
ORDER OF PREACHERS



Letter of the Master of the Order: The Jubilee Commentary on the annual theme of the Jubilee (2015) Dominic: Government, Spirituality and Freedom of the Order



'If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' (John 8:31-32); 'For freedom Christ set us free' (Gal 5:1)

The truth will set you free! Echoing this promise of Jesus, the image that is forced on me is that of the group that walked with Jesus, announcing the kingdom from town to town. Each one in their own way had been freed. Freed from the weight of their mistakes, the impasses of their lies, the heaviness of their history, from alienating divisions ... driven by the desire of their Master and Lord to go even to other cities, they accompanied him, confident so as to hold themselves, with him, in a Breath that made them day by day more free to be themselves, free to have been given this friendship offered by God with His Son, free to be sent. Free to be disciples of Christ and in turn to invite others to join them. It is the Breath of Jesus' preaching that sets them free, even though they had perhaps not really considered what they had become involved in by responding to his invitation to follow him, or by joining him on their own initiative in appreciation of the mercy which was his grace to them. By staying by his side in his proclamation of the kingdom, they discover that they are becoming even more free than they had ever dared to hope. Free because of the Word of their friend and Lord. 'If you remain in my Word, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free'. Freed by the Word of truth!

It is, I believe, to this freedom of the preacher that this year's theme in preparation for the celebration of the jubilee of the Order refers. Dominic: government, spirituality and freedom. We have in mind some important texts that were proposed to us over the last few decades on these topics (government in the order, obedience, freedom and responsibility...), and which we will be happy to read again. It seems to me that the theme of this year invites us, within the perspective opened by these texts, to focus our attention on what is perhaps the heart of the spirituality of the Order: to receive the audacity of the preacher's freedom in learning to become his disciples. And such is the horizon of government in the Order.



We always emphasize the essential role, unique, given to obedience in the profession of being a preacher: 'I promise obedience, to God ...' Dominic, the historians recall, asked the first brothers to promise him 'obedience and common life'. Two ways to become disciples: listen to the Word and follow his example in living with others, following him as the first community of friends that went with Jesus from town to town to learn from him how to be a preacher. Listen and live together, making this following of the Word the source of unanimity.

Consecrated to preaching: Sent to preach the Gospel

In this year dedicated to the consecrated life, it seems we are invited to draw again, constantly, to this source of our life: to be devoted to the evangelization of God's Word, to be consecrated to the preaching the Word, 'remain in his Word'. 'If you remain in my word, you are truly my disciples'. Government for Dominic is to support this desire – of individuals and communities – to be 'truly his disciples'. This means be a guardian of this 'remain in the Word'. There again, it is the criterion of the mission that imposes itself. Indeed, what is this 'Word' ? We learn what that Word means for us starting from the conversation of the Son with the Father in the breath of the Spirit: 'those you have given me ...', 'that where I am, they also may be with me ...'. This filial intimacy in which the mission is ingrained: 'as you sent me, I will also send them ...'. Remaining in the Word does not evoke any 'self-centred contemplative immobility'. Nor does it evoke a 'moral observance' that would establish (or seek) a final 'state of perfection'. Remaining in the Word, in the school of Dominic, means rather to enter into the movement of the Word which comes to humanity to make his home there, and to make us free by the power of his Spirit. It is to stand in the Breath of the Son's mission. It is for us to become disciples, and a community of disciples, proportionate to this friendly and brotherly closeness to the Son. In the words of Thomas Aquinas when he speaks of 'verbum spirans amorem', one can in effect think that to remain in the Word is to remain in this Word that 'transmits' love, that is to say establishes friendship, brotherhood and communion, in us and amongst us. The Spirit, the Word, of truth and freedom.

One of the first decisions of Dominic, regarded by the history of the Order as one of the most important, was to disperse the brothers of Saint-Romain, so that the grain would not accumulate. In this way he showed that government in the Order would mainly be concerned with preaching. As such, government involves a certain dynamic of spiritual life, which seeks to promote and to serve the freedom of each one and which has its source in the Word of God. As Jesus himself did with the disciples, Dominic sends his brothers in pairs on the roads of preaching. In reality he sends them at the same time to study and to preach, and it is thanks to this determination about dispersal that the Order develops, is established, creates, and welcomes new vocations. This dispersion establishes itinerancy as a method for 'becoming disciples', inviting preachers to allow their lives to be marked by the encounters they will have by going out into the world as 'brothers'. It will also lead them to go to school at the first universities and so to root their search for the truth of the Word in the conversation with the knowledge of their time, root their respect for the human capacity to have knowledge in the study of the mystery of the revelation of God the Creator and Saviour. Remaining in his Word means to stand closer to the conversation of God with humanity which Jesus, first and only master of the preaching of the Kingdom, made visible to the eyes of all.

'God manifested the tenderness and humanity of his Son in his friend Dominic, may he transfigure you in the image ...'. This prayer of blessing for the feast of St Dominic echoes the choice of Pope Saint John Paul II, to place his reflection on the 'Vita consecrata' within the light of the mystery of the Transfiguration (VC 14). In this perspective, and because it has the task of calling, leading and assisting on the journey of 'becoming disciples' so as to become preachers, Dominican government continually seeks to promote the conditions of this 'economy of the transfiguration'. The preaching of the Kingdom is the way the Order proposes to its brothers and sisters for them to be conformed to Christ by the Spirit. Contemplating the icon of the Transfiguration reveals the essential dimensions of this adventure. At the heart of his journey of preaching, Jesus took three of his disciples with him to attend his transfiguration: contemplation of the mystery of the Son is at the heart of the preacher's mission. From this, the preacher receives what it is his mission to transmit: the reality of the Son of God along with the revelation of the economy of the mystery of salvation. Let us remember, in fact, the account of the Transfiguration: 'let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah ...' And Jesus does not take long to answer: a tent will indeed be set up, but it will be at Golgotha in Jerusalem. There will also be two companions, but they will be robbers expelled with him from society and put to death. To the shining light of the mountain of the transfiguration corresponds the



lightning that will tear the skies, as if to confirm beforehand the fulfillment of this descent into the abode of the dead from where the Son will be raised, living, overcoming once and for all the darkness of death, and carrying with him in the full presence of the Father those who from this point forward will live with Him forever. On the Mountain of Transfiguration, the disciples finally receive the mission that will be their joy: to go with Jesus, as far as Jerusalem, where the Word of truth is revealed in fullness. There where the donated life of Christ is the source of our freedom.

To be under the sign of the Transfiguration, is to take a path on which our desire to become disciples can grow, remaining in his Word, letting it teach us the obedience and love of the Son revealed on Golgotha and on Easter morning, receiving from his Breath the mission as on the day of Pentecost.

Remain in my word

In his apostolic letter to religious, Pope Francis invites them to 'wake up the world', by knowing how to create 'other places where the evangelical logic of gift, brotherhood, welcoming of diversity, mutual love will flourish'. These places 'must become ever more the leaven of a society inspired by the Gospel, the 'town on the hilltop' which tells the truth and the power of Jesus' words'. These places are our communities, where we can promise to learn to become 'experts in communion' of which the Pope speaks in this same apostolic letter.

It is significant and essential that, in the Order, the superior's function is located precisely at the intersection of these two horizons of our promise: obedience and common life. Dominic wanted 'apostolic obedience' to shape the preachers in becoming brothers of those to whom they were sent in mendicant itinerancy, and in letting themselves be converted and shaped into a brotherhood by leading a community life. This apostolic brotherhood to which we make the vow of obedience is the path proposed by Dominic for fully receiving our freedom. Obedience and common life: two ways to direct attention towards the eschatological communion promised to the world that has been created 'capable', as we say that the world is created 'capable of God'. Two ways to engage, 'usque ad mortem', our freedom in all its fullness. Once again, it is for the superior to call us to take that route of being placed 'under the authority' of the Word, of being the servant of this conversation between God and humanity, that the Word came to fulfill by living amongst men. Obedience and common life, so that preaching is rooted both in the community of disciples who hear the Word of life, and in the community hoping for this eschatological communion announced by the prophet and sealed by the Son with his own life.

What could be a 'tree of preaching', fruit of the promise of evangelical and apostolic life, is rooted in three ways which the tradition of the Order offers us for 'remaining in his Word': brotherly communion, celebration of the Word and prayer, study. It is a specific task of government in the Order - and this is perhaps its primary responsibility - to promote amongst the brothers, and amongst the sisters and the laity, the quality of this triple foundation which guarantees and promotes apostolic freedom.

Brotherly communion is the place where the brothers and sisters can test the ability of human words to serve the search for truth that will set them free. It is through community life that we are to arrive at our freedom by contributing to communion. For this reason, our 'capitular religious life' is essential to our spirituality: each member of the community has his own voice, engaging in the common search for the good of all adapted to the mission of being a servant of the Word, he participates fully in the government of the Order. This is democratic, not because it consists in the designation of the power of the majority, but because it consists rather in the democratic search for unanimity. This exercise of community life is demanding, we know this, because it calls each one never to evade his own participation in the dialogue of this search. It is demanding also, because it requires the expression, in the fullest possible truth, of positions and arguments, even to objectifying disagreements among the brothers, but in the confidence that no one will ever be reduced to an opinion or position expressed, being always in the first place welcomed and loved as a brother. It is demanding, furthermore, because it requires all members of a community, after a patient search to the point that is the closest possible to unanimity, to take their part with determination in realizing the decision made by all. It is at this price that everyone is then welcome, recognized and supported by all in the momentum of his own generosity and apostolic creativity. Perhaps it is because of the difficulty of this exercise that we abandon far too often this dimension of our remaining in the Word by our community life.



Prayer is a second method of rooting the tree of preaching in the Word. Personal and community prayer cannot be regarded as an exercise to be fulfilled so as to be consistent with the commitment to regular consecrated life. It is the way in which we make the choice, individually and in community, to punctuate the time of our human history through meditation on the mystery of God's history with the world. It is thus to 'own' the history of revelation, in response to this God who comes in His Son to 'own' each one of us. It is about allowing, in prayer, the Spirit to 'blow where he wants'. In this way, prayer comes from listening to the Word and leads back to it, establishing the center of gravity of our personal lives and of the lives of our communities in the contemplation of the mystery of the revelation of which Scripture is the account. The celebration of the Word in the liturgy, its contemplation in meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary, patient silent prayer, help us to locate the consecration of our lives to preaching between contemplation and study, two ways of seeking the truth of His Word of which we want to give the taste to those to whom we are sent. 'If you remain in my word, you are truly my disciples'. Remaining thus becomes an opportunity for us, as was the case for the first friends of Jesus preaching, to find ourselves free because raised by His calling, strengthened by His love and mercy, encouraged and sent by his grace to carry forward His Word of truth. Remaining in the Word then leads to us carrying with us, in this silence of listening and waiting, those to whom we are sent, who rely on our prayer, who are given to us by God so that, mysteriously, we accept that He binds their destiny to ours in the same grace of salvation. In this area, government in the Order is a watchman: ensuring that the freedom of individuals and communities is really rooted in the contemplation of this mystery in which the Son himself, in his humanity, gave salvation to the world by adjusting his freedom to that of his Father.

Prayer places us in the school of Our Lady of Preachers. With her, preachers can discover and be constantly amazed by the capacity of human life to be able to become a 'life for God'. With her, singing the Psalms which write their contemplation in the history of revelation, the human words of the preachers are rooted in a friendly understanding of the conversation by which God proposes to humanity its adoption. With her, yet again, the Order establishes at the heart of its preaching the prophetic sign of conversion to brotherly communion, confident announcement of the full realisation of the promise of the alliance in Him who is Truth. At the school of Our Lady of Preachers, this spirituality of obedience in the common life unites the Order intimately to the mystery of the Church, by the shared love of Christ, by adoption in the Breath of His life, by the gift to the world.

Study is the third method for rooting preaching by 'remaining in his Word'. It is the place of research and contemplation of the truth, and it is for this reason that it is a very particular observance in our tradition. Still firmly established in listening to Scripture, and in fidelity to the doctrine and teaching of the Church, study is in the Order the preferred way to maintain our conversation with God, leading also to a friendly and brotherly dialogue with the many systems of thought that mold the world and which search in their own way for truth. By study, the Order invites us to grow continually in freedom, not by enhancing in a worldly way the level of acquired knowledge, but rather by inviting us to move forward on the path of the 'humility of truth'. To engage human intelligence in this adventure that has the audacity to attempt by words and finite human concepts to make the mystery understandable, is both to give thanks to God the Creator who wanted human reason, however finite and limited it is, to be 'capable of God', and also to allow the surpassing of reason in hope of a fullness that no concept can truly grasp. The occurrence of hope reveals the true extent of our freedom. Government, in the Order, has the responsibility of stopping us abandoning this field of study, and to stimulate our creativity to seek constantly for the most compatible ways of proposing to others this adventure of the evangelization of reason.

Government and spirituality?

This perspective given to the spirituality of the Order - remaining in the Word to know the truth that sets free – allows us to identify certain essential principles of government in the Order. We have already seen that government is essentially directed to the mission of preaching and that it seeks to promote a lifestyle specific to the Dominican tradition which provides brothers with the conditions for rooting their preaching in the Word.

The first principle is to encourage constantly the celebration of the chapters to establish the brothers in a common apostolic responsibility. In his recent apostolic letter, Pope Francis expresses the wish that consecrated persons should ask themselves what it is God and humanity are asking of them. In our tradition,



this underlines the renewed importance we must give to the reality of our chapters. Of course chapters - conventual, provincial and general - have the responsibility of making precise decisions about the organization and legislation for our life and our mission. And, as we have highlighted, they are as such privileged moments for placing ourselves humbly in the school of the truth being sought together in brotherhood. Precious reflections of my predecessors have helped us grasp how democracy in the Order was not a method for the exercise of power by the majority, but rather a search for the greatest possible unanimity. If dialogue and debate between the brothers is so important in our tradition, it is so that everyone might participate freely and confidently in a shared articulation of the good of all to which each one will commit himself to contribute. Such a fraternal conversation is possible to the extent that there is fraternal respect, and we demonstrate among ourselves an openness and freedom to express our thoughts.

One of the essential subjects of these debates should be attention to the signs of our time, and understanding the needs and calls that are made to the charism proper to the Order: to carry at the heart of the church the memory of evangelical preaching. In a letter soon to come, I will address - in response to the request of the General Chapter of Trogir - the theme of the community project whose elaboration seems to me to be the focal point of government in the Order. Only to the extent that all have participated in the development of this project can we really assess and direct our service of the Church and the world by preaching. Fraternal communion is built starting from a common concern for the mission, which is not only the determination of what we want to 'do', but also the sharing of our 'compassion for the world' from which we want to share this precious gift of being freed by the Word of truth.

On the basis of this common apostolic responsibility, and because the task of government in the Order is to ensure this rooting in the truth of the Word, the second principle of government is to send to preach. Dominic wanted the response to this 'mission' to be itinerant and mendicant so that the preaching of the Order would extend the economy of the Word, who in Jesus has come into the world as a friend and as a brother, begging hospitality of those he wanted to invite to take part in the conversation with the Father. The 'assignments' given by superiors should always be aimed at this horizon of mendicant itinerancy, for the mission. He spoke, specifically, of apostolic itinerancy, of this 'non-installation' as the way to become a disciple. 'I will follow you wherever you go ...' said one of the disciples, to which Jesus replied, 'foxes have holes, and birds have nests. The Son of Man, however, has nowhere to lay his head ...' It is this statement that Dominic wanted to take seriously, in this way giving his brothers a chance to ask again the question of the Baptist's disciples, 'Lord, where are you staying?' 'Come and you will see ...' This is what should help us to understand the exercise of government in the Order. To understand, and to hear at the heart of our life, the ministries and responsibilities proper to each one: at the heart of the most established realities, perhaps of successes or brilliant 'careers', of the most important functions, a call may resound which asks us to leave in order to rejoin, further on, and more freely, another dimension of the common mission of the Order for the Church. These displacements - painful at times, but so often productive - have characteristics that are constantly recalled in Dominic's life: compassion, frontier between life and death, between the human and the inhuman, the challenge of justice and peace, the need for dialogue between religions and cultures - as many realities as echo the 'existential boundaries' of which Pope Francis speaks again in his letter. Mercy for sinners, rather than attachment to our own sins which centres us on ourselves. Service of the communion of the Church and its extension, rather than too great an importance given to identities that reassure us but confine us to ourselves. To remain in the Word, is to stand in the full breeze of the Breath of the mission of the Word itself, of the Word of which we wish to become disciples. The itinerancy of preaching is thus the way to our 'freedom in order to be free.'

It is because the exercise of government in the Order is directed towards this sending that special attention should be given to each person, to his gifts, his creativity, so that the freedom of each one at the service of the common good and mission will be best deployed. At the heart of this attention, in the name of the common search for the truth of the Word, superiors must have at heart the dual requirement of mercy and justice. Mercy, so dear to our tradition, must give to the care for people its first shape. It is in this way that interpersonal fraternal relations, like the relations within a community, should always be the point of focus that allows us to remind each one that he cannot be reduced to his flaws and failures. Brotherhood really forms when everyone discovers, through it and through the call it constantly gives to let yourself be free in order to be free, his full dignity of being raised and saved by the mercy of Christ. But at the same time, this dignity must always be recognized in its capacity for responsibility. In the perspective of the Word of truth



that liberates, there is no individual freedom that justifies being an island, or being the centre of gravity of the life of all the others. Brotherhood, as realized by Christ, teaches us precisely how to receive our true freedom in an openness to reciprocity where the other always counts more than myself. This is why government has the demanding responsibility of keeping together the concern for mercy and the duty of justice. The precise and objective reference to our Constitutions, to the common good, to the decisions of our chapters, allows us to protect the common good of all from the arbitrary claims of individual freedom. The task sometimes seems dry and ungrateful, but it is at the price of this demanding equilibrium that we avoid facile reference to a mercy that is nothing more than cowardice, irresponsibility, or indifference, and that everyone will be able to receive the grace that he came looking for in the Order: to be called to allow yourself to be freed by the Word of truth.

In concluding this commentary on the annual theme of the Jubilee, I would like to mention one last spiritual principle of government in the Order, that of unity and communion. Here again, it is by the criterion of the mission that we can move forward. It is to the extent that we patiently take the means of common deliberation which directs the ministry of preaching that individuals, communities, provinces and all the entities of the Dominican family, enter into the dynamics of integration in a single unity. Each of these is of course invited, summoned, to bring to the common good their own identity, personal, cultural, ecclesial. But because of the common reference to a founding enthusiasm which has consecrated us, all together, to preaching, our desire is to respond together to this sending. Or rather, what is even more demanding, we ask the Spirit to make of us a preaching communion. We make this demand along with the incessant prayer that the Spirit of communion might open in this world the horizon of salvation, establish in our hearts the hope of the new creation. Above the door of the Basilica of Santa Sabina, given to St. Dominic by Pope Honorius III, the mosaic representing the Church of the Circumcision and the Church of the Gentiles recalls this first horizon of the preaching of the Order: the Word of truth obliges us to serve, through preaching and through witness, the promised communion. This is why we are sent. And on the door of the same basilica, as we know, the representation of the crucifixion recalls that this preaching will lead us to become disciples of Him who, freely, gives his life so that all might be gathered together in unity.

The truth will make you free !

fr. Bruno Cadoré, O.P.

Master of the Order

• [Dialogue as Mission: Remembering Chrys McVey, A Review](#)

Dialogue as Mission: Remembering Chrys McVey, edited by Prakash Anthony Lohale, OP, and Kevin Toomey, OP

At a time when there is increasing tension between the Christian and Muslim worlds, and when many Christians are tempted to close their minds and hearts to Islam, this book is timely. It offers us a salutary reminder that the Scriptures tell us again and again to love one another, to welcome the stranger, and to be generous and inclusive.

For those of us who were lucky enough to count Chrys McVey among our friends, this volume is a wonderful reminder of the depth of his spirituality and of his passionate commitment to the Order of Preachers of which he was such a valuable member. The editors, Prakash Lohale and Kevin Toomey, his Dominican confreres and friends, say that there is an abundance of other material written by this extraordinary friar, so we may look forward to another collection of his writings.

What the editors have gathered together are talks, essays and short articles that return again and again to McVey's primary themes: dialogue, mission, openness to the other (and to the Other), the adventure of faith and the need for compassion. Born in the United States, he spent 40 years in Pakistan. He admitted that he had become, to some degree, a foreigner in his native country, for a prolonged stay in another culture always leaves its mark. When asked how many people he had converted, his reply was always the same: "Just one — myself."

A favorite story that McVey used over and over again is the one of the wise man who, when a young disciple asked him for wisdom, replied: "Of course: give me your certainties and I will give you confusion." It is



impossible to read these essays and articles without facing the inevitability of this healthy confusion. And here the author takes the role of the wise man.

McVey quotes extensively from a number of other Dominicans, especially the former master of the order, Timothy Radcliffe. He also draws from the words and writings of Carlos Aspiroz Costa (another former master), Vivian Boland, Fergus Kerr and Herbert McCabe, as well as representatives of other branches of Christianity (for example, Rowan Williams) and, notably, followers of Islam. It is this last category that makes the book especially important for the 21st-century reader. Living in a predominantly Islamic context, McVey found common ground with his Muslim friends through the commitment to dialogue that emerges time and time again in his writings. Dialogue means listening as well as speaking, and this collection makes clear that the author never failed to listen. No question was closed for him, no point of view beneath his notice. As he reminds us in one passage, “Understanding what is other than ourselves expands our very being.”

McVey eventually left Pakistan and moved to his order's international headquarters in Rome to take up the job of promoter general for the Dominican family. Brother Bruno Cadore, the current master of the order, has noted that the “bonds of friendship and collaboration that connect the members of St. Dominic’s family, support the life, joy and creativity of everyone in their very different fields (apostolic, intellectual, artistic projects).” Chrys McVey was a shining example of these bonds. A big man with a big smile and a hearty laugh, he was simple in the best sense; his gift for communication and the orderly, disciplined nature of his mind are clear from the texts published here. Brian Pierce, another Dominican confrere and friend, said of him: “He loved the world in the best and deepest way.” The proof of that statement is that anyone who reads this book will be eager for another volume.

You can get the book, *Dialogue as Mission: Remembering Chrys McVey* on the New Priory Press site and on Amazon.

Ruth Anne Henderson, is a former university professor and past president of the European Council of Lay Dominican Fraternities and currently a lay assistant to the promoter general of Dominican laity.

• [Why Saint Thomas Aquinas Matters](#)

Despite the incredible connections available to us through roads, language, and the internet, we live in times of great confusion. Modern men and women tend to divide their lives into disparate compartments. Thus it is not uncommon to hear people speak of their work life, family life, public life, private life, social life, and spiritual life. But how many lives do we actually live?

Instead of having a single goal, or telos, to which all our actions are ordered, we have become shattered and imbalanced. This division prevents us from growing as a whole person, from living a whole and unified life. We have lost sight of the virtue and gift of wisdom.

But when we pursue wisdom, it is then that we are able to answer correctly the question: “What should I live for?”[1]

Within the Order of Preachers we have one of the best guides in our pursuit of wisdom (sapientia) -- St. Thomas Aquinas, O.P.

St. Thomas notes that it is the task of the wise man to order things well. Order not only involves putting things in their proper place (like putting socks in a sock drawer), but also seeing and judging the intrinsic value of things in relation to another. Hence a soldier is “out of order” if he were to speak impertinently to a general. Order also involves directing things to act appropriately, which is why we say that something is “out of order” when it doesn’t work.

St. Thomas guides us in wisdom because he clearly shows us the order of reality, and the order by which we must live and act in accord with that reality. One of the great fruits of wisdom that we find in St. Thomas is



that the order of reality and order of action coincide -- *actio sequitur esse* (action follows from being). Reality has something to say about our lives, and our lives must reflect the reality in which we live.

Imperial Rome was built on stone roads connecting once far-off metropolises and agricultural markets. In the present, the internet and satellites allow us to connect to people and ideas with near instantaneous speed. As we see throughout history, the more connected we are, the greater our abilities, the more opportunities we have to perfect ourselves and our communities.

And yet the 20th century is still marked by wars and turmoil.

The great existential despondency of the modern age flows from a rejected view of reality. St. Thomas, however, faithfully serving the Christian revelation of Scripture and holding true to right reason, guides us to seek our happiness by becoming what we truly are: men and women made in the image and likeness of God. This simple truth, this window into reality, was what drew me to the study of St. Thomas Aquinas.

From the tranquil profundity of the *Summa Theologiae*, to the exalted wonder of the *Commentary on John*, St. Thomas Aquinas has given me a connection to reality, a connection to Christ, which informs and nourishes every aspect of my life. This connection is what the world needs most. By following St. Thomas' wisdom, rooted in Scripture and the Sacraments, I am following a wisdom that is ordered to God, that is ordered by God.

G.K. Chesterton wrote that "Homo Sapiens can only be considered in relation to sapientia and only a book like that of St. Thomas is really devoted to the intrinsic idea of sapientia."^[2] My prayer is that the study of St. Thomas Aquinas may continue to flourish in these days, that men and women may regain their connection to God with minds alight with learning and hearts aflame with charity.

[1] *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity: A Study in Thomistic Natural Theology* by Thomas Joseph White, O.P.

[2] *St. Thomas Aquinas* by G.K. Chesterton

Recommended for Further Reading

-Thomas Aquinas: Scholar, Poet, Mystic, Saint by A.G. Sertillanges, O.P.

-The Thought of Thomas Aquinas by Brian Davies

-Guide to Thomas Aquinas by Josef Pieper

-Perfecting Human Action: St. Thomas Aquinas on Human Participation in Eternal Law by Rzhia

-The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being by John Wippel

-By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas by Fr. Michael Sherwin, O.P.

--By Br. Thomas Aquinas Pickett, O.P.

• [The Blessings of Catholic Schools](#)

I stand on the sidewalk in front of St. Dominic Parish School in Eagle Rock to greet the happy children popping out of cars as their parents drop them off. They have big smiles on their faces as they greet me, the principal, and their friends on the way to their classrooms for a new day of learning and fun. Parents wave to me from their cars as they drive away, also with big smiles on their faces. Our students, parents, and teachers are part of a big, happy Catholic family.

This new day will be another step in the academic growth that makes Catholic schools achieve significantly higher standardized test scores than the average public schools. Most of our 8th graders score at the level of high school juniors and seniors in many areas. Our 8th graders at St. Dominic's finish Algebra I, then take an intensive summer course in Geometry. This allows them to advance much further in mathematics and in the sciences during high school.

Just as important as academic achievement, if not more so, is the Catholic faith that is infused into the daily program at our Catholic school. We open the school day with a school-wide prayer, and we pray for



vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Our students attend Mass each week during the school day and have opportunities for going to confession during the school year.

Each grade level learns about the teachings of Catholic Church, the common prayers of the Church, about the saints, spirituality, and God. Each class adopts a patron saint. Catholic morals are taught and reinforced throughout the day. The religious atmosphere of the school promotes good behavior among our students, being kind and attentive to each other, and showing great reverence to Jesus. This is all an important part of the human and spiritual development of our students.

Our students fill out their development in many after school activities, especially in sports. Our students have the opportunity to play on different teams throughout the school year and compete against other Catholic schools in our area.

While public schools generally cannot have any aspect of Christmas or religious symbols in their schools, at St. Dominic's Christmas and Easter take on a spiritual meaning beyond their secular materialization in our society. We openly teach what each holy day is all about. Our teachers provide retreat days, when students go from classroom to classroom for a different spiritual activity and prayer event during Advent and Lent. In October, our students all participate in a living Rosary to promote the devotion of praying the Rosary. On Good Friday, our 8th graders perform the Stations of the Cross, which brought tears to my eyes and to the eyes of many adults in the church – both women and men!

The students at our school form true friendships and a close bond that last far beyond graduation. Every year we have reunions for graduating classes from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Last summer our graduates from 2010 came together for a reunion party to be able to re-connect before going off to college. They had a wonderful time reminiscing about their happy times together as a class at St. Dominic's while their parents sat at other tables re-connecting, and enjoying the opportunity to share their experiences of helping out at the school in many areas of volunteering.

Parents naturally want the best for their children, and to give them the tools for success in all of life's challenges. That is why a Catholic school is the right choice. Catholic schools provide a complete program of academic, physical, and spiritual development so that our students understand their relationship with God, and will have confidence in themselves, and in their relationships with others.

I love St. Dominic Parish School in Eagle Rock. I love greeting happy faces in the morning, and I love our happy, Catholic school family. If your children are not in a Catholic school, visit your parish school. See if what I have described is true. Talk to the principal about tuition assistance if needed. Give your children the best faith-based educational experience that you can.

--By Fr. Peter Rogers, O.P. (Pastor at St. Dominic Parish and School in Eagle Rock, Los Angeles)

• [Our brothers and Sisters in Iraq](#)

A Report of the Visit of Brian Pierce, OP (Province of St Martin de Porres, USA. Former Promoter of the Nuns of the Dominican Order) and Timothy Radcliffe OP (Province of England. Former Master of the Dominican Order) to Iraq

At the invitation of fr. Amir Jaje OP, the Vicar of the Arabic Vicariate of the Province of France, we made a visit to Iraq, from January 8th to 16th. We are very aware of how superficial is our understanding of this complex and beautiful country and its suffering, but even so we would like to share what we have heard and seen, the hope that our brethren and sisters keep alive, and what we can do to support them. Please forgive any inaccuracies.

Our brothers and sisters belong to one of the oldest Christian communities in the world, dating almost from the time of Christ. They are our elders and so we must be with them in this terrible time. Also the suffering of Iraq is symptomatic of the crisis of our whole world. ISIS, or Da'esh as it is more usually called in Iraq, is a child of our times. Its violence derives, at least in part from the violence of Western culture, with its love of guns. The jihadists love to watch our films with all their endless killing. We are complicit with what is happening here. Our invasions triggered the crisis that the Iraqi people now endure.



We started in Baghdad. A travel website advised us not to go at all, but if we did, to remain within the fortified Green Zone, where nearly all foreigners are sheltered. If one travels outside that fortress, the advised means of transport are either helicopter or armoured car. Neither the brethren nor the sisters had either of these! As we drove around Baghdad with our brother, Amir, at no time did we experience any tension or feel any threat. Everywhere we were welcomed with a generosity which is astonishing, given how our countries have played a part in the explosion that is ripping apart this country.

Of course it is not entirely safe: there were suicide bombers and kidnappings even while we were there. But the most potent weapon of terrorism is terror. If we let terror prevent us from visiting this city, or if it keeps us imprisoned behind the high walls of an impregnable fortress, the terrorists have won. Iraqis feel forgotten and betrayed, but if one visits our brothers and sisters in Iraq, the welcome is beyond words. After Baghdad, we flew to Erbil where we joined a delegation of three Dominican sisters, Dusty Farnan, Marcelline Koch, and Arlene Flaherty, who were visiting the refugee camps in Kurdistan. We enjoyed the unforgettable hospitality of Sister Maria Hanna, Prioress General, and her community of marvellous and beautiful sisters.

What we saw

The numbers and statistics are numbing. 500,000 Christians and Yazidis, together with a number of moderate Muslims, fled the ancient city of Mosul as Da'esh (ISIS) swept through the Nineveh Plain in early August 2014. A few days later the predominantly Christian villages of Qaraqosh and Bartola were emptied of Christians in a matter of hours, as the ISIS forces marched towards these two predominantly Christian communities. With no time to prepare for their tragic exodus, the local people left taking with them only what they could gather in their arms, as they fled in cars or by foot towards the Kurdish region of Iraq.

We met a couple in one of the refugee camps whose baby daughter was snatched from the mother's arms by an ISIS militant as they were leaving Qaraqosh on a bus. There is no word of the baby's whereabouts. A Catholic pastor, who now directs one of the refugee camps in Ankawa (the 'camp' being nothing but the dark, damp concrete shell of an unfinished shopping mall) told us that of the four churches that he served in Mosul, one has been turned into a weapons' warehouse, while the other three are being used as prisons and places of torture.

We heard heart-breaking stories of betrayal by long time Muslim neighbours and friends as ISIS swept through these predominantly Christian towns and neighbourhoods. Some of the Muslim neighbours have even phoned their former Christian neighbours, taunting them, saying, "We have your homes now and are selling the merchandise that you left behind in your shops." Though we met many people who still hold onto the hope of returning, others have said that the betrayal by former friends and neighbours has created a wound that can never be healed.

One of the bishops in Kurdistan told us that due to the violence and the absence of any substantial help from the Iraqi government, approximately 1800 Christians are leaving Iraq each month. Some are resettling, at least temporarily, in surrounding countries (Lebanon and Jordan principally), while the others go to Europe, Australia or North America. It is often the more educated who flee. For many, this is the beginning of a life in exile, resigned to the possibility that they may never see their homeland again. Some Christians say that they must leave for the sake of their children. Those who stay are the poorest, although some Christians and moderate Muslims who have the means to leave have chosen to remain, committed to the difficult task of helping to build a new Iraq. Our Dominican sisters' and brothers' courage in staying to build the future with their people is a powerful witness of their faith in God's steadfast love and mercy.

We were told that the local Kurdish authorities have now begun to close the borders to new waves of refugees, leaving them with no place to seek asylum and safety. There are approximately 120,000 refugees in Ankawa (a Christian suburb of Erbil, in Iraqi Kurdistan) who are now living in one-room cubicles (called caravans) about the size of a camper-trailer. In many shelters two caravans are joined by a common bathroom, while in other shelters there are only public bathrooms and showers. Many people are sick with colds and other ailments, due to the unusually cold winter this year and the precarious living situations. Some family trailers house 8-12 family members, and in one we were told that 26 people from a single extended family are living in a single caravan, an almost unbearable situation.



The largest camp – the Ankawa Mall – is home to 400 families, approximately 1700 persons. Creatively they have set aside a space that serves as a kind of coffee house where people can rest and enjoy a game of dominoes. Both of us were soundly beaten! The Dominican sisters of St. Catherine are working with two priests and a brother of another congregation in a new neighbourhood on the outskirts of Erbil where 200 newly built houses are being rented to accommodate refugee families.

Unfortunately they are not completely free from the danger of violence in their new environment. A suicide bomber, a fundamentalist Kurdish Muslim, blew himself up inside Erbil some weeks ago, stoking the fear that even within the boundaries of their 'new home' as refugees, they cannot be totally safe. It is estimated that about 18% of Kurdish Muslims are members of a fundamentalist sect.

The psychological and mental toll on these refugees is worrisome, given that the future is so uncertain. In one camp we watched as thirty to forty desperate refugees protested before one of the priests working in the camps, begging for answers and relief. The priest stood before them patiently, gently listening to their desperate cries for help, with few answers to give to their anguished demands. The harshest pain is the stripping of their human dignity. Their needs are simply overwhelming. The heroism of aid workers, volunteer doctors, nurses and pharmacists, priests and sisters, many of whom are refugees themselves, is incredibly moving in such circumstances.

The Yazidi refugees, many of whom are being cared for by Church aid agencies, suffer an added burden, of being considered by many of their neighbours as devil-worshippers. The Church has called on Muslim leaders to be more forthright in denouncing the use of religion as a pretext for violence. While some claim that Islam is a religion of peace, others say that it is a religion born in violence and that it will not stop until all 'unbelievers' are converted or destroyed. Moderate Muslims, however, have bravely stood alongside their Christian and Yazidi neighbours, sharing in their struggles and offering aid to the refugees.

Few Iraqis trust the Western nations, demanding that they must assume their responsibility for this crisis, even as the war games for control of the region's vast oil reserves continue. Muslim fundamentalism, backed by money from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, uses the greed and economic voraciousness of the West as a pretext for their own self-serving and violent aims.

We happened to be in Iraq at the time of the brutal massacre at the Charlie Hebdo studio in Paris. The "I am Charlie" campaign has reverberated throughout Iraq and surrounding countries. This will only lead to more violence. One Iraqi Dominican sister commented to us: 'As they march in Paris for freedom of expression, we are the ones being killed in retaliation for the cartoons.' The Dominican friars in Ankawa held a two hour prayer vigil in solidarity with the victims of the Paris massacre, while echoing Pope Francis' plea for prudent restraint. Freedom of expression is not a 'right' disconnected from social justice, non-violence and ethical responsibility. Meeting offense with more offense will lead to more violence. We Christians must show that non-violence has the power to change the world and issue in a new era of peace.

Many talked of Westerners who are joining ISIS and other international jihadist groups. Though we cannot always stop the radicalised young from setting off to the Middle East, it does not seem constructive to punish or arrest those who return to the West, disillusioned by the violent and extremist expressions of Islam. We must welcome the young home and help them to be healed of the wounds of war. Only education and the pursuit of justice will defeat fundamentalism. In the end, those who return home disillusioned by the violence of ISIS may be the best preachers to other young who are tempted to join these violent groups.

Access to schools and universities is seen as one of the important and urgent steps needed in order to stem the rise of violent fundamentalism. One bishop in Iraqi Kurdistan said that thirty to forty universities and a number of hospitals are desperately needed if they are to stem the flight of all persecuted Iraqis to other countries.

What Hope?

The question that constantly haunted us during this visit was: How can our brothers and sisters in Iraq keep hope alive? We were often told that in Arabic there are two words for hope. 'Amal' is the everyday optimism



that things will go well. ‘Raja’ is a deeper hope, based on our trust in someone, above all God. Most of these Christians have lost all ‘amal.’ They see no future at all except sad exile in foreign lands. A bishop told us that even the babies in the womb were longing to go.

But there are signs of that deeper hope, ‘raja’, even if it is not clear how it may come to fruition. Staying in Iraq is already a sign of hope. A chemistry teacher said to one of our sisters: ‘Why are you still here? France will accept you.’ When many of the disciples fled, Jesus said to Peter: ‘Will you also go?’ (John 6.67). Peter remained. Jesus abides with us, and remaining is a powerful sign of hope when so many are leaving. Who knows what we would do in this situation? If we had children, would we dare to stay and risk their future? It was not for us to urge members of this most ancient Christian community to stay and keep alive their unique tradition. But we hoped that some would.

It is a source of hope that some Muslims say that if the Christians go, the Iraq which they love will be finished. The relationship between believers of different faiths has been the core of Iraqi identity. In a Muslim restaurant in Baghdad, offering ‘impregnating chicken’, ‘sheep full of rice’ and ‘upside down chicken’, there was an image of the Last Supper of Christ with his disciples, and a light burnt before an icon of the Virgin and her child. We gave a public lecture to almost three hundred people in Baghdad, 70% of whom were Muslim. They begged the Christians to stay. One young man said: ‘Why do we debate whether the Christians should stay or go? They were here before we Muslims arrived.’

It is hopeful that Christianity is sometimes recognised by Muslims as a religion of peace. When soldiers came searching for weapons in Baghdad they entered a Christian home, but when they saw the Christmas crèche they said: ‘You are Jesus. There are no weapons here’ and left immediately. It seems to be above all the Christians who welcomed and collaborated with the Yazidis. Christians have something essential to offer if Iraqi society is to find a new unity

We were told that this year many Muslims bought Christmas trees. Of course this may in part be due to the dominance of the Western world in the media and its image of Christmas. But for many Muslims, especially the Shia, this was an expression of shared devotion: Muslims and Christians standing together before the tree to make a wish, honouring the prophet Jesus.

This hope peeps through in the simple determination to get up each morning and do what must be done today. One of our brethren, Nouiran, said: ‘Hope means that I live now, whatever may happen tomorrow.’

This hope shines through in the Christian commitment to go on caring for others even when our own future is so uncertain. In a clinic in a squalid camp we met a woman who had owned three pharmacies until the dreadful night when ISIS came. Now she works as a volunteer, dispensing what few medicines they have. She said: ‘I have lost everything, but I have learnt gratitude for the little that remains. This is why I come.’

In Baghdad we were bowled over by our visits to two homes. Mother Theresa’s sisters run a home for children of all faiths who have been abandoned because of their disabilities. Who could forget the intelligent, gentle face of Nora, born without arms or legs, who feeds the younger children with a spoon held between her teeth? Two consecrated virgins welcome 60 older women of all faiths who have no home, with whom we laughed and prayed. The joy in these places is sacramental of a hope for a new world.

We visited two centres for refugees built by the brethren, called ‘the Vine’ and ‘Hope.’ Our brothers Nageeb and Sarmad explained that it is important that every family have a home with a window and a door. One needs to look out but also human dignity requires a space for privacy. Here the refugees themselves are involved in building emergency caravans and homes, an employment which gives them some income but, even more important, dignity.

Memory shores up hope. One can hardly imagine the hope given to the people staying in one of these camps when the phone rang on Christmas Eve, and Pope Francis was there to tell them that they were not forgotten. Let us remember them too and be a sign of our God who never forgets anyone: ‘Can a woman forget our suckling child, that she should not have compassion of the child of her womb? Yes, these may forget, yet I



will not forget you. Behold, I have graven you upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are always before me.’ (Isaiah 49.15f)

When we visited these and other centres, we were impressed by how our brothers and sisters remembered the names and stories of so many of the refugees. There is a hunger for recognition. So many NGOs treat people as just numbers, units with material needs rather than the dignified children of the People of God, each of whose name is known to God.

Memory of the past can be a sign of hope in the future. Things need not necessarily be as they are today. Our brother, Nageeb, just managed to snatch the Vicariate’s centuries’ old archives from under the noses of ISIS and carry them into exile, keeping alive the memory of the past. These help us to remember that we have survived crises in the past.

The most intriguing sign of hope was the commitment to education. If ISIS is just defeated militarily, then it will be reborn in another form. The true enemy is the blind fundamentalism that fuels its violence. In 2012, the Dominican Father Yousif Thomas Mirkis, now the Archbishop of Kirkuk, founded the Baghdad Academy of Human Sciences. It has 500 students, mainly Muslim. They study philosophy, sociology, anthropology, as well as English and French. They earn certificates granted by DOMUNI, our Internet University. Is it crazy to attend lectures on Wittgenstein when ISIS is decapitating people? But in this violent storm, the Church must cling to its belief in reason. The logo of the Academy is the Dominican shield, with a pencil in the centre, supporting a big question mark. Archbishop Mirkis told us: ‘We need places where people can breathe the oxygen of debate.’ Here they discuss whether it is true that ‘Je suis Charlie’ rather than just chant a slogan. The Church keeps alive a belief in reason when many others look only to force. Intelligence can break through the walls of prejudice and stupidity.

Our magazine ‘Christian Thought’, edited by fr. Philippe, is widely bought by Muslims who wish to think and dialogue with us. It is not for spreading Christian ideas, but so that the Christian tradition of reflection can open a space for dialogue. 800 hundred years ago, in ancient Baghdad, Christian, Muslim and Jewish scholars studied together. Fr. Amir’s commitment to dialogue with the Shia scholars in the south of Iraq, in Najef, is a witness to hope. One of us attended a summit of Christian and Muslim leaders in Rome in December, where many Shia spoke with affection and respect for his work.

In Ankawa in the north, we visited Babel College, where many of our sisters and brothers teach. Two of our sisters have doctorates in scripture, from Oxford and Notre Dame. What a wonderful and long-sighted expression of hope to form scholars in such terrible circumstances. Three of the professors in this Christian college are Muslim. There are 120 lay people in the lay programme.

Beauty too makes hope visible in the face of the ugliness of violence. We had a very moving afternoon in Baghdad when we visited the Church of Our Lady of Deliverance, where on October 31, 2010 forty-seven lay people and two priests were massacred, along with the five suicide bombers who blew themselves up after entering the church during the celebration of the Eucharist. During our visit to the church we met a woman who was shot during the attack, losing the baby in her womb. The new church, beautifully reconstructed with fine wood work, with the names of the dead carved on the walls, is a sign of the victory of the resurrection, when the dead barren wood of the cross blossoms, as it will in Iraq. We believe that the blood of the martyrs will be fruitful.

Finally, in the camps, there are many children whose playful laughter gave us hope. We visited two hospitals in Baghdad founded and run by the Dominicans sisters of the Presentation and of St Catherine, each of which has a maternity ward. Here the future citizens of Iraq are being born, Muslims and Christians side by side. One sister, a midwife, was described to us as ‘the mother of Iraq.’

When we visited the camps in the north children came bounding up to meet these strangers in white habits. They had been dragged out of their homes, fled for their lives, and live in squalor, but they had a confident, trusting spontaneity which is not always evident in Western children. Just before communion in the Chaldean Catholic rite, two children come up to the altar to receive the sign of peace from the priest which



they transmit to the congregation. Perhaps these children are the messengers of hope for the future, even if now we cannot imagine what form this might take.

What can we do?

This is a question which we often put to the brethren and sisters. Frequently the response was: ‘Tell people the truth of what is happening here.’ This is our motto: Veritas.

The truth is that this is a vast humanitarian catastrophe, which is crushing millions of lives.

The truth is that this disaster has largely been triggered by the West’s bungling intervention in the region, mainly in pursuit of its own interests.

The truth is that the confrontation with ISIS is symptomatic of a crisis which afflicts the whole of humanity at the beginning of the twenty first century, as traditional cultures confront modernity.

The truth is that the violence of ISIS is in part a sour fruit of the violence of a global economic system which is creating ever greater inequalities between nations and within nations. We should inform our politicians, invite them to visit Iraq and to work for a solution to this catastrophe.

Secondly, the Dominicans of Iraq ask for our prayers. Many of them pray every day: ‘How long, O Lord, how long?’ (Psalm 15.1) We should besiege the heavens with our prayers, like the importunate widow beating on the door of the judge until he gives her what she wants (Luke 18.2ff). We must pray frequently and insistently for peace in Iraq, and for its Christians, in our communities, our parishes, our various ministries.

Thirdly, it would be wonderful if some of the wider Dominican Family were to visit our brothers and sisters in Iraq, and meet the people whom they serve. The bumper stickers distributed by the Order during the last Iraqi war read: ‘We have family in Iraq’. We still do. Come, especially if you have some skill that could help the refugees, if you are a nurse or a doctor or an expert in the care of people with trauma. Maybe small groups of young people could come for a couple of weeks to be with the young in these camps, to share their experience. This would be transformative, both of those who come and those who are visited. Of course it is a little risky, but we should not be governed by fear: ‘Perfect love casts out fear’ (I John 4.18).

Finally, we can raise money to help these refugees, so that they can live with dignity and hope. Funds to support the work of the brethren and sisters should be sent to:

PROVINCE DOMINICAINE DE FRANCE
DOMICILIATION : HSBC FR AGENCE CENTRALE
IBAN : FR 76 3005 6001 4801 4854 2857 016
Code B.I.C. : CCFRFRPP

• Witnessing to the Life and Apostolates of the Friars of the Province of Croatia

The Canonical Visitation of the Master of the Order to the Province of Croatia

From January 17th till January 24th, 2015, the Master of the Order, fr. Bruno Cadoré, visited the Croatian Dominican Province in official capacity for the second time to witness the quality of fraternal and religious life of the Croatian brothers and gain better insight into their everyday lives and apostolates.

Fr. Vivian Boland, Vicar of the Master of the Order and Socius for Initial Formation and fr. Krzysztof Poplawski, Socius for Central and Eastern Europe also came with the Master of the Order.

In the first couple of days of his visit, fr Bruno visited communities in Split, Bol on island of Brač and in Dubrovnik. He celebrated Holy mass and preached to the brothers and also met with Dominican student friars who live in Split and with novices in Dubrovnik.



In the second part of his visit, fr Bruno visited convents in the cities of Rijeka, Zagreb and Zenica (in Bosna and Herzegovina). He met not only with communities in those convents, but also with student brothers and Dominican laity.

This was the second official visitation by the Master of the Order to the Province of Croatia. For better impression of his visit to Croatia you can check out photographs taken during this past week on the Flickr account of the Croatian Dominican.

• [Charlie Hebdo, freedom of expression and a thought from GK Chesterton](#)

In the context of Charlie Hebdo, a very interesting article by George Weigel on Europe and Nihilism has prompted me to reflect upon freedom of speech in light of the conundrum Weigel sets out: that of trying to stand for something when your basic position is to be against everything.

I've never been a subscriber to Charlie Hebdo and I've never held a copy in my hands, but I have seen plenty of its cartoons and I have read interviews with its journalists and it seems to me that the magazine delights in desecrating that which people hold sacred, and not always for the aim of exposing some truth that points out a flaw or some hypocrisy in the thing held sacred. Rather too often the point just seems to be to create offence for no other good purpose. I get what Private Eye is trying to do, its cartoons and sketches try to shed the veil, somehow get beneath the major headlines and increase our understanding through humour. Charlie Hebdo, on the other hand, often seems to seek to portray the story in the most crass and offensive way possible. The main purpose seems to be to shock; they don't seem to shock for the sake of something. Elsewhere you can find cogent arguments for why we might be under an obligation to mock religions, but although I disagree with the general thrust of the argument, it's at least mocking for the sake of some higher principle.

Perhaps though the retort of the Charlie Hebdo writers and fans to my argument thus far would be: "No, we are for something; we are for freedom of speech." Well, that too is empty, unless it's for the sake of something. I would ask "freedom of speech, for what . . . for the sake of expressing some truth . . . inspiring others to some good . . . exposing hypocrisy?" These all seem to me justifiable reasons for causing offence, but offence should not be the end, only ever the means. In addition, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that in making a broader point we should seek to limit the offence we cause, and when can a pornographic cartoon be the only way of making your point? However, if your most cherished value finds its standard form of expression in the deliberate mocking and causing of offence to others, not in the service of some more fundamental truth, because in fact you don't believe in any fundamental truths, then ultimately what's the point?

Related to this I was very sad to read the following from Charlie Hebdo after the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris pealed out its bells in memory and in solidarity with the victims of the deplorable terrorist slaughter:

"What made us laugh the most is that the bells of Notre Dame rang in our honour," the editorial stated. "We would like to send a message to Pope Francis, who, too, was 'Charlie' this week: we only accept the bells of Notre Dame ringing in our honour when it is Femen who make them tinkle."

If an expression of solidarity and compassion with fellow human beings after a tragic event at a time of national mourning can only be responded to with mockery and scorn, then what hope is there of any genuine fraternity being established? In fact fraternity seems to be forgotten value of liberty, equality and fraternity in the French Republic. Whilst there has been a huge march expressing solidarity for the victims and marking, quite properly, a strong stance against terrorism, what there has not really been is any reflection on why mockery of Mohamed is not congruent with fraternity. The grotesque cartoons (I have personally been disgusted by those aimed at Catholics and sympathetic to Muslim sensibilities at gross depictions of Mohamed) take a liberty at the expense of fraternity, and those most likely to be offended are often those least likely to feel any sense of equality in the society in which they live. Muslims are, in the main, in the lower socio-economic groups in France and the editors of Charlie Hebdo represent the white and wealthy establishment. What to one group is an exercise of freedom of speech can quite easily be perceived as bullying by another. You're poor, you're under-represented, and then somebody is deliberately offensive



about that which you hold most dear. The reaction from those violent and senseless terrorists was grossly disproportionate, utterly inexcusable and rightly roundly condemned, but the fact that there has been a reaction to this continual baiting in the magazine should not really come as a surprise. I am no apologist for Islamism and I believe there is an urgent necessity for full and frank critique of radical expressions of Islam and their relation to Islam in general, but this is going to require engagement with Muslims and the actions of Charlie Hebdo are likely to alienate even the moderates. Freedom of expression needs to be used to start a conversation whereas right now it is just being used to hurl insults, and those insulted don't really even have the for a right of reply in the public forum and thus frustrations get vented in ever more desperate ways. This does not excuse gratuitous violence; it is merely to acknowledge the reality of how these things play out.

We need then to examine on what basis there be a genuine solidarity between all humanity. Certainly, one sure way to diminish fraternity is to deliberately upset and antagonise people, particularly those who are the poorest. I shall go on to look at some answers below which seem to be discernible to us by use of reason alone, but I want first to look at the exercise of freedom of expression a little further.

Whenever we have a right we normally have a responsibility too, and our free speech is no exception: it needs to be used responsibly.

Those associated with Charlie Hebdo fail to do this, in my opinion. They in no way merited or can in anyway have any culpability for the crazed actions of those who killed them, but they did know that there were risks in publishing what they did. There was a certain bravery or foolhardiness, depending on your view point, in the magazine's continually taking cheap shots at Muslims (and not just Christians as most Western publications tend to), when they knew the likelihood of violent reactions - at least one member of staff already had required police protection – and would have been fully aware of the violent protests against the Danish cartoons of Mohamed back in 2006 which are estimated to have resulted in around 200 deaths in numerous different parts of the world.

Thus after the most recent terrorist slaughter in the name of Islam, with palpable tension between Muslims and other communities in France, and with Christians being blamed in some parts of the Islamic world (where there is naive assumption that all non-Muslims in the West are Christians), there was obviously going to be a huge amount of focus on the next front cover. Yes, it was good that the magazine was uncowed by violence and its threat, but with their enormous police protection and surveillance, they had a comparative safety which others did not have when they published a further inflammatory depiction of Mohamed. The all too predictable (whilst still utterly unjustifiable) violence ensued with, in Niger alone, at least 10 dead and 45 churches torched in revenge attacks (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-30888188>). The writers of Charlie Hebdo are not responsible for these atrocities, but I don't think it can be said that they have used their freedom of speech responsibly in this instance. If you from a distance knowingly send my neighbour into a rage, knowing that he'll likely lash out at me, I have a right to feel aggrieved. I suspect that the families of those killed in Niger are wishing a little restraint had been shown and that somebody had thought of their freedom to live. The triumphal exercise of free speech probably rings a little hollow with those families. Whatever problems there are with certain interpretations of Islam it appears that Charlie Hebdo is exacerbating the problem, not contributing to a solution.

Turning then to what might hold us together, I don't think that we can form any sort of social cohesion around freedom of speech as the ultimate value. The right to insult one another in as offensive a way as we wish will not build up fraternity. Freedom of speech as a good thing must rest on something else, it is not axiomatic. At this moment in time, in pluralistic Western societies, the need to work out what that something else is has never been more urgent.

We seem, though, to acknowledge implicitly at least a part of what that something more might be in the law which bans "the incitement to ethnic or racial hatred". Why do we permit this incursion on freedom of speech, the right which we hear spoken of in such privileged terms so often?

I think it's at least in part because we recognise that to make decisions about the way we treat people entirely on the basis of their race or ethnicity is in fact entirely wrong. So we might conclude that certain truths are so fundamental to society that their perversion should be avoided even at the cost of free speech. Thus it seems



that truth is one of those things that we hold as a higher value than freedom of speech. Again, this seems implicit in laws we see elsewhere, such as the criminalisation of holocaust denial in parts of Europe.

The other thing that is being protected by the ban on hate speech is the common good. We rightly consider that hate speech encouraging one race to rise up against another is not a good thing for anyone, neither for those attacked, nor for the perpetrators falsely set against their fellow human beings.

So it seems that at a bare minimum truth and goodness are two things that we consider more important than the exercise of freedom of speech. They seem to me a pretty good start for a civil society. It seems proper that there should be a responsibility on all of us whenever we speak to ensure that we do not corrupt the truth or the common good. Every right that we enjoy brings with it a corresponding duty to use it responsibly. Not out of some child-like fear that otherwise we won't be allowed to enjoy the right any more but because it goes toward our dignity as human beings to use the exercise of our freedoms with thought and consideration, otherwise we're not really free, just unthinking. It would be good if some journalists kept this a little closer to heart; there are after all some things more important than circulation figures and the exercise of a right for the sake of it, things like truth, goodness and beauty.

The real value of freedom of speech lies in having something worth saying and not being suppressed in our attempt to say it. Two of the most worthwhile things that there are to be expressed are the truth and love, in fact one should never really be without the other. Truth should always be expressed in love and love always requires that we be truthful.

As a Dominican I belong to an Order which has Veritas – truth – as its motto, and the truth we wish to proclaim is truly beautiful: that God is love and that he so loves the world that he sent his only Son, who, in an ultimate act of love, would lay down his life for us so that we might be freed from the chains of death and sin and share eternal life with him. This is a truth which countless martyrs throughout the years, but never in greater numbers than in the 20th century, have thought worth dying for. It's a truth that Christians continue to die for and a truth that continues to be illegal or impossible to express in many parts of the world. Millions marched in Paris in support of the right to continue to be able to insult each other, fewer march in solidarity with those who have lost their lives for refusing to change their beliefs. That's a sad truth which needs to be expressed. But here's the paradox that lies at heart of the good news of the Christian message: the truth is never more powerful than when it is held by those who are weak; never more triumphant than when its expression is found in self-sacrifice; and never finds its expression in violence.

One salutary last remark. If he is ever canonised, then I am sure GK Chesterton would be made the patron saint of journalists and one quote of his might be particularly apt for us all, but journalists especially, to bear in mind: "To have a right to do a thing is not at all the same as to be right in doing it."
Toby Lees, OP

• **The Arrival of Dominicans in Nigeria**

The Province of St Joseph the Worker, Nigeria and Ghana.

In 1946, the Apostolic Delegate to English speaking East and West Africa, Archbishop David Matthew, whose headquarters was at Mombasa, invited the Dominicans to West Africa. His brother was an English Dominican. In 1949, he followed up his earlier 1946 invitation to the Dominicans with a more specific request. He wrote to the Provincial of St. Albert the Great Province in Chicago, Fr. Edward Hughes, requesting for Dominicans to come and serve in the mission field in Nigeria. Fr. Hughes made exploratory visits to Nigeria in 1949 and 1950. In January 1950, the Provincial Council unanimously approved the Lagos foundation.

The Archbishop of Lagos, Most Rev. Leo H. Taylor, through a formal letter, invited them to take the responsibility of the then new Yaba mission that was not a Parish yet. On March 4, 1951 at 4:00pm, three friars of the Province of St. Albert the Great, USA accompanied by their Provincial, Fr. Hughes, arrived in Lagos to assume responsibility of the new mission. There were: Michael James Dempsey, Edward T. Lawton, and Arthur Leo Kinsella.



Almost immediately after they arrived, the Rosary Confraternity and the Angelic Warfare Confraternity were established. The Thomistic Institute was inaugurated and the Third Order of St. Dominic was introduced. To crown it all, in January 1954, “St. Patrick Catholic Mission” was raised to the dignity of a “Parish”, and renamed “St. Dominic’s Parish”, and Fr. Michael J. Dempsey named its first Parish Priest. Prior to the arrival of the Dominicans, St. Patrick’s Catholic Church had been a Mission Station under the SMA Fathers with about 600 parishioners.

At a reception held in his honour, Fr Dempsey was given a purse of 5 guineas, seed money that was to later yield a thousand fold. From time to time, the friars made the effort to extend their apostolic operations outside Lagos. They gave retreats in centers like Benin, Kaduna, Kano and Akure. In 1955, Fr. Kinsella had to return to the US due to ill health. He was replaced by Fr. Ambrose Windbacher. In the same year, two more Dominican friars, James S. McHatton and Louise V. Nadeau arrived Yaba. With more Priests in the Parish, the number of Sunday Masses at Yaba increased.

On October 17th 1959, Brother Stephen Lucas arrived in the Yaba Parish. Brother Stephen entered religious life at age 20, took his vows seven years later in July and came to Nigeria three months later. In that same year, a fourth Mass was added, with the last one specifically celebrated for children. Brother Stephen introduced St. Jude Apostolate and Society for Vocations Support to encourage vocations.

Fr. Tom McDermott, a young Dominican friar who was to later move the Dominican presence in Yaba to greater accomplishments, arrived at St. Dominic’s Parish in September of 1983 after his ordination four months earlier. Some after his arrival, he was appointed an Associate Pastor with responsibility for Catechetic. This Dominican friar was popularly called Fr. Tom and similarly nicknamed Little Jesus because of his close mimicking of the physical image of Christ.

Fr Tom was the last of the American friars to serve as Pastor of St Dominic’s. The American friars laid the foundation (a solid one indeed) and the Nigeria friars have taken over and carried on the baton diligently, not only in St Dominic but in the entire Province of St Joseph the Worker (Nigeria and Ghana).

The Nigerian mission became a Vice Province in 1985 and in 1993, it was erected a Province. Now, it has about 170 friars (104 ordained and 50 in formation). At the moment, only four of the friars of the Province of St Albert the Great are still working in Nigeria.

St Dominic’s Parish is unarguably the most significant presence of the Dominicans in Nigeria. The parish is one of the biggest in Nigeria and strategically located in the center of the biggest city in Nigeria - Lagos. The magnificent church structure has a capacity of more than 5,000 with about 25,000 parishioners. The parish has a total of 16 Masses every Sunday (9 within and 7 at outstations) and 3 daily. There are about 22 Dominican friars at the service of the parish.

• Why Popes visit the University of Santo Tomas, Manila

As the only Pontifical University in Asia, UST always has the Pope’s special attention. And so when popes visit the Philippines, UST is the place where the Vicar of Christ meets the youth, the future of the Church.

Blessed Paul VI met young people at the University’s open field in 1970. Pope St. John Paul II did it twice, in 1981 and 1995. Pope Francis, the Roman Pontiff of the social media era, will follow the footsteps of his predecessors and is expected to electrify his youthful crowd on Sunday, Jan. 18.

UST Central Seminary Rector Fr. Quirico Pedregosa, Jr., O.P. said the Pontifical University is the venue for youth gatherings with the Pope because it is an “institution of the youth.”

More importantly, it is an institution under the Holy Father’s supervision, he said. UST’s flag carries the papal colors of yellow and white.



The title Pontifical University was granted by Pope Leo XIII to UST in 1902, recognizing the Dominican-run institution's role in spreading the gospel. Pontifical universities have the authority to grant ecclesiastical degrees in theology, philosophy, and canon law.

For instilling Christian values among young Filipinos, UST was named by Pope Pius XII the "Catholic University of the Philippines" in 1947.

The Pope and the Holy See are part of the governance structure of the campus to ensure that it plays an integral role in strengthening the Catholic faith in the country.

The Pontiff appoints and confirms the rectors of the University. Names of candidates for the rectorship are sent to the Vatican for confirmation.

'Molto bella'

Blessed Paul VI, the first pope to set foot in the country, visited UST on Nov. 28, 1970 to meet 150 bishops and priests at the UST Medicine Auditorium and address UST, the "university world of the Philippines."

In his speech, Pope Paul VI lauded the youth's dynamism and sensitivity in their desire to involve themselves deeply in the Church.

The Holy Father was impressed with the warm welcome given by UST and considered it as "contentisimo," which means, most happy. He also described the University as "molto bella" – very beautiful.

"It is a university which is one of the most renowned for the richness of its history, one of the most important in number of students and one of the most well-known for the care it devotes to education of high quality," he said.

More than 60,000 young people gathered anew for a prayer rally at the UST grounds during the visit of Pope St. John Paul II on Feb. 18, 1981, a month after martial law was lifted in the country.

Rector Fr. Frederik Fermin, O.P. considered the second papal visit as proof of the pope's special love and concern for the Filipino people.

John Paul cited the "cordial and generous hospitality" of the "illustrious" University. He called on students to help evangelize culture. "As Catholics you must confess Christ openly and without embarrassment in the university environment that is yours. In this way you are also contributing to maintaining the Catholic character of your University in its institutional commitment to the Gospel of Christ as proclaimed by the Catholic Church," he said.

After more than a decade, John Paul II returned to the Philippines for the 10th World Youth Day Celebrations in 1995, during which UST hosted the 5th International Youth Forum (IYF).

The Pontiff was welcomed by about 200,000 young people waving yellow and white flaglets and cheering "John Paul II, we love you!" to which he replied, "John Paul II, he loves you!"

He offered Mass before IYF delegates at the St. Thomas Chapel of the Central Seminary before addressing the crowd at the UST field. The Holy Father began his speech on how special UST was in the eyes of the Pope. "As a Pontifical University, Santo Tomas has a special right to the Pope's attention," he told the Filipino youth.

"What does the Church look for in Filipino youth? For help in saving your own generation from the futility, frustration and emptiness in which so many of your contemporaries find themselves. When I think of all the young men and women who should be the strength, the hope and even the conscience of society, but instead are caught in a web of uncertainty, or are desperately seeking happiness along paths that cannot lead to happiness – then I pray all the more that the young Catholics of the end of the twentieth century will come to



an ever more profound knowledge of Jesus Christ and will be convinced of the marvelous challenge and adventure which he represents for every one of us,” Pope St. John Paul II said.

Papal relics

Blessed Paul VI and St. John Paul II’s visits are remembered through relics preserved in the UST Museum and Central Seminary.

Pope Francis canonized John Paul II in April 2014 and beatified Paul VI in October 2014.

There are two classes of relics, the first and the second classes. First-class relics are those that come from a saint’s body, while second-class relics are material things a saint used.

Second-class relics found in UST are vestments worn by St. John Paul II when he offered Mass at the University in 1995. Another is his papal chair that is displayed at the UST Museum.

The Central Seminary holds custody of the vestments, which includes a chasuble and an inner stole.

Blessed Paul VI gave symbolic gifts to the University: a gold chalice and a gold ciborium, signifying the unity of the Church with the youth.

Bro. Dave de la Cruz, organizer of the “Totus Tuus” tour of relics of St. John Paul II, said a pope’s visit should be viewed as a blessing more than anything else.

“It is a gift of presence of the Pope and the gift of a challenge to set the world on fire through the gospel and truth as what the venerable Dominican fathers instill in every student,” De la Cruz said. Arianne F. Merez and Karl Cedrick G. Basco

● [Trafficking in Persons: No Longer Slaves, I Call You Friends](#)

A report by Kelly Litt, Dominican Volunteer

Nelson Mandela once said, “To deny any person their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.” We are once again faced with this challenge, as Jan. 11 marks the National Human Trafficking Awareness Day in the United States and as Pope Francis similarly named Feb. 8 as the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking.

In his recent message for the New Year, Pope Francis wrote against slavery and reminds the world that millions of people are still deprived of their freedoms and rights as they are forced to live in modern day slavery.

Pope Francis explains:

“Today, as in the past, slavery is rooted in a notion of the human person which allows him or her to be treated as an object. Whenever sin corrupts the human heart and distances us from our Creator and our neighbours, the latter are no longer regarded as beings of equal dignity, as brothers or sisters sharing a common humanity, but rather as objects. Whether by coercion or deception, or by physical or psychological duress, human persons created in the image and likeness of God are deprived of their freedom, sold and reduced to being the property of others. They are treated as means to an end”.

Sixty-six years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed that “no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.” Yet human trafficking, the modern day form of slavery, has truly become a global issue.

At the United Nations, both civil society and Member States are working together for an end to human trafficking and modern day slavery in all its forms. The United States Mission to the UN released its annual Trafficking in Persons Report for 2014. Alison Kiehl Friedman from the State Department explained that the report, themed “Journey from Victim to Survivor,” provides a diplomatic tool for greater government to



government cooperation working toward the prevention of trafficking, the prosecution of traffickers, and the protection of survivors.

With the ability to sell a human's body over and over through sexual exploitation or organ harvesting or to contract them out for endless amounts of forced labor, begging, or armed conflict, the business of human trafficking is more profitable than drug trafficking; human beings are continuously being sold over and over again as if they were a mere commodity. It is estimated that there are between 27-29 million victims of human trafficking in the world today, yet there continues to be a decrease in victim identification despite the fact that 90 percent of countries have enacted legislation to criminalize trafficking.

Shortly after the United States' release of the 2014 Trafficking in Persons Report, the United Nations also released its annual UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Person. Similar to the U.S. report, the United Nations report is a great resource that presents information on the patterns and flows of trafficking at all levels as well as how traffickers operate and what type of response is necessary to combat trafficking.

These reports explain the necessity of tackling root causes and factors that lead to trafficking such as poverty, lack of equal opportunity, underdevelopment, and inequality. Both the United States Mission and the United Nations stressed the importance of involving survivors and incorporating their experience and voice when guiding and implementing policy changes.

Pope Francis stressed that civil society organizations are tasked with "awakening consciences and promoting whatever steps are necessary for combating and uprooting the culture of enslavement." Remembering the words of the Gospel in John 15, "no longer do I call you slaves... I have called you friends," we must ensure that every person is recognized as a brother or sister of the human family and treated with dignity, shown respect, and given their full human rights.

Human trafficking is a threat to security, development, and human rights. There simply is nothing human about human trafficking.

Margaret Mayce, OP (DLC/Amityville)-NGO in Special Consultative Status at the United Nations

• [Younger Dominican Sisters meet at Düsseldorf, Germany](#)

For the annual meeting of young Dominican Sisters in Europe

For six years now, at the beginning of the year, a group of younger Dominican sisters have been meeting at Angermund, near Düsseldorf, for a weekend of reflection, prayer and fraternity. From the initiative of Sr Sara Böhmer when she was European Coordinator for Dominican Sisters International, the main aim of the meeting is to enable the younger sisters, relatively few in number in Europe, to get to know each other. It is also an opportunity for sharing ideas and experiences about community life, liturgy, study, formation and apostolic engagements. The sisters usually attend for three years and then allow other sisters to take their place.

From 2 to 4 January this year, fifteen sisters took part, from Germany, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Italy, France, Switzerland and Norway. One of the sisters representing Italy is Polish, one of the sisters representing Germany is Vietnamese, and one of the German sisters lives in Latvia, so that broadened the reach of the group considerably.

The main speaker was Sr Pilar del Barrio from Spain. Also present were Sr Marie-Therese, International Coordinator of DSI, Sr Else-Britt, the European Coordinator, and Br Vivian Boland, the Socius of the Master of the Order for Northwestern Europe.

Sr Pilar gave two presentations; the first one on collaboration within the Dominican Family, using the example of Spain to show what is possible and the second on the work of the Dominican delegation at the United Nations in New York, particularly on its involvement in the UN commission on the status of women.

Another main theme of the meeting was mercy and reconciliation. Brother Vivian summarized what St Thomas Aquinas says about fraternal correction, with reference also to the 'chapter of faults'. The sisters



shared experiences from their congregations about the chapter of faults, some having decided to stop doing it because it became superficial or even abusive, others finding that it can be restored in a thoughtful and helpful way, and can be celebrated prayerfully and joyfully.

The weekend was a time of celebration also, the celebration of Christmas and New Year with joyful liturgies and recreation to which the sisters brought food and drinks of their different home countries. There were also songs, stories, and dances.

● We have family in Iraq: A journey in solidarity and love

A Delegation of Dominican Sisters of Northern America to Iraq

On January 5, three U.S. Dominican Sisters will begin a journey to Iraq. They will visit the Iraqi Dominican community and the Iraqi people displaced by war and terrorism. We share their thoughts before this trip and will bring you updates while they are in the Middle East.

Arlene Flaherty, OP, Dominican of Blauvelt, New York

As the 2014 Christmas Eve liturgy at the Blauvelt Dominican Motherhouse in New York was about to begin, a small burlap bag filled with the soil of Iraq was placed in the congregation's crèche. This symbolic action was not only a prayer for the suffering Iraqi people, but also a reminder that in the midst of the terrorizing violence, divisions, and displacements that besiege this ancient homeland of Christianity, God becomes flesh and dwells within Iraq today. The placing of Iraq's soil into the Christmas crèche, expresses the conviction that in the power of God's incarnate love, all darkness, division, and despair will cease, and hope will rise radiantly once again in Iraq. The Christmas story illustrates the solidarity of God-who-is-always-with-us, and it commissions us all to be living expressions of God's solidarity to each other.

As we U.S. Dominicans embark on our journey to Iraq, we hope that our presence among the Iraqi people will convey what words often cannot – "we have family in Iraq." Not only the U.S. Dominican Family, but countless men and women religious, church and interfaith communities, as well as Americans from all walks of life, send us to Iraq with this message of solidarity and support – "we are family." Though the message is seemingly simple it is a potent counterpoint to the propaganda of divisiveness that is tearing Iraq and many other nations apart today. It is in the spirit and power of our relatedness, evoked by the Christmas crèche, that our journey hopes to pave a pathway to peace and security in Iraq- a pathway we hope, many more will travel in the days to come.

Marcelline Koch, OP, Dominican of Springfield, Illinois

The connection to our Dominican sisters and brothers in Iraq was ignited in us during the 1990s by our brother, Timothy Radcliffe. Since then we have honored the claim that We Have Family in Iraq. As family we have grown in relationship – U.S. and Iraqi Dominicans.

For the past four weeks, all of us have been praying Come, Lord Jesus. We want our God to come among us, and God does, in and through all of us.

Meister Eckhart wrote that "we are all meant to be mothers of God . . . for God is always needing to be born." As I place these words along-side the question in the Christmas message from the sisters in Iraq – Where and how are we going to be born in this tough crisis in which we live? – I know that I want to be about this birthing process. I want to visit our sisters and brothers, hear their stories, and let them know of our love and concern. As they have been for us in their suffering, I want the presence of our delegation, in the name of the Dominican Family, to be a sign of hope and solidarity.

In Jesus, we experience God's solidarity with us. And in our solidarity with one another, we draw strength for all our birthing.

Durstyne Farna, OP, Dominican of Adrian, Michigan

I can't forget the night of June 25, 2014. I was on retreat and it was late in the evening. I was in front of the Blessed Sacrament in the quiet of night when I started receiving a series of text messages from Sr. Diana Momeka in Iraq. One might think of texting as an intrusion into retreat but it was really a deepening of



prayer and solidarity with the sisters being displaced in their own country. They left everything and began to walk toward safety first to Qaraqosh and eventually to Ankawa where they are now.

And now I prepare for a visit to meet the internally displaced refugees called Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Mosul. It is very difficult to comprehend how they are living in containers just like their people. It seems as if God has asked them to re-enact the night Christ was born in a manger some 2000 years ago. The surroundings are unfamiliar and the circumstance frightful for the Holy Family as it is now for the Christians and Dominicans in Iraq.

I feel an urgency to meet them, experience what they are experiencing and wondering If I could do what they are doing. I feel sent and called at the same moment by my sisters in the Adrian Dominican Congregation. They have blessed me in many ways with their tears, delight that we are going and somewhat hesitant. Each of us represents not only our Dominican congregation but all Dominicans, as well as our families.

I pray that I will be a useful ambassador and most especially be open to all that Christ wants to reveal to me and us as we embark on this pilgrimage. May the Christ fill our hearts with deep love, and compassion as we greet our dear friends in Iraq not unlike when Mary and Elizabeth greeted one another with open arms and welcome.

[Arlene Flaherty has served in Leadership of her religious congregation and as a justice promoter within the Dominican Order; currently serves on the Iraq Coordinating Committee; Marcelline Koch directs the Office of Justice for the Dominican Sisters of Springfield; and Durstynne Farnan, is Director of Vocations for the Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Michigan.]

• [The Bible in Jerusalem: A Dominican Exegetical Symposium](#)

From 3-5 January 2015, fifteen Dominican friars from across the regions and provinces of the Order met in Jerusalem at the Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française for a three-day symposium. The group from Poland, England, Ireland, France, Croatia, Ukraine, the United States, Mexico and the Philippines was formed out of an initiative of the Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadoré, calling for brothers engaged in exegetical work and biblical studies to collaborate for the mission of the Order.

Welcomed by the Priory of St Etienne in the heart of Jerusalem, we joined the community for prayer and recreation and a number of the professors made time to attend parts of our conference. Two brothers from India and Nigeria, studying at the Pontifical Biblical Institute at this time were also able to join us for a session.

The schedule of the symposium combined two important elements. First, there were presentations of individual papers on themes taken from our current research. In this way we shared our work with each other for an exchange of ideas and fraternal support. Papers were given on Deuteronomy, Ben Sira, the Greek translations of Aquila, Greek Philosophy in 1 Corinthians and ancient interpretations of Exodus 4, as well as presentations on Genesis, the mission of Elisha, hermeneutics and Jewish studies. All the papers were followed by a common discussion.

The second element was a common Biblical Workshop in which we studied a passage of Scripture together, bringing our own expertise to the interpretation of the text. The workshop was structured around the format of a major project of the Ecole Biblique—the Bible in its Traditions – that is working on an annotated text of the Bible using the latest biblical and archaeological research.

The brothers assembled were engaged in a variety of research areas- – Old and New Testament, Intertestamental literature, Patristic commentary on scripture, epistemology and Jewish studies. In the study of our chosen text, Luke 4:16-30, we were able to put forward our own perspectives, enabling an extremely rich interpretation of the Gospel.



All of our specialisms brought to bear upon our discussions made for an extremely fruitful meeting, marked by academic quality, but above all, fraternity. It is hoped that the fruit of our contemplations will be made commonly available through the Ecole Biblique.

In the limited space in the schedule, the opportunity was seized to visit Jerusalem's Old City and some of the foundational sites of our redemption, which was profoundly important for those who had not been to the Holy Land before. The presence of our institution in Jerusalem was thereby confirmed as a precious characteristic of the school's academic and spiritual reflection.

A mark of our discussions was the conviction that the symposium must continue and planning has begun for the next meeting in 2016, which will be extended to four days to include an excursion to one of the many important historical sites in the area.

With the fundamental mission of the Order to preach the Word of God ever in mind, this collaborative project, based on the advanced study of the Bible, will help deepen our knowledge of Christ and the meaning of his Word for ourselves, for our Dominican brothers and sisters and for the people to whom we are sent.

• **"Share a word of justice, hope, peace and life"**

On the Canonical Visitation of the Master of the Order to the Province of Nigeria

From the 4th to the 22nd of December 2014, the Master of the Order, fr. Bruno Cadoré visited the Province of St Joseph the Worker, Nigeria and Ghana. He was accompanied by fr. Michael Mascari, O.P., Socius for Intellectual Life and fr. Gabriel Samba, O.P., Socius for Africa. They received a warm and fraternal welcome. The Master was grateful for the important contribution that the brothers are making to the mission of the Order in the two countries.

In addition to meeting with all of the brothers in Nigeria and Ghana, the Master and his two Socii were able to visit together different communities (Yaba, Mafoluku, Oyigbo, Ibadan), and several of the ministry sites: parishes, schools, the Dominican Institute in Ibadan, the site of the future Dominican University, the Dominican Centre for Human Resources Development (Moniya Farm), among others. They had meetings with members of the Dominican Family (Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena, lay Dominican fraternities, Movement of Dominican Youth).

They also visited the Adoration Sisters in Ilorin founded by fr. Jude Mbukanma, O.P., and who want to become Dominican Nuns. The Master had important meetings with them in the presence of their founder, and fr. Charles Ukwé, O.P., Provincial of Nigeria and Ghana, and Bishop Ayo-Maria Ayotébi, O.P., Bishop of Ilorin, because according to the current status of the sisters in the Church, as a "Public Association of the Faithful" (CIC 312), they are under his authority and responsibility. The Master of the Order invited them to establish or re-establish bonds within the Dominican family, through simple, brotherly, usual relations, especially with the nuns of the Order in Africa. He also outlined a clear plan for the Sisters to follow so that they might realize their goal as a Monastery *sui iuris*.

The Socius for Africa visited the brothers and the Dominican Family in Gusau, diocese of Sokoto in northern Nigeria, a region strongly influenced by Islam, and where minority Christians are often subjected to religious intolerance. He represented the Master of the Order at the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of this diocese which was ran by the Dominicans for many years.

Unfortunately, difficulties with the visas prevented brothers Bruno and Michael from visiting the two communities in Ghana, which was especially disappointing since strengthening the presence in Ghana is one of the priorities of the province. However, all five brothers living in Ghana, came to meet with the Master in Lagos, Nigeria. Finally, we paid courtesy visits to the Archbishops of Lagos and Ibadan, the bishop of the Diocese of Aba, and our brother Ayo-Maria Ayotébi, Bishop of Ilorin.

The brothers explained to us the ecclesial and social context in which they work: preparation for national elections in 2015 in Nigeria, proliferation of Pentecostal churches which attract people through a gospel that emphasizes the Resurrection, but avoids the cross; a gospel that proclaims a theology of prosperity and



material success through a God who grants daily miracles to those who believe in this gospel. The context is also marked by the terrorist attacks of Boko Haram.

The political and social situation forced the Master to challenge the preaching mission of the brothers: “What does the Gospel of Jesus have to say to the people of Nigeria and Ghana? How do we as an Order respond to all these challenges? What are the gifts that the Order of Preachers has to offer to the local Church? What word do we as Dominicans have to say to those who follow Pentecostal churches? How do we as preachers of the Word share a word of justice, of hope, of peace, and of life?” Indeed, the brothers look to the future with hope, strengthened by the blessing of many new vocations who are eager to share the Gospel.

During this time of the Jubilee of the Order, fr. Bruno encouraged the brothers to reflect on the way that as a community of brothers they can address the needs of the Church and the society, faithful always to our Dominican charism and to the mandate that we have been given, namely preaching and salvation of souls. Finally, he invited them to foster greater collaboration with the Dominican family through the creation of a secretariat, and to carry the mission of the new foundation in Zambia through to a successful conclusion.
The Socii, MM & GS

• Dominican Priestly Fraternities in Italy

The Priestly Fraternities of the Italian Provinces of St Dominic, St Catherine of Siena and St Thomas

In Italy, there currently exist three Dominican Provinces from the previous six: the Province of St. Dominic in Northern Italy with its seat in the Convent of S. Maria delle Grazie in Milan; the Roman Province of St. Catherine of Siena with its seat in the Convent of S. Maria sopra Minerva in Rome; and the Province of St. Thomas Aquinas in Southern Italy with its seat in the Convent of S. Maria dell’Arco in Naples. All three have recently undertaken various works for the Dominican Priestly Fraternities.

Spiritual Retreat for Secular Priests

From 10-14 November 2014, the community of St. Dominic in Varazze, played host to a spiritual course organized by the Priestly Fraternity of the Northern Italian Province, not only for the members of the fraternity, but also for other secular priests who desired an experience of retreat in the company of the friars.

Though accompanied by harsh weather that battered the coastlines of Genova, the participants were enriched with insightful sharing given by fr. Daniele Mazzoleni, Provincial Promoter of the fraternities, who is also the superior of the house, and by Don Angelo Belloni, secretary of the fraternity. The priests shared days of fruitful reflection on the life and ministry of the priesthood with inspiration from St. Catherine of Siena and the newly-beatified son of the Province of St. Dominic, Bl. Giuseppe Girotti. The activity was made more meaningful not only by the historical richness of the convent and the church, but also by the fraternal welcome of the friars’ community, which everyone experienced especially in the common liturgy, meals and recreation. They also enjoyed a visit to the nearby Shrine Basilica of Our Lady of Mercy in Savona.

On a sad note, however, a mass was especially offered by the participants on the conclusion of the event for the eternal repose of Fr. Mazzoleni’s father, who passed away on the previous day. The Priestly Fraternity of the Province of St. Dominic in Italy was established by its former Provincial Fr. Riccardo Barile in 2011. It is based on the Dominican house of Agognate in Novara, and currently has 15 members.

Inaugural Meeting of Members

Although, for a few years now, there exist in the Roman Province of St. Catherine of Siena a number of diocesan priests who made their individual promise to live according to the Rule of the Priestly Fraternities of St. Dominic, there has never been a single group constituting each priest together into a fraternity.

On the morning of 15 December 2014, the Roman Province, through its Prior Provincial fr. Aldo Tarquini, and newly-appointed Provincial Promoter of the Priestly Fraternities fr. Antonio Cocolicchio, held its inaugural meeting that brought together for the first time both the current members and those aspiring to know more about the fraternities. A total of seven secular priests came to the Provincialate in Rome, and participated in an encounter marked by sharing acquaintances with one another as well as recounting individual experiences in the ministry. The group likewise discussed plans for the formal establishment of a



local fraternity, following the provisions of the General Chapter of Trogir, which petitioned the Priors Provincial not only to accompany the members of the fraternities, but also to name a friar to help form these communities. (ACG 2013 Trogir, n. 120)

Currently, there are six diocesan priests in the list of individual members of the Province, with several other potential candidates for reception into the fraternities. After the meeting, the priests joined the friars' community for the Liturgy of the Hours at the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, and thereafter for lunch at the convent refectory.

In both events organized by the Northern and the Roman Provinces, Fr. Florentino Bolo, Coordinator for Priestly Fraternities of the Order, was present to give an update on the current status of the fraternities in the world, as well as on the celebration of the Jubilee of the Order.

Rite of Profession in the Fraternity

On 14 December 2014, the Dominican Province of St. Thomas Aquinas in Italy welcomed Don Gerardo Perillo of the Diocese of Salerno into the Priestly Fraternities of St. Dominic. The Prior Provincial, fr. Francesco La Vecchia, presided over the ceremony held at the Shrine of the Madonna dell'Arco in S. Anastasia, Naples. Born on 12 November 1963, Don Gerardo was ordained a priest on 24 March 1999. He is currently the hospital chaplain of the Santa Maria Della Speranza in Battipaglia in the province of Salerno.

Official News

• [Fr Vincent Li has been re-elected as the Vicar General of the General Vicariate of Taiwan](#)

The Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadoré has confirmed the re-election of fr Vincent Li as the Vicar General of the General Vicariate Our Lady Queen of China, Taiwan. Fr Vincent has since accepted the re-election.

Fr Vincent was born in 1963, He made his first profession in 1988 and after his initial formation, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1997.

The Chinese General Vicariate was founded in 1978. It has 21 ordained friars and 8 friars in formation. It has two parishes, a high school, and an Evangelical Mission Centre.

• [Fr Giovanni Pazmiño, OP has been appointed as the new Bishop of Ambato, Ecuador](#)

Holy Father, Pope Francis has appointed the Dominican friar, Jorge Giovanni Pazmiño Abril as the new Bishop of Ambato in Ecuador. He is the Vice Provincial of the Vice Province of "St Catherine of Siena", Ecuador.

The bishop-elect was born in 1965 at Baños, Tungurahua Province, Ecuador. He entered the Order in 1987 and after his Novitiate, he made his first religious profession of vows the following year. He studied Philosophy and Theology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador and was ordained to the priesthood in 1995.

After his ordination, he studied Dogmatic Theology at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), Rome. He has since been involved in various pastoral and academic ministries as Chaplain, Pastor of various parishes and Professor of Theology and Philosophy at various institutions.

In the Order, he has been the Promoter of Vocations in his Vice Province, the Superior of the community at Guayaquil and the Secretary General of the Conferencia Interprovincial de los Padres Dominicos de América Latina y el Caribe (CIDALC). In 2011, he was elected the Vicar General of the General Vicariate of Ecuador which was later erected a Vice Province in August 2014.



The Diocese of Ambato covers an area of 3,844 sq/km with a population of 538,800 of which 499,000 are Catholics. The diocese has 98 priests, 3 deacons and 217 religious.

• **Fr Mark Padrez is re-elected as Provincial of the Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, USA**

The friars of the Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, USA have re-elected fr Mark Padrez as their Prior Provincial for another four years.

Having been confirmed by fr. Bruno Cadoré, OP, the Master General of the Order, fr. Mark has accepted the election and has subsequently made his profession of faith.

Born and raised in Nogales, Arizona in 1963, he was studying at the University of Arizona when he met the Dominicans at the Newman Center of the University. Having been impressed by the Dominican life and after much reflection and prayers, he joined the Order in 1987 and made his first profession the next year. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1995.

After his ordination, he was assigned to the Holy Rosary Church, Antioch, California and later to the Newman Center at the University of California of San Diego. He has served as the Director of Vocations and Socius of the Province. He was first elected Prior Provincial in 2011.

• **Fr Guido Vergauwen is the New Provincial of the Province of Switzerland**

The friars of the Province of Switzerland, gathered at their Provincial Chapter have elected fr Guido Vergauwen as their new Prior Provincial. The Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadoré has confirmed the election and fr Guido has accepted.

Born in Flanders in 1944, Guido joined the Order and made his first profession of religious vows in 1963. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1969. He has studied philosophy and theology in Leuven, Fribourg, Tübingen and Zurich.

He is a professor of fundamental theology and has been teaching for many years mostly at the University of Fribourg. He has served in various capacities in the same university and since 2007, he has been the rector of the university. He has special interest in Philosophy of Religion and Ecumenism and he has published several books on these issues and many others.

In the Order, he has served as the Socius of the Master of the Order for Intellectual Life. In 2008, he was awarded the “Magister Sacra Theologia“ (MST) by the Master of the Order.

Calendar of the Master of the Order for February 2015

Jan 31-Feb 5: Visitation to Ukraine

10-13: Visit to the Convent of St Albert the Great, Fribourg

16-27: Plenary Meeting of the General Council at Santa Sabina

18: Ash Wednesday Mass with the Pope at Santa Sabina

All articles are available on www.op.org