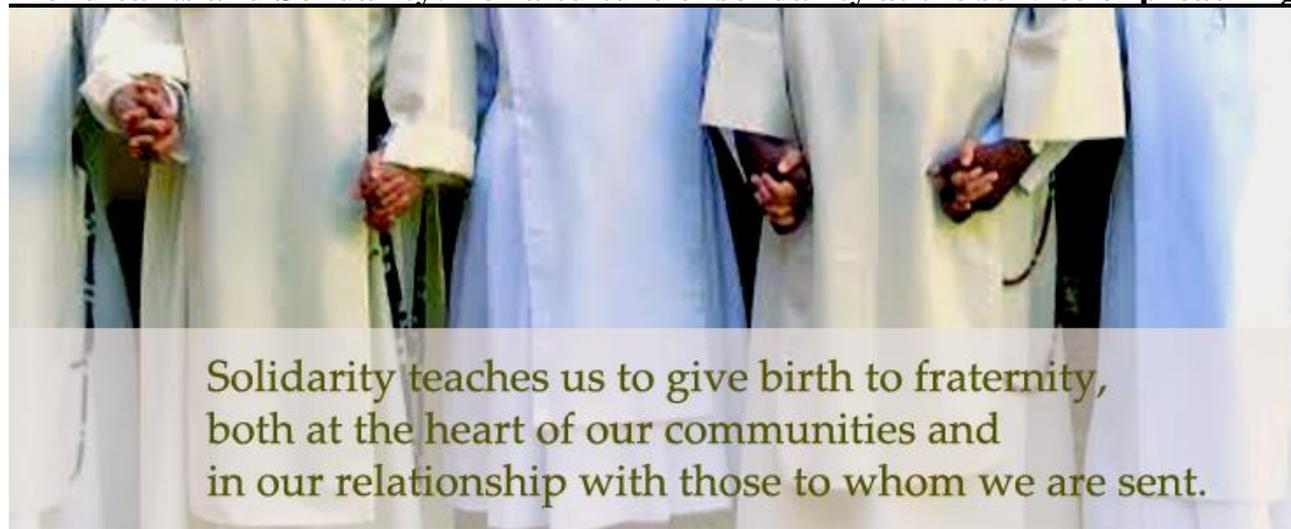




ORDER OF PREACHERS



Mendicants and Solidarity: For a culture of solidarity at the service of preaching



Solidarity teaches us to give birth to fraternity,
both at the heart of our communities and
in our relationship with those to whom we are sent.

In a world where there has never been so much wealth, so much money in circulation, but where the gulf between rich and poor constantly widens, the Order cannot remain ignorant of this reality, nor let the “logic of the world” determine our relationships. For this reason, and in order to root our preaching in the concern for a more equitable world, we must develop a genuine and challenging “culture of solidarity” among ourselves. Such a culture will help to reinforce our unity, a fundamental characteristic of our Order.

Introduction: out of mendicancy, a culture of solidarity

Mendicancy

The Order of Preachers was founded as a mendicant Order and, even if it is clear that the times are different, it is important to take account of this when we speak of our Dominican identity. We know that Dominic made a very radical demand concerning poverty. In his time, he wanted to choose a state of life in solidarity with those who were in destitution. He insisted also upon a rule not to have any property, whether personal or in common. This naturally led to the adoption of a state of mendicancy, following the example of Jesus (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III 40 3). However, besides being the consequence of a choice for quite a radical relationship with poverty, mendicancy also indicates a choice to live in dependence upon those to whom the preachers are sent, mirroring the dependence of Jesus and his disciples as they go through towns and villages proclaiming the Kingdom of God (Lk 8,1-3). This dependence manifests the will to take the risk of a certain material vulnerability and, after the example of St Dominic, abandonment to divine Providence, as well as a choice for itinerant preaching. In this way, to speak of solidarity in the universal mission of evangelisation implies the necessity of mutual support in this mission of evangelical itinerancy, at once qualifying our life (itinerancy because of the Gospel), and also determining our goals (itinerancy in order to give the Gospel).

The choice for such a vulnerable mendicancy is far from evident today for several reasons. Of course we must fulfil a certain number of obligations, such as formation of the youngest brothers or providing the best healthcare possible for the oldest, health insurance and pensions for retirement, as well as reasonable maintenance for our living and liturgical spaces. Given the reality of social vulnerability of which there are many victims in many countries, it would not be sane or just to pretend that we identify with this. There are already established systems of solidarity among the different strata of a given society, and religious cannot willingly put themselves in a position where these systems would be obliged to support various needs, even



if they may have the means to do so. Nevertheless, the choice of a certain “frugality” and simplicity of life must be a determined choice, in order not to distance ourselves from the most vulnerable, and not to find ourselves “dependents” of the well-off and the powerful without really having decided this. And yet, we must recognise that, gradually, we have become used to a certain quality of life that obliges us to secure appropriate necessary resources, and that we are not always ready to lower the quality of life and comfort that we enjoy in many countries. In the same way, in some places, we have become used to being proprietors of many important buildings (or even seeking to become proprietors) which we would consider it difficult to sell in order to secure the most essential needs, and despite having to rely upon the generosity of others to help us meet those needs. Therefore we must not be flippant and a reflection upon mendicancy must be for us a call to evaluate objectively and with humility that to which such a choice commits us and what real needs there are for which we deem it legitimate to ask help from benefactors. One question in particular must concern us: how much does our state of mendicancy make us dependent upon others to support the needs of our daily lives, and to what extent do we think of mendicancy as the modern way of asking others to support the needs we have determined? Or on the other hand – and this is more just – from the “living relationship” (LCO, 99 II) we have with them, do we want to learn to rely on others to determine the quality of life that would be most appropriate for our mission of preaching?

Solidarity and common goods

The last two General Chapters (ACG Rome 2010 §§57, 72-73; ACG Trogir 2013 §§48, 57, 111, 209) invited us to ask such questions about our way of living poverty and mendicancy in considering the more general theme of a true culture of solidarity. This perspective can help us avoid the risk (often mentioned during my visits to the Provinces) of making apostolic choices that, in reality, by following criteria more relevant to improving economic security rather than the mission, many brothers say they regret. In visiting the Provinces I learn, for example, that brothers regret the necessity to keep what is quite a lucrative position but which prevents a response to a more urgent need. Or, that the choice to remain in such and such a place is less related to a real need and more to the place’s profitability. Economic questions must, of course, be taken into account in the organisation of our apostolic life, but how do we make sure they do not become a constraining criterion, which serves as an obstacle to our response to the needs of evangelisation or to our creativity?

Since the foundation of the Order, many forms of solidarity have existed between the different entities. These have allowed the development of our mission and reinforced the fraternal links of solidarity through the centuries. However, a shared culture reinforced by solidarity presents us (among other demands) with hearing the call not to be centred upon ourselves but to ‘expropriate ourselves’ – to use the beautiful expression suggested by Cardinal Ratzinger in 2000 to describe the spiritual requirement for the New Evangelisation. This expropriation of ourselves through concern for the needs of others is a medium from which the consciousness of a common apostolic responsibility would emerge, in which it would be rooted, and in view of which we could structure our concrete material life. In this way, solidarity does not mean only a fund of resources thanks to which each can achieve his own projects with the economic help of others, but rather a shared mode of living based upon a common concern for Preaching which makes us ever more capable of adjusting our concrete life to the real apostolic needs we have undertaken in a spirit of solidarity for all.

Let us take as an example the initial formation of brothers, which is one of the priorities of this communal responsibility, because the preparation of friars preachers for tomorrow ought to be everyone’s concern. In this area, we can find a real inequality between the brothers of the Order, whether it is to do with resources for maintaining the daily life of houses of formation, for study (libraries, equipment, university registration), or for the possibility of experiencing the universality of the Order. Yet, each brother in formation will make profession for the Order, and we ought to discover how we can better acknowledge this reality from an economic point of view, in order that each can benefit from the necessary resources for his formation and initial studies. I can emphasise the same need for solidarity concerning complementary and specialised academic studies for which the Provinces have the obligation to prepare brothers to take on this dimension for the mission of the Order. In some Provinces, the achievement of solidarity in this area of formation already exists and the generosity of certain entities is commendable. Without doubt, we can further improve the efficiency of this support by better structuring solidarity at the level of the entire Order. For example, through adaptation and ongoing collaboration in many existing formation structures in Provinces that are



able to provide resources; support for still fragile houses of formation; bursaries for study; structured collaboration for teaching; availability to reinforce communities of formation, etc...

When we speak of solidarity, the Scripture reference that springs immediately to mind is that of the first community described in the Acts of the Apostles, where “all who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:44-45). The challenge, we know well, is not only that of sharing with others, and even less of sharing, out of our generous “good will”, what we have left over. It is above all that of having ‘a priori’ a concern for the needs of others and to consider these needs in some way as our own. Sometimes we are tempted to regard possessing things in common as the only economic point of view, but we must take a larger perspective that encourages also a solidarity that helps us respond with what is needed for apostolic tasks or for the reinforcement of communities because of our common apostolic responsibility. The sin of withholding goods, recounted in Acts, is not primarily a lie, but rather abandoning the concern for the unity of all that presumes unconditionally trust and mutual respect. Mendicancy is like a school, which teaches us how to take on the role of being a mendicant based upon the concern of others for our needs. Holding all things in common, in its turn, is a pedagogy for the defence of the common good, the fruit of the concern for the needs of others.

Renewal in the Order

The call to develop a culture of solidarity was launched by the last few General Chapters at the same time as they called for a restructuring of the Order. This restructuring is rooted in a perspective of renewal to which the coming celebration of the Jubilee of the Order invites us. So, such a restructuring should not be defined as a rationalisation of our structures but as a determination to better orient our modes of organisation towards the mission of preaching. The challenge is that of promotion and support of the Order’s preaching for the Church in new places or in particularly difficult places. In this area, it is essential not only to consider strong, organised, well established and secure situations. The danger of our new structures in a “globalised” world is actually to give preference to the strongest, inviting the weak to join the strong or to be put under their protection, placing them at the mercy of the good will of the strong. In our effort of restructuring, we must on the contrary consider the complementarity between all forms of presence of the Order’s preaching, whether strong or weak. The beginnings of a new mission, for example, can be fragile and vulnerable, and require extended and coherent support even if, sometimes, we may want to take effective decisions very quickly. We also know that some particularly important places of preaching are and remain particularly vulnerable, rarely able to sustain preachers, which calls for the implementation of a long-lasting solidarity. The only possible point of view is, once again, that of the common responsibility of preaching, which allows us, all together, to give ourselves the opportunity of bringing the Word to the most difficult places, where fragility and vulnerability will be the very condition of an evangelical witness.

Obviously, such a culture of solidarity must be placed in the global context of the world. One of the characteristics of the “global world” is the gulf that grows between rich and poor. In a certain sense, this gulf grows also among us – between the Provinces, and sometimes even at the heart of a Province, between its communities. This gulf grows also between us and the most vulnerable sector of a population to whom we are sent (in terms of travel and communication, access to healthcare, education...). To think of a culture of solidarity obliges us to be clear about what it means when we are sent to live as brothers to the world. For, through this fraternity, we witness to the Word spoken to all to bring us into friendship with God. In this sense, solidarity teaches us to give birth to fraternity, both at the heart of our communities and in our relationship with those to whom we are sent.

Solidarity and the vows

Solidarity is not one of the three classic vows of religious life, but, in this perspective of mendicancy, we can understand how a culture of solidarity as mentioned above in fact concerns the three classic vows of consecrated life. When in the Order we pronounce the vow of obedience, we ask for the grace to consecrate our lives to the Word in the itinerancy of a preacher. In a certain sense, we take vows to be mendicant because we are preachers.

Dominic asked the first friars to promise him obedience for the common life. I think in this way, he was insisting upon the link between preaching and the work of fraternity, implicitly affirming that the service of



preaching is intimately linked to the mystery of the grace by which Christ establishes his Church as Fraternity given to the world as the sign of the hope of salvation. Engagement in the common life is not primarily a moral observance, but rather a proclamation of hope in this mysterious work of giving birth to fraternity. The first companions in Jesus's preaching saw how he formed a solidarity with humanity, a solidarity with those who did not have a place in a society established by human beings – such as the leper, the man born blind, and the paralytic, or even the publican and sinners with whom he agrees to share a table. It is solidarity with all for the salvation of all. In this way, the disciples learnt to live this solidarity themselves (cf. Luke 8-10; Matt 10) as the preferred path for preaching. The apostolic letters of Paul show how difficult it could be for new believers, over time, to establish true solidarity among themselves. The letters insist upon the essential character of this economic aspect in the life of Christ's disciples. The witness of fraternal life is not that of a moral ideal which is already fully realised. It is rather that of a hope that the human being is capable of being converted to fraternity, in becoming gradually dependent upon brothers and sisters who have been given to him, inspired by the same example of Christ (see 2 Cor 8-9, where Paul proposes a paradigm for a theological reflection on solidarity between Christian communities). In this sense, dependent fraternity is a preferential modality for "announcing the Kingdom". The promise to obey, to hear the Word, letting it guide us to be put at its service for the good of all, seals our entry into solidarity.

Every conversion is, ultimately, a work of grace. But, it is given to those who want to acquire the means and practical conditions in order to be used by this grace. From this point of view, we can say that living the vow of poverty is a means for this preparation. We cannot deny a real paradox in our religious lives: poor or mendicants from the beginning, how easy it has been, and how rapid, to move into a rather "bourgeois" and individualistic life! This is true from a collective point of view, and we understand well why Dominic wanted to guard against the instinct for property, which risks attaching us to goods more than making us available for the mobility for preaching. But this is also true from a personal point of view. It is true for many among us who, coming to the Order with so few things, must at each new assignation organise an ever more substantial removal service as we accumulate books and goods of all kinds. And this is without mentioning the social or academic positions to which we rise. The vow of poverty must invite us, daily, to be uprooted from this tendency to "secure" our life for ourselves, in preference to allowing those "living relationships" with people (and with the brothers of our community or Province) to be, at last, our true security. From this we will each be given "a hundredfold".

We should not be attached to those specific places that would keep us indifferent to others, but rather, we should accept being in solidarity with others in the countries to which we are sent. It is necessary to work together to gain more and more simplicity and frugality of life, not by an unhealthy pleasure at being a "hero" to poverty, leading to self-importance, but to gain an interior liberty. To gain also a mutual trust that allows us to believe He will truly give to each according to his needs. The essential link between the vow of poverty and the determination to hold our goods in common is often emphasised. Yet, it must be recognised that holding all things in common is one of the greatest difficulties encountered by communities, and also between communities in the Provinces. Everyone knows the many strategies with which we attempt to hijack this commitment and we know that this is one of the most difficult aspects of the common life. Experiencing this difficulty means tasting, in our own experience of life, the challenge that every call to solidarity with others represents: the common life, in its daily sharing of fraternal life, in the capitular organisation of the community, as well as in the actual management of common goods, is a type of "pedagogy" for solidarity. From this point of view, bringing to community a concern for a true and strong solidarity among us⁷ (meaning between communities and/or Provinces), but also building a real solidarity with the poor of our world, is a call to take seriously the commitment to choose to organise our personal and common lives under the sign of vulnerability rather than under that of absolute security. Again and again, make the choice to be uprooted and "expropriate oneself"...

The religious vow of chastity belongs in this same project, calling also for a kind of affective uprooting. After several months in a community living in a very vulnerable place in proximity to many victims of poverty, a friar may say, in such an apostolate, the pertinent vow for the religious is not so much poverty but rather chastity. Indeed, being subject to poverty is unenviable and should not be considered a "value" in itself. But the commitment to solidarity with the poor calls us to deepen and cultivate our commitment to chastity, which is an appropriate distance that truly opens a space for the freedom of all. The vulnerability in continent celibacy, to which the vow of chastity leads, is that of a type of insecurity in solitude, taking the



opportunity that this lack will give birth to a keener readiness to see our capacity for solidarity in the way Christ lived in His humanity. Thus, chastity leads both to a certain way of being, and also to learning a certain quality of relationship with those who are in need, discovering that the issue is not meeting needs, but joining destinies in a relationship of solidarity which frees each one.

Solidarity in the mission and witness for the world

During my visits, it has been always very important to recall the organic unity of our Order. The Order is not a sum of entities, each one autonomous, under contract like a “federation”, no more than a Province is a juxtaposed sum of communities, nor a community a juxtaposition of individual brothers. This image of an organic reality (somehow integrated: cf. LCO 1, VII) is, in itself, a way of announcing the Kingdom. If we aspire to a world of which the God of the Covenant can accept being King, in which the human being no longer seeks other “kings” created in his own image, it is necessary – within our human capacities and limits – to seek to create a world habitable for all. Such a world cannot be reduced to a contractual organisation between entities or autonomous individuals. It must be a world where the destinies of all are joined in the same existence because they share the same hope in God who is both source and communion between human beings, and it calls for their active participation. This is the preaching of fraternity, to which the commitment to solidarity specifically contributes.

From this perspective, the issue in our communities of our relationship to material goods and especially money, raises not only the idea of “sociality” we want to promote, but also a real hope we have in the transformative power of the “work of fraternal communion” (cf E. Lévinas, “Socialité et argent”, in C. Chalier et M. Abensour, *Cahier de l’Herne*. Emmanuel Lévinas, Editions de l’Herne, Paris, 1991, p. 134-138 – a text in which sociality means the dynamic of social relationships which organise and determine a society and culture). The rules that guide us in this area are not there to “moralise” the religious life, but rather to fix us within a theological horizon and to give our concrete practices an eschatological perspective. In this view (and with the strength of the hope it gives us) we can dare to confront the current failures in order to correct them (parallel economies, resistance to holding things in common, consumerism, safeguarding one’s personal life, priority given to family ties or to private means over communal solidarity, alliances established on the basis of affective dependencies...). Such corrections will not, in the first place, ask for moral judgements of individuals but rather for creativity in the solidarity of fraternal life. It is also from this theological point of view that we can dare to define priorities in favour of the poorest in a community, the least fortunate, the least productive. This point of view will guide how we can establish the interdependence of solidarity at the heart of our community (common management, giving to each according to his needs).

This perspective will also be one that directs relationships of solidarity at the heart of a Province. In a Province, certain questions are often raised: for example, the distinction between rich and poor communities (sometimes, the richest help the poorest, but in some cases according to criteria which the richest set); or an inequality between communities that conduct their affairs with all the necessary transparency and those who practice a certain secrecy. In many places apostolic institutions have been created that promote preaching, but which can also gradually be tempted to become autonomous in relation to the Province and a brother in charge makes himself virtually the project’s owner. In a more general way, several Provinces have been led to reflect upon the bonds that are gradually formed between apostolic choices and the concern for economic profitability. While this aspect can certainly not be ignored, we must avoid preaching activities that direct our solidarity to that which ensures our own security for indefinite economic reasons. So, it is necessary to call to mind the relationship that can be built at the heart of a Province with the communities, institutions, or even with Vicariates deemed unable to participate. In view of this, too often the economic reality becomes the first, sometimes the only, way of seeking to build relationships with others.

Through all these things, how does the Order appear to the world? It is important to be aware of this so that we can also recognise the radical demand of working for a fraternal communion for the world. The issue of the option for the poor is central because it is a criterion for analysis, for authenticity, for decentring (to whom do we come close?). How can our communities be joined through solidarity and extend this solidarity to the whole of a Province or even the Order?

Questions are raised in the Order, in particular concerning health and initial formation, which are two areas where there is the greatest inequality among us. But we can also question close ties to particular situations



that might seem quite unsuitable from the perspective of the whole Order. In the same way, we should point out a great inequality regarding the provision of means for the apostolic life, or apostolic engagement – which sometimes means apostolic freedom. For example, we can accept (or even request) responsibility for parishes in order to live, instead of giving priority to education, to the promotion of the poor or of women, or to the protection of children.

In order for solidarity to work among us, it is indispensable that we demand clarity, transparency and responsibility for specific objectives. At the same time, it is also important that we do not ask the weakest, those who have the most essential needs, for the same accountability we ask from the strongest. This is how the world works, certainly, but it is important for us who want to preach the Gospel by word and example to resist this temptation.

Building a culture of solidarity

Responding to the request of the General Chapter of Rome, (which charged the Master of the Order with establishing an “office for supporting mission” (ACG Rome 2010, 231)) a solidarity office – whose name is now Spem Miram Internationalis – has been in place for three years. Its main goal is to encourage the development of the culture of solidarity I mentioned and to manage solidarity funds from this perspective. Such management should be undertaken in line with this culture of solidarity, just as it finds its relevance in the promotion of solidarity so that all can support a “common culture of solidarity”.

We can identify some prerequisites for this culture. It must be rooted in a common apostolic consciousness and its priorities agreed together. For example, it would not be possible to develop solidarity in the area of initial formation if we are not all convinced that it is more important to promote the vocation of every brother for the Order than to restrict ourselves only to the concern of the entity to which we belong. Let me emphasise again the fact that the Order is not a “federation” of Provinces, even if it is very important that the entities have true local roots, both culturally and ecclesially. This rooting in the “particular” is essential for each entity to contribute to the promotion of the mission of the Order at the service of the Universal Church. A solidarity among us can build to the extent that we develop a real consciousness and mutual esteem for the projects undertaken by each other. In the end, if we want to progress in solidarity, this presumes that every one, each entity, be animated by a true determination to keep to what is “truly necessary”, putting everything at the disposition of everyone.

In this perspective, I ask all the entities, communities and Provinces, to reflect upon a better manner of living the solidarity that is at the heart of the Order. It is possible to identify several ways of contributing to this project of solidarity: regular contributions of communities and Provinces to the solidarity funds of the Order that support apostolic projects and the formation of the most fragile entities; collaborations for the formation of young brothers; thematic collaborations (for example in the field of education or of the protection of children); sharing our “human resources” (professors, pastors, experts); partial responses to calls; sharing of “relational resources” (we are often quite “jealous” of our benefactors!). Communities and Provinces can, each at their level, decide to support these solidarity projects for the Order. Spem Miram Internationalis follows projects to suggest to the Master of the Order, and sees that the money is used wisely so that donor communities and Provinces are assured of what happens to their generous contributions (cf Spem Miram Internationalis website, www.spemmiram.org, which presents its objectives and the process for projects applying. There are forms for submitting projects and reports on projects currently supported by the different funds).

Obviously, a good dynamic of solidarity calls for a number of conditions. There is, of course, the requirement of clear accounts, a report of what is achieved, the expression of gratitude; but, there is also the desire not to get locked into attitudes of victimization and infantile dependence. One brother, and others agree, let me know that our dynamic of solidarity would probably be enhanced if we discovered all together how to implement a project of solidarity with someone other than ourselves. It expresses the dream that this be a way for us to celebrate the Jubilee of the Order: to give to the world what we have received!

This seems a suitable point upon which to conclude this letter on the culture of solidarity. Of course, we need to develop solidarity among ourselves further, and this will be an essential element for consolidating the unity of the Order. But as I have emphasised at the beginning of this letter, such a culture must constantly



refer to the fact that Dominic gave us an Order which chooses to be preachers by being mendicants, imitating Him whose coming we want to announce to the world. The Word of life presents himself as a mendicant, relying on the hospitality of humanity, in order to demonstrate that in His Son, God wants to be in solidarity with the world.

Your brother,

fr. Bruno Cadoré, O.P. Master of the Order of Preachers

Rome, May 24 2014. Feast of the Translation of our Holy Father Saint Dominic

JRD AND JPCC 2014

11-16 AUGUST, SURABAYA, INDONESIA

The Journées Romaines Dominicaines, (JRD) a gathering of Dominican women and men living in Muslim countries or working with Muslim communities elsewhere for inter-religious dialogue, is held every four years.

Justice, Peace and Care of Creation (JPCC) a tri-annual conference of the Regional Promoters of Justice and Peace for the Asia-Pacific Region.

The theme: **“Dialogue as a Way for Preaching.”**

A conference examining the role of interreligious dialogue in a world rife with fundamentalism and violence and also cooperation and mutuality

Process: The week together will be structured around conferences, reactors, panel, group-work and sharing. Major themes are: Fundamentalism and violence as realities of our world, The Word and the words of Dialogue and Dialogue as bridge-building towards peace.

Speakers include, Frs. John Prior SVD, Heru Prakosa SJ and Prof. Peter Phan among others.

Date : 11 -16 August, 2014.

Venue: CIPUTRA WORLD RESORT and HOTEL, Surabaya, Indonesia.

Language: English and French

Cost: The participants will be charged US 200 \$ for the whole session (6 days). We are also asking participants, as usual to pay a registration fee of US 135 \$ to cover additional costs. This is to be paid on arrival.

Only a few seats are left. Anyone still interested to participate please click www.op.org or <http://jrd.op.org/> or write to apostolates@curia.op.org

Profession and Jubilee at the Monastery of Rweza

The Monastery of Our Lady of Peace, Rweza, Burundi

On Saturday the 17th of May 2014, the Monastery of Our Lady of Peace, Rweza, Burundi celebrated with joy and thanksgiving, the first profession of Sr. Consolata of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Silver Jubilee of Sr. M. Madeleine and the Golden Jubilee of Sr. Margarita Mariya in the Order of Preachers.

The ceremonies were presided over by His Excellency Stanislas KABURUNGU, Emeritus Bishop of Ngozi, along with 25 priest concelebrants. The Order was represented by our brothers from Bujumbura: Liboire KAGABO, Emmanuel NTAKARUTIMANA and Benjamin NGORORABANGA, superior of the community of Bujumbura; brother Clau LOMBRISER from Switzerland who came especially for the feast and our Dominican laity of Bujumbura. Several religious, members of our 3 families, friends and acquaintances were at the rendez-vous.



The Mass was preceded by a long procession. At the beginning of the Mass and during the homily, Bishop Stanislas expressed his joy for this day of celebration in Rweza. As an historian, he gave an outline of the story of the foundation of the Order by St Dominic, “a man who understood the value of prayer because before founding the Friars Preachers, he began by establishing the contemplative sisters,” he said. “Similarly, he continues, these sisters who live in this monastery, who never leave their cloister to go outside for the apostolate, live their life of prayer and intercession for all preachers of the Word of God throughout the world. Behold that two sisters today celebrate their 25 and 50 years of religious life in this Order and a young sister commits herself by her first profession. I ask you, he says to the whole assembly and insistently that nobody goes home without encountering, without seeing God for whom these sisters are here. They are the heart of our diocese, the Church and the world. ”

After the profession of Sr. Consolata of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Sr. Pascasie Mary Magdalene and Sr. Margarita Mariya recited their prayer of thanksgiving for this gift that the Lord gave them of faithfulness over the past 25 and 50 years. This prayer was followed by their renewal of profession in the hands of the prioress. It was a very emotional moment. The assembly applauds for a long time and the choir breaks into songs of thanksgiving while the three sisters are embraced by all the priests and go to embrace their sisters in joy expressed through dance.

At the offertory, a procession of offerings carried in large and beautiful baskets for the occasion, on the head of the two Jubilerians accompanied by a beautiful bouquet of flowers carried by the young professed sister were brought to the altar.

After communion, there was a long time of thanksgiving followed by speeches for the occasion. Brother Liboire, on behalf of the Order and the community of nuns, expresses the joy for this feast at Rweza. He also gave an abbreviated history of the Order from Burundi to the Benin Republic. "The Order," he said, "is present in Burundi since 1954 due to our nuns in Mureke. As the monastery was closed in 1968, three sisters among whom were Sr Margarita Mariya who celebrates her 50 years in the Order, Sr. Consolata who celebrated her 50 years of religious life 2 years ago and a third sister who died 4 years ago. It is in 1970, at their solemn profession that I knew them. I was studying in Switzerland. Later on, at the beginning of the foundation of Rweza in 1974, I came to see them and I even participated with my fellow seminarians in the construction of their monastery. Let us thank the Lord for the faithfulness of our two jubilee sisters and for the temporary profession of our younger sister. Let us pray that the sisters continue their vocation of prayer and intercession for the Church, for the Order and for the world. Let us pray also for the establishment of another monastery in the Benin Republic that the monastery of Rweza has just opened."

A member of the Dominican Laity and the representative of the families of our three sisters express their joy of this day of great celebration. The solemn blessing given by the Bishop with all the priests and the song of the Magnificat, concluded the ceremonies. There was fraternal meal in the courtyard of our hostelry. Let us thank the Lord for his love is everlasting!
Sr. Margarita Mariya du Sacré Cœur, op.

Call for Papers: The Order of Preachers and Vatican II

University of St. Michael's College, Toronto, ON Canada, May 7-9, 2015

The year 2015 marks the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council and the 800th anniversary of the Dominican Order. The Dominicans had a tremendous impact on Vatican II: in shaping the twentieth century influences that gave rise to the Council, in their involvement within the event itself and in the reception of the Council throughout the world. Indeed, it could be said that Vatican II would have been an entirely different Council had it not been for the Dominicans and their influence upon it.

To celebrate these jubilees, the Institute for Research on the Second Vatican Council in Canada and the Dominican Institute of Toronto organizing a three-day international conference on May 7-9, 2015 at the University of St. Michael's College, Toronto in order to explore the relationships between the Dominicans and Vatican II.

Examples of topics and themes that will be considered in this call for papers include:



- Dominican influence on factors that gave rise to and shaped the agenda of Vatican II;
- Dominican involvement in Vatican II (Protagonist and Antagonist);
- the role the Dominicans play in implementing Vatican II;
- preaching;
- Scripture;
- the thought of Thomas Aquinas;
- the role of the laity, etc.

To submit a proposal, please e-mail an abstract of no more than 500 words to dominican.toronto@gmail.com. Proposals may be submitted in French or English. Please submit proposals by: August 1, 2014

For further information, please contact: Prof Michael Attridge or Prof. Darren Dias at dominican.toronto@gmail.com

THE DOMINICAN SISTERS AFRICA (DSA) CONTINENTAL ASSEMBLY

ABIDJAN, IVORY COAST: MAY 11 – 16, 2014. THEME: Our Dominican Mission in the context of the challenges facing women in Africa

The Assembly which drew participants from thirteen countries across Africa as well as the International Coordinator for Dominican Sisters International (DSI), Sr. Marie Therese Clement OP; the Socius to the Master for Africa, fr. Gabriel Samba OP; and the International Co-promoter for Justice and Peace, Sr. Celestina Veloso Freitas OP, sets as its objectives the following:

- To deepen our understanding of the situation of women in Africa today.
- To discover our call as Dominican women and identify ways of responding.
- To develop a strategic plan of action.
- To celebrate Dominican women together on mission in Africa today.

The Assembly provided us with the opportunity to listen to the unique experiences of how each Dominican Sister Congregation of Apostolic life is continuing to birth Dominic's vision of setting the world ablaze with the fire of God's love in our different locations on the continent, and to offer opportunity to dream and plan together on how we could best fulfill our charism as women preachers, in our continent.

The weeklong program began with an opening Mass presided over by the Socius for Africa, fr. Gabriel Samba, OP who expressed happiness at the convocation of the Assembly and encouraged us to continue to strengthen our bond for the sake of fostering our Dominican mission on the continent. The continental coordinator, Sr. Faustina Jimoh OP formally welcomed everyone and especially our guests from Rome, the DSI Coordinator, the Socius and the Co-Promoter for Justice and Peace.

There were reports from the Zonal Coordinators in Africa, the Continental Coordinator for Africa, the International Coordinator and the International Co-Promoter for Justice and Peace in which they expressed their successes, strength, weaknesses, challenges and hope for the future.

The Socius for Africa, fr Gabriel Samba also gave a report in which he enlightened the sisters on the governing structure of the Order, his duties as Socius for Africa, the activities of IAOP especially as regards its forthcoming Assembly in Kenya in July. He stressed the need for collaboration among the branches of the Dominican family in Africa.

To aid our deliberation on the theme of the Assembly, there were presentation from fr. Emmanuel Ntakarutimana, OP and Sr. Florence Nwaonuma (Sacred Heart of Jesus, Nigeria) which brought closer to us the reality of injustice in our continent particularly as it affects women and especially in the area of



trafficking. Putting into consideration the objectives we had set at the beginning of this assembly, we laid down some focus for the next four years.

Following the invitation of the Master of the Order to an inward journey leading to conversion of self as a way of preparing for the jubilee year of the Order (2016), we reflected on the need to create ‘safe-spaces’ for healing, reconciliation among ourselves starting with the individual sister, local community, congregation and zone.

We had the closing Mass at the friars Convent in Cocody and dinner with the friars after the Mass. It was a beautiful experience of the communion of the Dominican family.

At the end of the Assembly, Sr. Marie Therese and I had the privilege of visiting the Dominican Sisters of the Presentation in Quagadougou, Burkina Faso and the Dominican Sisters of the Annunciation in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Our visit to these communities resonate our desire to be family, to carry one another along so as to ensure that no Dominican Sister on the continent of Africa lives or work in isolation.

In conclusion, the Assembly was altogether a success because not only did it fulfill the objectives we had set at the beginning, it also gave us a clear focus for the next four years.

SR. FAUSTINA JIMOH, OP
DOMINICAN SISTERS AFRICA (DSA)
CONTINENTAL COORDINATOR

9th European Assembly of Lay Dominican Fraternities

21 – 26 May 2014 at Bologna, Italy. Titled: TORCHBEARERS: crossing borders

Arrival: All the delegates arrived at the Collogio San Tommaso, Bologna. The participants were welcomed by the council members; Ruth Anne Henderson, Jean Michel Solente, Leny Beemer De Vos, Eva Zudorova and José Antonio Munoz Mata. Of course fr Rui Lopes, the General Promoter for laity was also there. During the last Assembly in Caleruega, it was decided that the next Assembly will be in Bologna: after the village where St. Dominic was born, now the city where he died

Day 1: To begin the business of the day, the Council gave its report. From the content of the report, the Council has been able to achieve a lot in the past three years. The Council members are from 5 different counties and they have managed to work together as a good team.

In the afternoon, the first talk was delivered by Robert Mickens, a well-known Vatican journalist, entitled “Taking the friendship of Christ to the Margins of Society: Pope Francis and the call to dialogue with all humanity”. On the basis of the Apostolic Exaltation, *Evangelii Gaudium*”, he pointed out the guiding principles of the Holy Father. After the talks, the participants went into group discussions.

Day 2: On the second day of the Assembly, the participants discussed the Youth Movement and the laity as branches of the Order. Guest speakers were José Alberto de Blas, the Coordinator of the International Dominican Youth Movement (IDYM) and Francesco Andriulli, a former member of the Youth Movement and a Lay Dominican. Francesco Andriulli pointed out that in Europe, the IDYM exists only in Spain and England. He challenged the participants to improve their relationship with the Dominican youths in their different countries. After a general overview of the IDYM – the history and the structure – there were group discussions on the relations between the Youth Movement and the laity.

At the end of the day the Assembly gathered around the Pilgrim Image. There was a moment of silence after all the words and a moment of meditation led by Klaus Bornewasser.

Day 3: The feast of Translation of St Dominic added colour to the Assembly. In the morning the working groups gave their reports and the harvest of their discussions on the first and second day. There were also discussions among the participants about the nominees for the European Council (ECLDF) and the International Council (ICLDF). The Assembly had a special tour of the Priory of St Dominic guided by



Brother Adriano. They saw the Inquisition room, the magnificent library and of course the cell of St. Dominic where he died.

At 6 pm, there was a concelebrated Mass at the tomb of St. Dominic with the Italian Dominican Family, followed by vespers. During the social evening, the Assembly met the laity of Bologna and the friars of the priory of Bologna. It was a day of hard working and good celebrating.

Day 4: On the last day, the Assembly received the Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadoré. In the morning the Assembly voted on some changes in the Statutes and elected the new council for the next four years.

Fr Bruno presided at the Mass of the day. In his homily, he reminded the participants that, to be able to preach it is important to contemplate, to really listen – not only with our ears but also with our hearts.

After the Mass the participants met and had lunch with Brothers Bruno, Bernardino Prella (Socius for Italy, Malta and the Iberian Peninsula) and Fausto Arici (Provincial of the Province of St Dominic, Northern Italy).

After lunch the Master attended the meeting of the Assembly. He engaged in dialogue with the participants about the different experiences within the Dominican Family, the Dominican identity, the preaching mission and interactions with Dominican youths. He reminded the participants that the Church needs the experiences of the laity in her mission.

After this meeting the Assembly installed the new council and Brother Rui, the promoter of the laity, gave his blessing to the members. With this ceremony the Assembly closed.

The Dominican Family in Rome Celebrates the Translation of the Body of St Dominic

On the 24th of May 2014 at the Basilica of Santa Sabina, Rome.

It has become a tradition for the Dominican family in Rome to gather at Santa Sabina to celebrate the feast of the Translation of the Body of St Dominic and this year was no exception. On Saturday, the 24th of May, Dominican brothers, sisters and the laity gathered at the Basilica of Santa Sabina to celebrate our Dominican communion as a family. The nuns were with us in spirit. This feast is more suitable for the Dominican family in Rome since the proper feast of St Dominic (August 8) occurs at the heart of the summer.

According to the tradition preserved for us by the successor of St Dominic himself, Blessed Jordan of Saxony, the body of St Dominic was moved from where it was initially buried (on the floor of the friars' Church of St. Nicholas in Bologna) to its present place inside the Basilica of St Dominic in Bologna on the 24th of May 1233. The tomb is a beautiful masterpiece laid in one of the side altars of the Basilica under an equally magnificent arch. According to the website dedicated to the Shrine of St Dominic,

“St. Dominic's tomb is both an artistic masterpiece and a historical document. Nicola Pisano, Nicolò dell'Arca, Michelangelo, Girolamo Cortellini, Alfonso Lombardi and other famous artists showed their genius by transforming lifeless marble into "speaking stones." The most important episodes of St. Dominic's life are "photographed" in the carvings of the sarcophagus (Nicola Pisano, 1267) and the step between the two angels (Alfonso Lombardi, 1532). These carvings were done according to the memories of friars who had personally known the Saint”.

The celebration started in the evening with the Holy Mass presided over by fr. Julio César Bunader, the Vicar General of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM). In his homily, he pointed out that the life of the first Christian community was a testimony to the resurrection. Just as Christ sent his disciples out to evangelize the whole world, he has called us through the charism of our father Dominic. Fr Julio reminded us of the great qualities of St Dominic; his evangelical poverty, his life of contemplation and his love for the preaching mission. Imitating the apostles in the first Christian community, St Dominic has invited us to the same evangelical community life and poverty to enable us carry out the preaching mission. In conclusion, fr Julio called on us all to pray together through the intercession of the Virgin Mary for the grace to be faithful to our calling.



After the Mass, there was a procession to the side chapel of St Catherine of Siena while singing the Salve.

The second part of the celebration was moved to the courtyard of the cloister where a banquet of fine food and wine were already laid. Just as we shared from the table of the Lord as a family, we also shared from this table with everyone having enough to eat, drink and chat about.

St Dominic, Pray for us.

Dominican Sisters of Bui Chu, Vietnam, and of Sinsinawa, USA, Celebrate Together

Perpetual Profession of Sr. M. Anne Do Thi Lien OP

On 18 May 2014, joy stretched across nearly 8,000 miles (13,000 km) and united the Bui Chu congregation from Vietnam and the Sinsinawa congregation from the USA. Sr. M. Anne Do Thi Lien OP (Dominicans of Bui Chu) made her perpetual profession of vows at the motherhouse of the Dominicans of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, USA. Sr. Maria Do Thi Hong OP, Prioress of Bui Chu, traveled from Vietnam to receive the vows of Sr. Lien. The Mass and Profession were “live-streamed” (broadcast live over the Internet) so that the family and Sisters of Sr. Lien in Vietnam could share in the celebration also. The other eleven members of Lien’s profession group made their vows in April 2014 in Vietnam.

In September 2012, Sr. Mary Ellen Gevelinger OP, Prioress of Sinsinawa, welcomed Sr. Lien and Sr. Maria Teresa HD Nguyen Thi Vong (also from Bui Chu) to the motherhouse community where they are living while they learn English. They plan to begin university studies in the USA in 2015.

A warm spirit of mutual affection has developed between Lien and Vong and the many Sisters at the motherhouse who have been teaching them English, as well as other topics in preparation for degree study. The motherhouse Sisters bring expertise and experience; Lien and Vong bring enthusiasm and determination to learn. The combination has been life-giving for all.

Toni Harris, OP

Following the footsteps of St Dominic

Fanjeaux, from July 5 to August 16, 2014

In 2015, we shall celebrate the eighth centenary of the year when St Dominic began to live in community with his first set of brothers. The city of Toulouse will be the center of the celebration since it was in this city that it all began in 1215 – our community adventure.

Through the preaching charism which the Holy Spirit conceived in this community of brothers, Dominic had a profound personal experience for ten years, from 1206 to 1215, preaching in Fanjeaux, the heart of the “Country of the Cathars”, - as it is called today.

Therefore, starting this summer, the brothers of the Province of Toulouse invites you to join them in exploring the footsteps of St Dominic. From July 5 to August 16, they will be about forty members of the Order – brothers, sisters and the laity, from France and elsewhere – who will lead you in the pilgrimage to discover these historical sites and to offer prayers with them in the old convents.

The program schedules, access, contacts etc., can be found on the official website: www.fanjop.com

Dominicans turn to music, rosary to evangelize in DC

Music and the distribution of rosaries provided an opportunity to spread the Gospel for a group of Dominicans in the heart of the nation’s capital.

“Music is such a beautiful expression of Gospel joy that it just ‘clicks’ for people,” Brother Gregory Pine, O.P., told CNA, explaining that the music is a way of “re-presenting the attractiveness of the Gospel in another medium.”

“That attraction is just the beginning of a relationship, a dialogue, that pleases God,” he continued.



Br. Gregory was part of a group of Dominican sisters, brothers and priests who took to the streets of downtown Washington, D.C., on May 17 to evangelize and spread the Easter message.

While downtown, the Dominicans sang Marian and Easter hymns, along with bluegrass and spirituals. They reached out to involve those passing by, adding names of people on the street to the song, “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands,” and enlisting help from onlookers in singing “Lean on Me” and “The Lion Sleeps Tonight.”

The religious brothers and sisters also greeted people walking by, offering rosaries, pamphlets on Marian devotion, and an opportunity to pray and talk more about the Catholic faith. Priests were also available to give blessings.

“People just want joy, they want to smile,” said Sr. Teresa Christi Balek, O.P., who added that “the witness of the joy of the music” is a powerful tool for spreading the Gospel.

Handing out rosaries also prompted conversations about Mary and Christ, she said. While on the streets, Sr. Teresa was joined by Br. Athanasius Murphy, O.P., in speaking to a handful of young Muslim men about Mary, discussing the respect for Christ’s mother present in Islam and Christianity, along with similarities and differences between the two faiths. They also prayed with the young men.

While it was Br. Norbert Keliher’s “first time out” evangelizing in the streets, he said the presence of music and the rosary provided a “doorway for evangelization.”

“People were interested in the singing,” he said, adding that “I didn’t have to sell anything,” but instead was able to have natural conversations about Mary and the Gospels. Br. Norbert added that most people he spoke to “also took rosaries.”

Br. Gregory commented that while the “strangeness of people congregating in strange dress, singing” garnered attention, the Dominican’s choice of song and interest in speaking to people was “received as an invitation,” especially as an invitation to join the brothers and sisters in prayer.

“People, I find, are very willing to share their needs with you,” he said.

Under Our Lady’s Mantle

The Order of Preachers celebrates the Blessed Virgin Mary as our special patroness. Dominican life is marked by Marian devotion—we wear her scapular, pray her rosary, and daily seek her intercession. She is the model Dominican—one who contemplated the Word in her heart, and who lived “to praise, to bless, and to preach” God’s goodness. Today’s post includes some selections from the Divine Office for this day that aren’t often heard outside Dominican priories and convents. Our Lady, Queen of Preachers, pray for us!

From the events that happened at the time of the founding of our Order, there are many reasons given why the blessed Virgin Mary is acclaimed as the special patroness of our Order. Many of these, which we have heard with our own ears, and many others written in the Lives of the Brethren, depict that she is the special Mother of that Order whose purpose is to praise, to bless, and to preach her Son. She is our Mother by what she brings forth, by what she advances, and by what she defends. Blessed Dominic commended the Order to her special protection in his prayers, as we read in the Nova legenda. Therefore, we commit ourselves to her as to a Mother every day in our procession – just as we invoke blessed Dominic in that commemoration.

—From an Exposition of the Constitutions of the Order of Preachers by Blessed Humbert of Romans
One night, after continuing his prayers until midnight, Dominic left the church and came to the dormitory. He completed what he had to do and, taking his place at one end of the dormitory, continued to pray. As he stood praying, he glanced at the other end of the dormitory and saw three beautiful women enter. He noticed that the one in the middle was a venerable lady far more beautiful and dignified than the other two. One of them was carrying a beautiful, shining vessel, and the other an aspersorium that she handed to the lady in the center.



She went from bed to bed sprinkling the brethren with holy water and blessing them. As she went along in this way, she passed by one of them without sprinkling him or blessing him. Blessed Dominic observed this and took note of the brother they neglected. The lady said to blessed Dominic: "I am the one you call upon in the evening. When you say, Turn, therefore, most gracious advocate thine eyes of mercy toward us, I prostrate myself before my Son and ask him to preserve the Order." After that blessed Dominic asked about the brother she had passed by as she sprinkled and blessed all the others. "Because he was not properly disposed," she said. After this she continued to sprinkle and bless all the others and then disappeared. When she was gone, blessed Dominic returned to pray in the place he stood before. Suddenly he was rapt in spirit before God and saw Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin sitting at his right. It seemed to blessed Dominic that Our Lady was wearing a cape of bright blue, the color of sapphire. As blessed Dominic looked around, he could see religious of all the orders but his own before the throne of God. He began to weep bitterly and stood far away, not daring to approach the Lord and His Mother. Then our Lady motioned for him to come near. He would not dare, until our Lord himself also called him. Then blessed Dominic cast himself before them weeping bitterly. Our Lord told him to rise, and when he did, Our Lord asked him, "Why are you weeping?" Dominic said, "I am weeping because I see all other orders here but there is no sign of my own." The Lord said to him, "Do you want to see your Order?" Dominic answered, "Yes, Lord." Then Our Lord, putting his hand upon the shoulders of the Blessed Virgin, said to blessed Dominic, "I have entrusted your Order to my Mother." Then the Blessed Virgin opened the cape that covered her and spread it out before blessed Dominic. It seemed vast enough to cover the entire heaven and, under it, he saw a large multitude of his brethren. Then, prostrating himself, blessed Dominic gave thanks to God and to Blessed Mary. After that the vision disappeared and he returned to himself just as the bell rang for Matins. When Matins was over, he called the brethren to Chapter and gave them a long and beautiful talk, exhorting them to love and pay reverence to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Among other things he related this vision to them.

—From the Narration on the Miracles of Saint Dominic by Blessed Caecilia

O God, you willed that the Order of Preachers be founded for the salvation of souls under the special patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and that the Order be filled with her unfailing gifts. Grant to us who call upon you, protected by the aid of her whose feast we celebrate, that we may be brought to the glory of heaven. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

—Collect for the Patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary over the whole Order of Preachers

—Br. Henry Stephan, O.P., Editor, Dominican Blog

Feast of Bl. Hyacinth M. Cormier (1832-1916), Founder of the Angelicum

A master general of recent times who did much to restore the primitive fervor of the Order was Father Hyacinth M. Cormier. Henry Cormier was born in Orleans on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1832. All his life he treasured the thought that he had been born on Our Lady's day, and therefore he should be especially devoted to her. His father died while he was still a small child, so Henry and his only brother, Eugene, went with their mother to live near his uncle, who was a priest in Orleans. The two boys entered the new preparatory seminary at Orleans. The following year Eugene died, leaving Henry alone and grief stricken.

Henry continued his studies for the priesthood at the major seminary of Orleans, and was ordained in 1856. At this time he fulfilled a desire that had been growing on him for some time; he went to Flavigny, where Father Lacordaire had opened a novitiate of the Order, and begged to be admitted. He was accepted, a little dubiously as he looked so delicate, and given the name Hyacinth.

When it was time for Brother Hyacinth's profession, the doubt had grown into a certainty; he had had several hemorrhages, and the community, which had already lost some of its most promising members from tuberculosis, was afraid to profess him. The master general, Father Jandel, took him to Rome as secretary and asked the pope for a special dispensation to allow him to make profession. The pope responded that if he went for thirty days without a hemorrhage he could make his vows. Young Brother Hyacinth tried hard once he got as far as 29 days and did not quite make it, but he fell seriously ill and was anointed. In the belief that



he was going to die in a few days, he was finally allowed to make his profession. But at this point he recovered, and he served the Order vigorously for fifty years.

In 1865 the old Province of Toulouse was to be re established, and Father Cormier was sent as the first provincial to build up the Order there. His ability for administration was so marked that the pope wanted to make him a cardinal; only the hostility of France towards religious kept him from doing so.

When Father Cormier was elected master general in 1904, it became necessary to replace him in some of the work he had been doing so that he could devote more time to affairs of the Order in general. It was then that his brethren found out what a load he had been carrying. Teaching and writing should have kept him busy; but he also was regular confessor to eight large convents and extraordinary confessor to several more. In spite of all the activity, he spent hours of every day in front of the Blessed Sacrament. He had a universal reputation for the soundness of his spiritual direction.

As master general, Father Cormier turned his attention first to the novices. Many of his writings had been for young people, and he always loved the novices on whom the future of the Order depends. As gentle as a child in his manner, but as inflexible as a Gibraltar in a matter of principle, he quietly demonstrated the policies that he wanted followed in the Order. HE FOUNDED THE PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS ("Angelicum"), the international house of studies at Rome, and supported other educational projects of the Order.

Father Cormier wrote incessantly, mostly devotional works or instructions for novices. Some of his works have been translated into English, but not by any means all of them. He wrote biographies of many eminent Dominicans, including Blessed Raymond of Capua and Father Jandel. His pen helped to make permanent the work done by Father Lacordaire and his companions in re establishing the Order in France and in the world. Father Cormier died in Rome in 1916 and was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1995. HIS BODY NOW LIES IN THE CHURCH OF SS. DOMINIC AND SIXTUS AT THE ANGELICUM.

What do the teachings about Mary say to women?

One cannot talk about women in the history of the Church without talking about Mary. What has she to say to us as women, married and religious? Many different things, but I will concentrate on those which flow out from the teachings about her proposed by the Church for our belief.

As Catholics we are obliged to believe that Mary was sinless for every stage of her existence from conception until the end of her life (The Immaculate Conception). Secondly we must believe that she remained physically and emotionally and spiritually a virgin before during and after the conception and birth of Jesus (The Virgin birth). Thirdly we are obliged to believe that at the end of her life Mary did not see corruption, but that her body was taken up into heaven and she is with Christ reigning in glory (the Assumption).

Now I have read a piece of feminist propaganda which attacked this picture of Mary as setting up before us as women an impossible ideal, which we cannot follow, being both Virgin and mother. I want to suggest that in fact in these doctrines about Mary a model is set before all mankind, but particularly before women, that they can and should follow. I would argue that on the contrary the devotion to Mary in the Catholic Church gives honour both to celibates and to wives and mothers, in ways that I shall explore.

I shall take the teachings about Mary in the order they took place in her life:

The Immaculate Conception: At no point in her life, from conception to her Assumption into heaven, was Mary touched by the stain of sin. Why is this 'necessary'? In brief for three reasons:

Firstly, an argument from equality, or the loving reverence which God shows to His creation. It was not enough that there should be the sinless Jesus as the New Adam – there had to be, in complement to Him, a sinless woman to be the New Eve. (This did not mean that Mary had no need of a Saviour, since the grace with which she was filled flowed from the Passion, Death and Resurrection of her Son, as do all graces in the history of mankind.)



Secondly, It was in order that in her ‘yes’ to God’s request, there should be no trace of those equivocations, qualifications and evasions which are the trace of sin in even our most sublime words and actions, so that that ‘fiat’ ‘let it be done to me according to your word’ was the first truly free action on record that had been performed since the time of the fall.

Thirdly it was not fitting that She who was to become for a time the Temple of the most high God, should sin while carrying Him in her womb.

What does this say to us as women? It shows us the value that God puts on his creatures, on humankind, including women. It gives the lie to any notion that there is a second class citizenship in the Kingdom. We should here celebrate and know our dignity precisely as women. It also shows us what it means to follow Christ fully – that our yea should be yea and our nay be nay, and that we should follow with undivided hearts the loving plan which God sets before us – with all its graces and sufferings, to bring us to heaven. It also puts the humanity of the conceptus – the beginning cell of our existing as an individual organism right at the heart of the story of our salvation. To deny the humanity of the zygote is to deny a basic tenet of our faith.

The perpetual Virginité of Our Lady, or to put it in other words, the Virginal conception and birth of our Lord is first and foremost a sign that God is truly the Father of Jesus. God could have done it otherwise – He could have become incarnate as a child with a human father as well as a human mother; the perpetual virginité of Our Lady is as it were a sacrament of the Divine origin of Christ, which is more natural and easy to understand than if there were a human father as well as a divine one.

Secondly, it has a significance for the work of salvation – that the blood and suffering that needed to be shed and undergone for the redemption of the World was shed by Christ, and not by anyone else. On the other hand the Church Fathers say that Mary suffered at the foot of the Cross the pain which she was spared in childbirth.

What does this say to us as women? Does it denigrate the pains of giving birth – not at all, if we take seriously the last point made, that those pains are in the life of Mary equivalent to the sharing in the Passion of Christ. What then? All women, and indeed all men, are supposed to be ‘mother’ to Christ – and frankly, I think this is something easier for real mothers to comprehend than for anyone else, since they alone understand the profundity of love which that implies.

As a celibate woman it has not often come my way to be fully responsible for a child for more than an hour or so, but I remember once looking after a niece over a period of a month. The thing that struck me most forcibly was the way I was never off the hook – not when she was with me, but more worryingly, not when she was not with me either. I do not know how mothers cope! But also, all of us should understand that this bringing forth of Christ in our lives will not hurt us in the ways that we fear and expect, which hold us back from complete commitment – that the pain of discipleship comes from external forces, and not from the fact of saying ‘yes’ to Christ in our lives. He will not hurt us, though He may allow others to do so in His service. Anyone who prays will reach a point in prayer when the fear of what being totally submissive to the will of God truly means – and this truth about Mary is again in a way a sacrament of the gentleness of God towards His creatures.

Finally, there is the doctrine of the Assumption. This is the doctrine according to which Our Lady ‘was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death.’ (LG 59) In this mystery we have as it were a guarantee of the truth of Christ’s promises, since what Mary has already received is a foretaste of what is promised to all of those who follow Christ faithfully.

What does it say to us specifically as women? I think it is the absolute answer to the fashion magazine’s false imaging of womankind. There is an inherent dignity and beauty of womankind which is of body and mind, which endures into old age and in the case of Our Lady, and we hope eventually for ourselves, in the glory of heaven. This dignity and glory, which cannot be reproduced or made up – is there in the frailest and least attractive specimens of humanity.



This truth is shown forth in a particular way in Our Lady, which is not shown in Our Lord, since His being in heaven, body mind and spirit is hardly surprising, as He is God. It is she who has been lifted high above all other in a way that we could neither imagine nor expect, and in her every woman can lift up her head and say ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my Spirit exults in God my saviour, Since He has looked on His Maidservant in her lowliness.’

Every doctrine about Mary tells us something more about Christ, and my final point about her therefore is this – can that also be said of us? This is the model we have been given, as the prototype of woman hood, and it is inasmuch as we ‘hear the Word of God and keep it’, ponder the word of God and bring Him forth fruitfully in our lives, that we succeed in modeling ourselves on her, the model disciple.

A talk given by Sr Tamsin Mary, OP at an event for the wives of married Deacons

New website for the Dominican Sisters Immaculate Conception Province

The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Dominic has recently unveiled a new website for their Immaculate Conception Province, which serves in the United States of America. The Congregation was founded by the Venerable Servant of God, Mother Kolumba Bialecka in 1861 in Tarnobrzeg-Wielowieś, Poland.

According to them;

We are a contemplative active Congregation of Sisters of St. Dominic, Immaculate Conception Province. Since our Provincial House is located in Justice, IL, we are, sometimes called the Dominicans from Justice. We are sisters consecrated to Christ within the Dominican lifestyle in order to spread the living Word of God through teaching, evangelization and health care. Our Religious Congregation has Pontifical Rite and approval of the Holy See. The religious profession of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience personifies Sisters into the Congregation. We follow the Magisterium of the Catholic Church and abide under the auspices of our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

Our Congregation belongs to the large religious family founded by Saint Dominic. The Order of Preachers (OP) has been established, from the beginning, for the purpose of preaching and the salvation of souls. (Primitive Constitution of the Order of Preachers, Prologue) Thus, the Sisters dedicate themselves to the fulfillment of the apostolic tasks of the Church in imitation of Christ who announced the Kingdom of God to the people. (Congregation’s Constitutions n.3)

As part of the Dominican Order, the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Dominic accept as its purpose the proclamation of the Truth of the Gospel to those in greatest need (Luke 4:18; 3:31). Our Congregation, in this purpose, reflects Christ who was sent to the poor and those in needs.” (Congregation’s Constitutions n. 4)

Depending upon particular needs, our Congregation engages in:

- Teaching- the truth of the Gospel
- Evangelization – Raising the level of education and culture
- Health Care – Bringing aid to the suffering

In union with the Church in diverse circumstances, we serve the people by helping them on their way to salvation in Catholic and missionary countries.

Official News

Fr Tom Condon is the New Provincial of the Province of St Martin de Porres, USA

The Southern Province in the United States of America

The Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadore has confirmed the election of Fr Thomas M. Condon as the Prior Provincial of the Province of St Martin de Porres, USA.

He was born in 1953 in Memphis. With a degree in Psychology and after working as a school psychologist, he entered the novitiate and made his first profession in the Order in 1982. In 1988, he was ordained to the



priesthood at the completion of his basic formation. He holds a Doctorate in Ministry (D. Min.) with speciality in preaching from Aquinas Institute of Theology.

He has been involved in pastoral work, formation, preaching and teaching apostolates. He has been; the Pastor of St Thomas More Parish and Tulane Catholic Centre, New Orleans and the Pastor of St Peters Parish and Director of St Martin de Porres Shrine both in Memphis. His pastoral engagements include preaching of recollections, retreats, conferences and workshops. He has also worked with prisoners, including counselling ministry with death row inmates.

He has served as the Student Master, member of the Intellectual Life Commission, Admissions Board and member of the Formation and Provincial Council all in his Province. As at the time of his election, he was the Socius and Vicar Provincial of the Province.

He is a lover of sports (tennis) and regular exercises and also a film critic. He publishes reviews of movies in the website and newsletters of his Province and the DomLife.

Bishop Celso Pereira de Almeida, O.P. has passed on

On the morning of Sunday, 11 May 2014, the Dominican Bishop Celso Pereira de Almeida answered the eternal call. He was a brother of the Province of Frei Bartolomeu de las Casas, Brazil and the Bishop Emeritus of Itumbiara, Goias in Brazil. He was 86 years old.

Bishop Celso was born in São Paulo in 1928. He studied at a Dominican School from 1940 to 1945 after which he joined the Order and made his first profession in 1947. In 1953, he was ordained to the priesthood in Bologna, Italy at the completion of his priestly formation.

In 1972, he was appointed the Auxiliary Bishop of Porto Nacional, Tocantins and the Titular Bishop of Camplum. In 1975, he was appointed the Coadjutor Bishop of Porto Nacional, Tocantins and he succeeded the outgoing bishop the following year. In 1995, he was appointed the Bishop of Itumbiara, Goias from where he resigned in 1998.

He was buried later on the same day after a burial mass at the Parish of St Jude Thaddeus at Goiania. May his soul rest in peace.

Calendar of the Master of the Order for June 2014

2-5: CIDALC Meeting in Cuba

7: Meeting with Spanish Nuns in Madrid

8-30: Canonical Visitation to the Province of Spain

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