitude. All our Institutes are heir to a history rich in charisms. At their origins we see the hand of God who, in his Spirit, calls certain individuals to follow Christ more closely, to translate the Gospel into a particular way of life, to read the signs of the times with the eyes of faith and to respond creatively to the needs of the Church. This initial experience then matured and developed, engaging new members in new geographic and cultural contexts, and giving rise to new ways of



exercising the charism, new initiatives and expressions of apostolic charity. Like the seed which becomes a tree, each Institute grew and stretched out its branches.

During this Year, it would be appropriate for each charismatic family to reflect on its origins and history, in order to thank God who grants the Church a variety of gifts which embellish her and equip her for every good work (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 12).

Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging. More than an exercise in archaeology or the cultivation of mere nostalgia, it calls for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to grasp the high ideals, and the vision and values which inspired them, beginning with the founders and foundresses and the first communities. In this way we come to see how the charism has been lived over the years, the creativity it has sparked, the difficulties it encountered and the concrete ways those difficulties were surmounted. We may also encounter cases of inconsistency, the result of human weakness and even at times a neglect of some essential aspects of the charism. Yet everything proves instructive and, taken as a whole, acts as a summons to conversion. To tell our story is to praise God and to thank him for all his gifts.

In a particular way we give thanks to God for these fifty years which followed the Second Vatican Council. The Council represented a “breath” of the Holy Spirit upon the whole Church. In consequence, consecrated life undertook a fruitful journey of renewal which, for all its lights and shadows, has been a time of grace, marked by the presence of the Spirit.

May this Year of Consecrated Life also be an occasion for confessing humbly, with immense confidence in the God who is Love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8), our own weakness and, in it, to experience the Lord’s merciful love. May this Year likewise be an occasion for bearing vigorous and joyful witness before the world to the holiness and vitality present in so many of those called to follow Jesus in the consecrated life.

2. This Year also calls us to live the present with passion. Grateful remembrance of the past leads us, as we listen attentively to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church today, to implement ever more fully the essential aspects of our consecrated life.

From the beginnings of monasticism to the “new communities” of our own time, every form of consecrated life has been born of the Spirit’s call to follow Jesus as the Gospel teaches (cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2). For the various founders and foundresses, the Gospel was the absolute rule, whereas every other rule was meant merely to be an expression of the Gospel and a means of living the Gospel to the full. For them, the ideal was Christ; they sought to be interiorly united to him and thus to be able to say with Saint Paul: “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). Their vows were intended as a concrete expression of this passionate love.

The question we have to ask ourselves during this Year is if and how we too are open to being challenged by the Gospel; whether the Gospel is truly the “manual” for our daily living and the decisions we are called to make. The Gospel is demanding: it demands to be lived radically and sincerely. It is not enough to read it (even though the reading and study of Scripture is essential), nor is it enough to meditate on it (which we do joyfully each day). Jesus asks us to practice it, to put his words into effect in our lives.

Once again, we have to ask ourselves: Is Jesus really our first and only love, as we promised he would be when we professed our vows? Only if he is, will we be empowered to love, in truth and mercy, every person who crosses our path. For we will have learned from Jesus the meaning and practice of love. We will be able to love because we have his own heart.

Our founders and foundresses shared in Jesus’ own compassion when he saw the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd. Like Jesus, who compassionately spoke his gracious word, healed the sick, gave bread to the hungry and offered his own life in sacrifice, so our founders and foundresses sought in different ways to be the service of all those to whom the Spirit sent them. They did so by their prayers of intercession, their preaching of the Gospel, their works of catechesis, education, their service to the poor and the infirm... The creativity of charity is boundless; it is able to find countless new ways of bringing the newness of the Gospel to every culture and every corner of society.



The Year of Consecrated Life challenges us to examine our fidelity to the mission entrusted to us. Are our ministries, our works and our presence consonant with what the Spirit asked of our founders and foundresses? Are they suitable for carrying out today, in society and the Church, those same ministries and works? Do we have the same passion for our people, are we close to them to the point of sharing in their joys and sorrows, thus truly understanding their needs and helping to respond to them? “The same generosity and self-sacrifice which guided your founders – Saint John Paul II once said – must now inspire you, their spiritual children, to keep alive the charisms which, by the power of the same Spirit who awakened them, are constantly being enriched and adapted, while losing none of their unique character. It is up to you to place those charisms at the service of the Church and to work for the coming of Christ’s Kingdom in its fullness”.[1]

Recalling our origins sheds light on yet another aspect of consecrated life. Our founders and foundresses were attracted by the unity of the Apostles with Christ and by the fellowship which marked the first community in Jerusalem. In establishing their own communities, each of them sought to replicate those models of evangelical living, to be of one heart and one soul, and to rejoice in the Lord’s presence (cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 15).

Living the present with passion means becoming “experts in communion”, “witnesses and architects of the ‘plan for unity’ which is the crowning point of human history in God’s design”.[2] In a polarized society, where different cultures experience difficulty in living alongside one another, where the powerless encounter oppression, where inequality abounds, we are called to offer a concrete model of community which, by acknowledging the dignity of each person and sharing our respective gifts, makes it possible to live as brothers and sisters.

So, be men and women of communion! Have the courage to be present in the midst of conflict and tension, as a credible sign of the presence of the Spirit who inspires in human hearts a passion for all to be one (cf. Jn 17:21). Live the mysticism of encounter, which entails “the ability to hear, to listen to other people; the ability to seek together ways and means”.[3] Live in the light of the loving relationship of the three divine Persons (cf. 1 Jn 4:8), the model for all interpersonal relationships.

3. To embrace the future with hope should be the third aim of this Year. We all know the difficulties which the various forms of consecrated life are currently experiencing: decreasing vocations and aging members, particularly in the Western world; economic problems stemming from the global financial crisis; issues of internationalization and globalization; the threats posed by relativism and a sense of isolation and social irrelevance... But it is precisely amid these uncertainties, which we share with so many of our contemporaries, that we are called to practice the virtue of hope, the fruit of our faith in the Lord of history, who continues to tell us: “Be not afraid... for I am with you” (Jer 1:8).

This hope is not based on statistics or accomplishments, but on the One in whom we have put our trust (cf. 2 Tim 1:2), the One for whom “nothing is impossible” (Lk 1:37). This is the hope which does not disappoint; it is the hope which enables consecrated life to keep writing its great history well into the future. It is to that future that we must always look, conscious that the Holy Spirit spurs us on so that he can still do great things with us.

So do not yield to the temptation to see things in terms of numbers and efficiency, and even less to trust in your own strength. In scanning the horizons of your lives and the present moment, be watchful and alert. Together with Benedict XVI, I urge you not to “join the ranks of the prophets of doom who proclaim the end or meaninglessness of the consecrated life in the Church in our day; rather, clothe yourselves in Jesus Christ and put on the armour of light – as Saint Paul urged (cf. Rom 13:11-14) – keeping awake and watchful”.[4] Let us constantly set out anew, with trust in the Lord.

I would especially like to say a word to those of you who are young. You are the present, since you are already taking active part in the lives of your Institutes, offering all the freshness and generosity of your “yes”. At the same time you are the future, for soon you will be called to take on roles of leadership in the life, formation, service and mission of your communities. This Year should see you actively engaged in



dialogue with the previous generation. In fraternal communion you will be enriched by their experiences and wisdom, while at the same time inspiring them, by your own energy and enthusiasm, to recapture their original idealism. In this way the entire community can join in finding new ways of living the Gospel and responding more effectively to the need for witness and proclamation.

I am also happy to know that you will have the opportunity during this Year to meet with other young religious from different Institutes. May such encounters become a regular means of fostering communion, mutual support, and unity.

II. EXPECTATIONS FOR THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

What in particular do I expect from this Year of grace for consecrated life?

1. That the old saying will always be true: “Where there are religious, there is joy”. We are called to know and show that God is able to fill our hearts to the brim with happiness; that we need not seek our happiness elsewhere; that the authentic fraternity found in our communities increases our joy; and that our total self-giving in service to the Church, to families and young people, to the elderly and the poor, brings us life-long personal fulfilment.

None of us should be dour, discontented and dissatisfied, for “a gloomy disciple is a disciple of gloom”. Like everyone else, we have our troubles, our dark nights of the soul, our disappointments and infirmities, our experience of slowing down as we grow older. But in all these things we should be able to discover “perfect joy”. For it is here that we learn to recognize the face of Christ, who became like us in all things, and to rejoice in the knowledge that we are being conformed to him who, out of love of us, did not refuse the sufferings of the cross.

In a society which exalts the cult of efficiency, fitness and success, one which ignores the poor and dismisses “losers”, we can witness by our lives to the truth of the words of Scripture: “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10).

We can apply to the consecrated life the words of Benedict XVI which I cited in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*: “It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but by attraction” (No. 14). The consecrated life will not flourish as a result of brilliant vocation programs, but because the young people we meet find us attractive, because they see us as men and women who are happy! Similarly, the apostolic effectiveness of consecrated life does not depend on the efficiency of its methods. It depends on the eloquence of your lives, lives which radiate the joy and beauty of living the Gospel and following Christ to the full.

As I said to the members of ecclesial movements on the Vigil of Pentecost last year: “Fundamentally, the strength of the Church is living by the Gospel and bearing witness to our faith. The Church is the salt of the earth; she is the light of the world. She is called to make present in society the leaven of the Kingdom of God and she does this primarily by her witness, her witness of brotherly love, of solidarity and of sharing with others” (18 May 2013).

2. I am counting on you “to wake up the world”, since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy. As I told the Superiors General: “Radical evangelical living is not only for religious: it is demanded of everyone. But religious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way.” This is the priority that is needed right now: “to be prophets who witness to how Jesus lived on this earth... a religious must never abandon prophecy” (29 November 2013).

Prophets receive from God the ability to scrutinize the times in which they live and to interpret events: they are like sentinels who keep watch in the night and sense the coming of the dawn (cf. Is 21:11-12). Prophets know God and they know the men and women who are their brothers and sisters. They are able to discern and denounce the evil of sin and injustice. Because they are free, they are beholden to no one but God, and they have no interest other than God. Prophets tend to be on the side of the poor and the powerless, for they know that God himself is on their side.



So I trust that, rather than living in some utopia, you will find ways to create “alternate spaces”, where the Gospel approach of self-giving, fraternity, embracing differences, and love of one another can thrive. Monasteries, communities, centres of spirituality, schools, hospitals, family shelters – all these are places which the charity and creativity born of your charisms have brought into being, and with constant creativity must continue to bring into being. They should increasingly be the leaven for a society inspired by the Gospel, a “city on a hill”, which testifies to the truth and the power of Jesus’ words.

At times, like Elijah and Jonah, you may feel the temptation to flee, to abandon the task of being a prophet because it is too demanding, wearisome or apparently fruitless. But prophets know that they are never alone. As he did with Jeremiah, so God encourages us: “Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you” (Jer 1:8).

3. Men and women religious, like all other consecrated persons, have been called, as I mentioned, “experts in communion”. So I am hoping that the “spirituality of communion”, so emphasized by Saint John Paul II, will become a reality and that you will be in the forefront of responding to “the great challenge facing us” in this new millennium: “to make the Church the home and the school of communion.”[5] I am sure that in this Year you will make every effort to make the ideal of fraternity pursued by your founders and foundresses expand everywhere, like concentric circles.

Communion is lived first and foremost within the respective communities of each Institute. To this end, I would ask you to think about my frequent comments about criticism, gossip, envy, jealousy, hostility as ways of acting which have no place in our houses. This being the case, the path of charity open before us is almost infinite, since it entails mutual acceptance and concern, practicing a communion of goods both material and spiritual, fraternal correction and respect for those who are weak ... it is the “mystique of living together” which makes our life “a sacred pilgrimage”. [6] We need to ask ourselves about the way we relate to persons from different cultures, as our communities become increasingly international. How can we enable each member to say freely what he or she thinks, to be accepted with his or her particular gifts, and to become fully co-responsible?

I also hope for a growth in communion between the members of different Institutes. Might this Year be an occasion for us to step out more courageously from the confines of our respective Institutes and to work together, at the local and global levels, on projects involving formation, evangelization, and social action? This would make for a more effective prophetic witness. Communion and the encounter between different charisms and vocations can open up a path of hope. No one contributes to the future in isolation, by his or her efforts alone, but by seeing himself or herself as part of a true communion which is constantly open to encounter, dialogue, attentive listening and mutual assistance. Such a communion inoculates us from the disease of self-absorption.

Consecrated men and women are also called to true synergy with all other vocations in the Church, beginning with priests and the lay faithful, in order to “spread the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its boundaries”. [7]

4. I also expect from you what I have asked all the members of the Church: to come out of yourselves and go forth to the existential peripheries. “Go into all the world”; these were the last words which Jesus spoke to his followers and which he continues to address to us (cf. Mk 16:15). A whole world awaits us: men and women who have lost all hope, families in difficulty, abandoned children, young people without a future, the elderly, sick and abandoned, those who are rich in the world’s goods but impoverished within, men and women looking for a purpose in life, thirsting for the divine...

Don’t be closed in on yourselves, don’t be stifled by petty squabbles, don’t remain a hostage to your own problems. These will be resolved if you go forth and help others to resolve their own problems, and proclaim the Good News. You will find life by giving life, hope by giving hope, love by giving love.

I ask you to work concretely in welcoming refugees, drawing near to the poor, and finding creative ways to catechize, to proclaim the Gospel and to teach others how to pray. Consequently, I would hope that



structures can be streamlined, large religious houses repurposed for works which better respond to the present demands of evangelization and charity, and apostolates adjusted to new needs.

5. I expect that each form of consecrated life will question what it is that God and people today are asking of them.

Monasteries and groups which are primarily contemplative could meet or otherwise engage in an exchange of experiences on the life of prayer, on ways of deepening communion with the entire Church, on supporting persecuted Christians, and welcoming and assisting those seeking a deeper spiritual life or requiring moral or material support.

The same can be done by Institutes dedicated to works of charity, teaching and cultural advancement, to preaching the Gospel or to carrying out specific pastoral ministries. It could also be done by Secular Institutes, whose members are found at almost every level of society. The creativity of the Spirit has generated ways of life and activities so diverse that they cannot be easily categorized or fit into ready-made templates. So I cannot address each and every charismatic configuration. Yet during this Year no one can feel excused from seriously examining his or her presence in the Church's life and from responding to the new demands constantly being made on us, to the cry of the poor.

Only by such concern for the needs of the world, and by docility to the promptings of the Spirit, will this Year of Consecrated Life become an authentic *kairos*, a time rich in God's grace, a time of transformation.

III. THE HORIZONS OF THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

1. In this letter, I wish to speak not only to consecrated persons, but also to the laity, who share with them the same ideals, spirit and mission. Some Religious Institutes have a long tradition in this regard, while the experience of others is more recent. Indeed, around each religious family, every Society of Apostolic Life and every Secular Institute, there is a larger family, a "charismatic family", which includes a number of Institutes which identify with the same charism, and especially lay faithful who feel called, precisely as lay persons, to share in the same charismatic reality.

I urge you, as laity, to live this Year for Consecrated Life as a grace which can make you more aware of the gift you yourselves have received. Celebrate it with your entire "family", so that you can grow and respond together to the promptings of the Spirit in society today. On some occasions when consecrated men and women from different Institutes come together, arrange to be present yourselves so as to give expression to the one gift of God. In this way you will come to know the experiences of other charismatic families and other lay groups, and thus have an opportunity for mutual enrichment and support.

2. The Year for Consecrated Life concerns not only consecrated persons, but the entire Church. Consequently, I ask the whole Christian people to be increasingly aware of the gift which is the presence of our many consecrated men and women, heirs of the great saints who have written the history of Christianity. What would the Church be without Saint Benedict and Saint Basil, without Saint Augustine and Saint Bernard, without Saint Francis and Saint Dominic, Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Angelica Merici and Saint Vincent de Paul. The list could go on and on, up to Saint John Bosco and Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. As Blessed Paul VI pointed out: "Without this concrete sign there would be a danger that the charity which animates the entire Church would grow cold, that the salvific paradox of the Gospel would be blunted, and that the "salt" of faith would lose its savour in a world undergoing secularization" (*Evangelica Testificatio*, 3).

So I invite every Christian community to experience this Year above all as a moment of thanksgiving to the Lord and grateful remembrance for all the gifts we continue to receive, thanks to the sanctity of founders and foundresses, and from the fidelity to their charism shown by so many consecrated men and women. I ask all of you to draw close to these men and women, to rejoice with them, to share their difficulties and to assist them, to whatever degree possible, in their ministries and works, for the latter are, in the end, those of the entire Church. Let them know the affection and the warmth which the entire Christian people feels for them.



3. In this letter I do not hesitate to address a word to the consecrated men and women and to the members of fraternities and communities who belong to Churches of traditions other than the Catholic tradition. Monasticism is part of the heritage of the undivided Church, and is still very much alive in both the Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church. The monastic tradition, and other later experiences from the time when the Church in the West was still united, have inspired analogous initiatives in the Ecclesial Communities of the reformed tradition. These have continued to give birth to further expressions of fraternal community and service.

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life has planned a number of initiatives to facilitate encounters between members of different expressions of consecrated and fraternal life in the various Churches. I warmly encourage such meetings as a means of increasing mutual understanding, respect and reciprocal cooperation, so that the ecumenism of the consecrated life can prove helpful for the greater journey towards the unity of all the Churches.

4. Nor can we forget that the phenomenon of monasticism and of other expressions of religious fraternity is present in all the great religions. There are instances, some long-standing, of inter-monastic dialogue involving the Catholic Church and certain of the great religious traditions. I trust that the Year of Consecrated Life will be an opportunity to review the progress made, to make consecrated persons aware of this dialogue, and to consider what further steps can be taken towards greater mutual understanding and greater cooperation in the many common areas of service to human life.

Journeying together always brings enrichment, and can open new paths to relationships between peoples and cultures, which nowadays appear so difficult.

5. Finally, in a special way, I address my brother bishops. May this Year be an opportunity to accept institutes of consecrated life, readily and joyfully, as a spiritual capital which contributes to the good of the whole body of Christ (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 43), and not simply that of the individual religious families. “Consecrated life is a gift to the Church, it is born of the Church, it grows in the Church, and it is entirely directed to the Church”.^[8] For this reason, precisely as a gift to the Church, it is not an isolated or marginal reality, but deeply a part of her. It is at the heart of the Church, a decisive element of her mission, inasmuch as it expresses the deepest nature of the Christian vocation and the yearning of the Church as the Bride for union with her sole Spouse. Thus, “it belongs... absolutely to the life and holiness” of the Church (ibid., 44).

In the light of this, I ask you, the Pastors of the particular Churches, to show special concern for promoting within your communities the different charisms, whether long-standing or recent. I ask you to do this by your support and encouragement, your assistance in discernment, and your tender and loving closeness to those situations of suffering and weakness in which some consecrated men or women may find themselves. Above all, do this by instructing the People of God in the value of consecrated life, so that its beauty and holiness may shine forth in the Church.

I entrust this Year of Consecrated Life to Mary, the Virgin of listening and contemplation, the first disciple of her beloved Son. Let us look to her, the highly -beloved daughter of the Father, endowed with every gift of grace, as the unsurpassed model for all those who follow Christ in love of God and service to their neighbour.

Lastly, I join all of you in gratitude for the gifts of grace and light with which the Lord graciously wills to enrich us, and I accompany you with my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 21 November 2014, Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Francis

[1] Apostolic Letter to the Religious of Latin America on the occasion of the Fifth Centenary of the Evangelization of the New World *Los caminos del Evangelio* (29 June 1990), 26.

[2] SACRED CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTES, *Religious and Human Promotion* (12 August 1980), 24: *L’Osservatore Romano*, Suppl., 12 November 1980, pp. I-VIII.



- [3] Address to Rectors and Students of the Pontifical Colleges and Residences of Rome (12 May 2014).
[4] POPE BENEDICT XVI, Homily for the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord (2 February 2013).
[5] Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 43.
[6] Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 87
[7] JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (25 March 1996), 51.
[8] BISHOP J.M. BERGOGLIO, Intervention at the Synod on the Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World, XVI General Congregation, 13 October 1994.

The Dean and Vice Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Angelicum Receive Awards.

On Saturday, 2 November 2014 at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome

Fr Alejandro Crosthwaite, OP, the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas, Rome and the Vice Dean of the same faculty, Sr Helen Alford, OP have been given the award, “Gloria Lavorativa”.

This took place at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome at an occasion organized by the International Academy “Fortuna d’Oro” of Ukraine in collaboration with the Central Council of the Coordination of Ukrainian Organizations in Italy.

The President of the Academy, Mr Dmytro Akimov handed them the award in recognition of their contributions to the development of the Ukrainian communities in Italy and the country of Ukraine itself.

Fr Crosthwaite was honoured for his contributions to the teaching and formation of young Ukrainians especially in the development of their Christian social consciousness.

Sr Helen was honoured for her contributions to the cohesion of the Ukrainian community in Rome especially for the development and promotion of social policies among the female leadership of the community.

5 Tips on Prayer with St. Thomas Aquinas

Praying better with the help of St Thomas Aquinas

Prayer, St. John Damascene says, is the unveiling of the mind before God. When we pray we ask Him for what we need, confess our faults, thank Him for His gifts, and adore His immense majesty. Here are five tips for praying better– with the help of St. Thomas Aquinas.

5. Be humble.

Many people falsely think of humility as a virtue of a low self-esteem. St. Thomas teaches us that humility is a virtue of acknowledging the truth about reality. Since prayer, at its root, is an “asking” directed at God, humility is crucially important. Through humility we recognize our neediness before God. We are totally and entirely dependent on God for everything and at every moment: our existence, life, breath, every thought and action. As we become more humble, we recognize more profoundly our need to pray more.

4. Have faith.

It’s not enough to know that we’re needy. To pray, we also have to ask someone, and not just anyone, but someone who can and will answer our petition. Children intuit this when they ask mom instead of dad (or vice versa!) for permission or a gift. It is with the eyes of faith that we see God is both powerful and willing to help us in prayer. St. Thomas says that “faith is necessary... that is, we need to believe that we can obtain from Him what we seek.” It is faith which teaches us “of God’s omnipotence and mercy,” the basis of our hope. In this, St. Thomas reflects the Scriptures. The Epistle to the Hebrews underlines the necessity of faith, saying, “Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Heb 11:6). Try praying an Act of Faith.

3. Pray before praying.

In old breviaries you can find a small prayer that begins, “Open, O Lord, my mouth to bless your Holy Name. Cleanse, too, my heart from all vain, perverse and extraneous thoughts...” I remember finding this slightly amusing– there were prescribed prayers before prescribed prayers! When I reconsidered it, I realized that although it might seem paradoxical, it gives a lesson. Prayer is utterly supernatural, and so it is far



beyond our reach. St. Thomas himself notes that God “wishes to bestow certain things on us at our asking.” The prayer above continues by asking God: “Illumine my mind, inflame my heart, that I may worthily, attentively and devoutly recite this Office and merit to be heard in the sight of Your divine Majesty.” The attentiveness and purity of heart needed to attain to God in prayer is itself received as a gift– and we will only receive if we ask.

2. Be intentional.

Merit in prayer– that is to say, whether it brings us closer to heaven– flows from the virtue of charity. And this flows from our will. So to pray meritoriously, we need to make our prayer an object of choice. St. Thomas explains that our merit rests primarily on our original intention in praying. It isn’t broken by accidental distraction, which no human being can avoid, but only by intentional and willing distraction. This also should give us some relief. We need not worry too much about distractions, as long as we don’t encourage them. We realize something of what the Psalmist says, namely, that God “pours gifts on His beloved while they slumber” (Ps 127:2).

1. Be attentive.

Although, strictly, we need only be intentional and not also perfectly attentive to merit by our prayer, it is nevertheless true that our attention is important. When our minds are filled with actual attention to God, our hearts too are inflamed with desire for Him. St. Thomas explains that spiritual refreshment of the soul comes chiefly from being attentive to God in prayer. The Psalmist cries out, “It is your face, O Lord, that I seek!” (Ps 27:8). In prayer, let us never cease to search for His Face.

By: Br. John Sica, O.P.

Open Letter to the EU: Including migrants and migration in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals agenda

An Open Letter to the European Commission, the European Parliament and the EU Member States

In conjunction with several Civil Society, Justice and Peace, Caritas organizations and NGOs, the Dominican Delegation to the UN and the Dominican Office for Justice and Peace has co-signed an open letter to the European Commission, European Parliament and the EU Member States.

In the letter, the organizations are asking the EU Member States to include migrants and migration-related targets in their post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

This call is pertinent bearing in mind that there are currently about 72 million migrants in Europe and they are not yet recognized as actors and subjects of sustainable human development.

The civil society organizations are reminding the EU Member States of the “Civil Society Stockholm Agenda” on migrants and migration. This agenda is a set of migrant-centered, right-based goals and targets that support development that is human, economic and sustainable.

These targets are framed around 9 goals

1. Decent working conditions and social protection for all migrants, regardless of migration status, that conform to international labour standards,
2. Reduction in the cost of sending remittances and reduction in the cost of labour migration and recruitment.
3. Access to social and legal protection, and decent work for migrant women and girls, including domestic workers.
4. Access to education for all migrants and migrants’ children, regardless of migration status.
5. Access to adequate and quality healthcare for all migrants, regardless of migration status.
6. Increased migrant participation and contribution in public policy planning and implementation.
7. Institutionalized mechanisms that embrace, integrate or reintegrate migrants and their families into their countries of origin, heritage and destination.
8. Full engagement of migrants and diaspora members as partners in development.
9. Facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, through enhanced international cooperation.

It is hoped that all these will be put into consideration in the post-2015 development agenda.



50th anniversary of the martyrdom of Belgian Dominican Friars and Sisters in Congo in 1964

It was with a solemn Mass presided over by the Master of the Order, Brother Bruno Cadoré, that the Belgian Dominicans honored our Belgian Dominican brothers and sisters massacred by the “Simbas” rebels in the Eastern Province of the Congo (DRC) in November 1964. This Mass, which was broadcast live by Belgian Television and *Le Jour du Seigneur* (France 2), was held on Sunday 23 November 2014 - Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe. The Mass was celebrated in the church of Our Lady of the Rosary at St Dominic’s International Community in Brussels, Belgium. The music was led by the Polish choir of EU officials under the pastoral care of brother Marian Wojciechowski of the Brussels community.

The Master of the Order was accompanied by his Vicar, brother Vivian Boland, Socius for this region of Europe, and by brother Gabriel Samba, Socius for Africa, where our Dominican missionaries were killed.

Around brother Bruno at the altar, were brothers Michel Val Aerde, Vice Provincial of Belgique Sud, Marcel Braeckers, Provincial of the Province St. Rose in Flanders, Michel Lachenaud, Provincial of France, Mark Butaye, prior of the Brussels Priory, and brother Jean Baptiste Dianda, son of the Vicariate General of St. Pius V in D.R. Congo, who proclaimed the gospel in Lingala. Participating also were many brothers of the Flemish province and of the Belgian Vice Province, along with Dominican Sisters of whom many had been missionaries in the Congo, some African brothers and sisters, lay Dominicans, family members of those who were killed, friends and acquaintances, as well as those who worship regularly with the community in Brussels.

A board illuminated by red candles had the pictures and names of the 22 Belgian Dominican martyrs, 13 brothers and 9 sisters. Also killed at that time were four Spanish Dominican sisters and four Italian Combonian missionaries who worked closely with our brothers and sisters. The Master of the Order paid tribute to these witnesses of the love of God and neighbour, emphasizing in his homily that the kingdom of which the Gospel speaks to us, is a "kingdom of compassion and peace."

This beautiful celebration carefully organized by Brother Didier Croonenberghs, who is responsible for televised Masses on Belgian television, by brother Mark Butaye, prior of Saint Dominic’s Priory, and all their staff, ended with a fraternal meal.

fr. Gabriel Samba, O.P.

Networking within and among the Dominican Family

From Sr Margaret Mayce, OP of the Dominican Leadership Conference, USA

I recently had the opportunity to meet with our new delegate to the United Nations in Geneva, our brother, Mike Deeb. Mike visited New York in an effort to understand the workings of the UN here, and to explore ways in which we can work together for the Dominican Family. Our conversations were fruitful, and gave each of us a sense of great possibility. What we each realize more fully is that the advocacy work we try to do in this venue requires a greater connection to what is happening “on the ground” in those parts of the world where our Dominican brothers and sisters live and minister. Networking and collaboration need to be a priority.

Iraq Coordinating Committee

A wonderful example of Dominican networking and collaboration in the United States is the work being done by the Iraq Coordinating Committee (ICC), as they seek to explore how best to respond to the plight of Iraqi Christians and other minority groups which are forced to flee the current onslaught of violence. The members of the ICC include Jim Barnett (Central Province), Dusty Farnan (Adrian), Pat Farrell (San Rafael), Arlene Flaherty (Blauvelt), Eileen Gannon (Sparkill), Beth Murphy (Springfield), Roberta Popara (Sinsinawa) Lucianne Siers (Grand Rapids), Richard Woods, (Central Province), Rick McDowell, Mary Trotochaud, and the North American Co-Promoters for Justice, Peace and Care of Creation, Chuck Dahm (Central Province) and Marcelline Koch (Springfield). Their direct contact with our Dominican sisters in Iraq provides them with a clear sense of the needs as well as the direction they feel is appropriate.

As of now, the ICC is considering ways to educate and advocate regarding the crisis in Iraq, the suffering and displacement of the Iraqi people and the ongoing impact of sustained trauma on Iraqi children and



youth—the future and the hope of this devastated country. As plans unfold, there will be ways in which each one of us will all be able to express our own unique solidarity with the people caught up in this tragic situation.

International networking

In addition to my visit with Mike, I also had the chance to meet with three sisters from the Roman Congregation: Rosa Maria Barboza (Brazil), Anne Marie Geoffrey (France) and Anne Levesque, who is stationed in Staten Island, and helped with translation. Rosa Maria and Anne Marie shared some of the realities in their countries—that of Brazil being the most poignant. They spoke of the so-called “agrarian reform,” which has left untold numbers of people landless; they addressed the “enslavement” of peoples in Brazil to the coal industry and to massive deforestation for the benefit of industry and profit. And most heartbreaking of all, the sisters spoke about the illegal organ market—body organs taken from people who lack the resources needed for their own medical care. These organs are then sold on the open market. It’s so hard to imagine that something like this actually happens; and that people allow it, because they feel they have no other recourse.

The Roman Congregation, though small, is represented in Japan, where the sisters are engaged in the nuclear issue, especially in the wake of the Fukushima tragedy; and in Africa, where they work with women and girls and the issue of human trafficking. Sisters also work in prisons in Italy and with the issue of migration in Spain, and in Sweden they work with immigrants and also host three Iraqi Dominican sisters from the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena. Right now I am in the process of contacting sisters in these areas, in the hope of establishing a network that will strengthen the connection between our sisters’ lived reality and the work that both Mike and I try to do at the UN.

Our sisters ‘down under’

I often feel that I am in a very privileged position, as I have had the opportunity to meet so many inspiring members of the Dominican Family. Not least among these are our Dominican Sisters in New Zealand. They treated Anne Lythgoe and myself as if they had known us all their lives! Being with them during their Chapter days (read more and view photos on the New Zealand Report blog), traveling with them to where they live and minister on both the North and South Island, and speaking with the people whose lives they have touched was an enormously inspiring experience for both of us. Their depth, their simplicity, their realism in the face of diminishment, and their absolute belief that they continue to have something to offer for the sake of the mission filled me with a great sense of hope for our future as a Dominican Family. Their dedication to the charism was palpable, as evidenced in the way in which they have passed on the Dominican spirit to their lay partners. If Dominican life and mission can be so vibrant within a congregation of 47 women, is this not a great sign of hope for us as well?

In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul speaks of having learned to be content whatever the circumstances. “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to live with abundance... I can do all things through God who gives me strength.” Our New Zealand sisters seemed to embody this for me. Being with them was sheer gift, and I am so very grateful I had the opportunity to spend time with them.

The late poet Jessica Powers said that “To live with the Spirit of God is to be a listener. It is to keep the vigil of mystery, earthless and still.” In deep gratitude for one another and the varied ways in which we participate in Dominican life and mission, let’s together keep this vigil of mystery—so that we might be open and ready to respond to the quiet invitations to join our hands and hearts in collaboration, in networking and in encouraging one another in the pursuit of justice and peace, for the good of all of God’s creatures and this one fragile Earth which we all call home. Happy Thanksgiving!

And in the meantime, our brother Mike, in Geneva, and I, here in New York, will commit ourselves to pursuing a deeper level of collaboration, and of fostering greater engagement from our brothers and sisters for the good of God’s people and this one fragile Earth which we all claim as our home.

Margaret Mayce, OP (DLC/Amityville) (ngo@domlife.org)



Call for Conference Papers: Belief, Curiosity, Knowledge and Cognition

In August 2015, the Dominican friars of the Province of Croatia will host a conference in Trogir, Croatia, on the themes of Belief, Curiosity, Knowledge and Cognition. The conference is part of a larger series related to “Human Curiosity and Knowledge and Christ’s Acquired Knowledge.” All are welcome to submit papers for consideration for the conference.

Papers may address any topic related to the main themes from a variety of historical, philosophical, theological and/or contextual perspective.

All papers should be submitted through email attachment (entitled: Application for the Trogir 2015 Conference) by 20th of January 2015 to: regens@dominikanci.br We will confirm receipt of all proposals submitted by email and alert potential participants of the decision by 20th of February 2015.

For more details contact: Srecko Koralijsa, OP - Regent of Studies

Opportunity for doctoral students in Theology, Philosophy and Mediaeval Studies to attend the Aquinas Colloquium and Seminar at Blackfriars Hall Oxford

As a result of a grant from the Earhart Foundation, Blackfriars Hall announces a competition for a number of doctoral students who are studying some feature of the thought of Thomas Aquinas to come to Oxford from 3rd to 8th March 2015. Those chosen will be able to attend seminars and lectures at Oxford, including the Aquinas Seminar on the afternoon of Thursday 5th March and the day-long Aquinas Colloquium on Saturday 7th March, both at Blackfriars. The students will have the opportunity to meet scholars at Oxford and to discuss their own work with colleagues. Those chosen as Earhart Scholars will receive funds to cover travel costs to and from Oxford, and a stipend for living expenses during their stay in Oxford.

To apply to be an Earhart Scholar, send a letter of enquiry detailing your research interests in Thomas Aquinas, and your curriculum vitae; you should also ask an academic adviser to send an e-mail in support of your application. The application should be sent by e-mail to: secretary@bfriars.ox.ac.uk by 5th December 2014. For further information, please write to Dr William E Carroll of Blackfriars Hall’s Aquinas Institute: william.carroll@bfriars.ox.ac.uk

New CD of Dominican Chant for the Immaculate Conception

Dominican Chant from the friars of the Dominican House of Study, Washington DC.

The Schola of the Priory of the Immaculate Conception (Dominican House of Studies), Washington, DC, recently released a new CD titled Ave Maria: Dominican Chant for the Immaculate Conception. This CD features chants composed from the middle ages through the late nineteenth century in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The CD was recorded in the hauntingly beautiful acoustic space of the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in Washington, DC. The music was edited, directed, sung and recorded by Dominican friars from the Priory of the Immaculate Conception under the musical leadership of Fr. James Moore, O.P., of the Province of the Holy Name (California).

To learn more about the new CD, or to purchase a copy, visit the website of Dominicana Records. The recording in CD and mp3 format from Dominicana Records, and in AAC format from iTunes.

The Visit of the Master of the Order to the Province of Teutonia

For a fortnight, from 14 to 29 September 2014, the Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadoré in the company of his Socius for Central and Eastern Europe, fr Wojciech Delik made a canonical visitation to the Province of Teutonia, Germany. He visited all the convents and houses of the province, met with the brothers individually and in groups and shared with them on their lives and works. The visitation started at Cologne where he visited the grave of St Albert the Great and celebrated Mass with the community.

The next stop was the two formation houses in Mainz and Worms. This was followed by a visit to Berlin, Leipzig, Braunschweig and Hamburg. At Vechta, he met with the brothers, the teachers and students of St



Thomas College. There he attended a French lesson. After a short visit with the Dominican Sisters at Osnabrück, he arrived at Dusseldorf, the last stop of his tour.

Back in Cologne, he had three major events :

Meeting with the Dominican Laity

On Saturday, 27 September, the Master of the Order met with about 50 sisters and brothers from the lay fraternities in the province. He had fraternal discussions with them and also celebrated the Holy Mass with them.

Solemn Profession

Sunday, 28 September was a special day for the two young brothers, frs Dennis Halft and Philipp Maria King. On that day, they made their solemn profession of vows at the hands of the Master of the Order. Their parents, relatives, friends and many brothers, sisters and laity of the Order were present to celebrate with them. The subsequent reception in the rooms and garden of the convent provided an opportunity to share with and congratulate the newly solemnly professed brothers.

Conclusion of the Visitation with the Provincial Council

On Monday, 29 September, at the meeting of the Provincial Council, fr Bruno was given further updates on the province and he also shared with the council on his impressions. The council thanked him for his visit, his fraternal sharing and his words of encouragement. Thus ending the 14-day visitation of the Province by the Master of the Order.

fr. Gerfried A. Bramlage OP (translated from the original German)

Fr Eric Discovers the Media Apostolates of the Friars in Nigeria

From October 7 to 14, fr Eric Salobir, the General Promoter for Communications in the Order was in the Province of St Joseph the Worker, Nigeria on a fact-finding mission to discover what the brothers are doing in the area of communications, to encourage them and to discuss future areas of collaborations. He was accompanied by fr Bonaventure Agbali (the Personal Secretary of the Master of the Order) who works with him as the General Editor of the official website of the Order (www.op.org) and the Director of IDI.

Fr Eric was in the cities of Lagos and Ibadan where the brothers have their major media apostolates. At Lagos, he met with fr Alphonsus Ozoemena who is responsible for the production and broadcast of weekly Masses on one of the local television stations. At Ibadan, fr Eric was given a guided tour of the operations of Verbum Networks, an ISP company established and managed by the brothers. The CEO of the Network, fr Gabriel Avbenake detailed the operations of the Network which includes, the provision of internet services for homes and offices, training in various areas of IT, website design and management and IT consultancy. Also at Ibadan, fr Kenneth Nkadi runs the Fra Angelico Studio which is involved in photo, audio and video productions and training of interested persons in these areas.

The media apostolates in Ibadan are situated at and run in conjunction with the Dominican Institute, the institute of philosophical and theological studies of the province. For these reasons, fr Eric paid a courtesy call on the President of the Institute, fr Anthony Akinwale and had a fruitful discussion with him.

At the end of his visit, fr Eric was highly impressed by the activities of the brothers in the area of communications despite the challenges especially that of electricity. He related this to the Prior Provincial, fr Charles Ukwe and some members of his Council whom he met at the end of his visit.

For the future, fr Eric hopes that Ibadan would serve as the centre of OPTIC (Order of Preachers for Technology, Information and Communications) in Africa, help in the management of information within Africa and between Africa and the rest of the Order and also help in the training of other members of the Dominican family in Africa in the area of IT. He had heartfelt and promising discussions with the brothers on these possibilities.



On a lighter mood, fr Eric had the opportunity to visit other locations in the cities of Lagos and Ibadan, including the convent and hospital of the Dominican Sisters in Ibadan. In all, he had a warm and fruitful visit.

Official News

Pope Francis Appoints Fr Lorenzo Lorusso, OP as Under Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches

The Holy Father, Pope Francis has just appointed fr Lorenzo Lorusso as the Under Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. He is of the Province of St Thomas Aquinas in Italy.

He was born in 1967 at Bari. He received the Dominican habit in 1989 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1995.

Fr Lorenzo has been a consultor to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and the Rector of the Basilica of St Nicholas in Bari. He holds a doctorate in Oriental Canon Law and he is a lecturer at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome.

New Dominican Student Friars in Rome meets with the Master

Annual Meeting of the Master of the Order with New Dominican Students in Rome 2014

As the 2014/2015 academic year begins, we welcome all the Dominican friars who just arrived in Rome to pursue various forms of studies. On Wednesday 19 November 2014, as he usually does, the Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadoré met with some of these brothers. In the fraternal discussion he had with them, the Master tried to find out the various courses they are studying, where they are studying, how they are settling down and the challenges they are currently encountering in that regard. In all these, he welcomed them to Rome and encouraged them to be steadfast in their studies.

They are ten brothers from different provinces in the Order and studying different courses at different universities in Rome.

At our own Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), we have the following brothers,
fr Joseph Nguyen Hoang Vinh (Vietnam) studying Ecumenism,
fr Peter Tran Van Huong (Vietnam) studying Canon Law,
fr Daniel Sampath Veigas (India) studying Canon Law,
fr Ezra Sullivan (St Joseph, USA) studying Moral Theology and
fr Francisco Javier Sanchez Pinero (Holy Rosary Province) studying Theology.

Two are studying Patristics at the Patristic Institute of St Augustine (Augustinianum);
fr Damien Elime-Bougoume (France) and
fr Austine Dominic Litke (St Joseph, USA).
fr Iderman Andrade Suarez (Colombia) is studying Liturgy at the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm,
fr Fabian Elicio Rico Virguez (Colombia) is studying Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute while
fr Adrien de Fouchier (France) is doing some research work on the Arabic manuscripts of the Vatican Library.

Also present at the meeting were fr Vivian Boland, the Vicar of the Master of the Order and fr Michael Mascari, the Socius for Studies in the Order.

fr. Orlando Rueda Acevedo is the New Socius for Apostolic Life

A friar of the Province of Colombia

The Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadoré has appointed fr Orlando Rueda Acevedo as the new Socius for Apostolic Life. He is from the Province of Colombia and he succeeds fr Prakash Lohale.

fr. Orlando was born in Santander, Colombia in 1960. He entered the Order in 1983, studied Philosophy and Theology at the University of Santo Tomas in Bogota, Colombia and was ordained to the priesthood in 1990.



He has been the Prior of the following convents; Santo Domingo in Bogota (1992), San José in Bogota (1999), Most Holy Name of Jesus in Cali (2005) and Christ the King in Bucaramanga (2009). He was the Novice Master for Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela (1994-1998), Rector of the University of Santo Tomas in Bucaramanga (2007-2010) and Lacordaire School in Cali (2003-2007). He was the Secretary General of the General Chapter of Bogota (2007) and the Prior Provincial of the Province of Colombia (2010-2014).

We wish all the best in his new assignment.

New Collaborators with the Promoter for the Laity

After consulting with the Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadoré, the Promoter for the Laity, fr Rui Carlos Lopes has chosen two collaborators that will work closely with him in his office as promoter. They will assist him in dealing with requests from various laity groups and also accompany him in some visits.

They will not be living at Santa Sabina, rather they will go about their normal businesses and still work closely with fr Rui. The new collaborators are fr Manolo Puppini and Ruth Anne Henderson.

Profile

Fr Manolo Puppini, son of the Roman Province of St. Catherine of Siena, is currently the parochial vicar at the Parish of Santa Maria del Rosario in Rome from where he attends to the local Fraternity of lay Dominicans. He studied at the Gregorian University, Rome. With the agreement of his Provincial and his Superior, he will come to Santa Sabina two half-days a week and will accompany the Promoter in a few visits.

Ruth Anne Henderson is a lay Dominican from Scotland but she lives near Chieri, Italy. She has been the President of the European Council of Lay Dominican Fraternities. She will remain at her place of residence, work remotely with fr Rui and make some visits with him.

Fr Rui is grateful for such generosity in the service to the laity of the Order.

Calendar of the Master of the Order for December 2014

Nov 29-Dec 2: Canonical Visitation to the Angelicum
4-22: Canonical Visitation to the Province of Nigeria
25: Christmas Day celebration in Santa Sabina
Dec 26-Jan 11 2015: Christmas Break

All articles are available on www.op.org