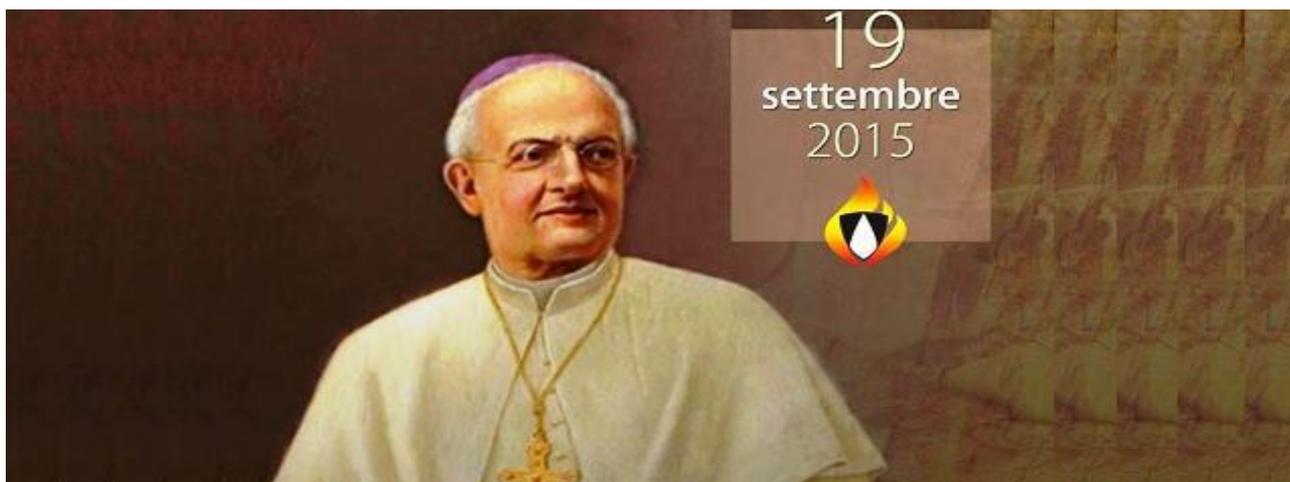

ORDER OF PREACHERS



The Beatification of Pio Alberto Del Corona, OP



On the 17th of September 2014, at an audience with Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Pope Francis approved a healing attributed to the intercession of Venerable Pio Alberto Del Corona. The approval clears the way for his beatification which will come up on the 19th of September 2015 at San Miniato, Italy.

He was born at Livorno on the 5th of July, 1837. His parents, Giuseppe and Ester Bucalossi were humble footwear retailers. He was their fourth and last child.

At the age of 17, Alberto pleaded with his father to join the religious life. He joined the Dominicans at the Convent of San Marco, Florence in 1854 and received his habit the following year. He made his religious profession of vows in 1855 and was ordained to the priesthood at the Basilica of San Marco, Florence on the 5th of February, 1860.

On the 8th of May, 1872, he was received in audience by Pope Pius IX together with Pia Elena Bruzzi Bonaguidi. At that audience, the Holy Father gave him the Apostolic Blessing and his personal imprimatur to found the "Asylum" of Bolognese and the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of the Holy Spirit. Few months after that, he was elected the Prior of the Convent of San Marco.

On the 3rd of January, 1875, he was consecrated a bishop at the Church of St Apollinaris, Rome and appointed Coadjutor Bishop of San Miniato. Few days later, he arrived at San Miniato and remained there for 32 years. At the death of the substantive bishop, he became the 18th Bishop of San Miniato.

In 1906, due to his serious ill health, he submitted his resignation to Pope Pius X but was turned down. Rather, the Holy Father appointed the Archbishop of Pisa Maffi as the administrator of the diocese. The following year, the Archbishop of Pisa Maffi was appointed the Bishop of San Miniato while Bishop Del Corona was made the Titular Archbishop of Sardica.

While still suffering from the ill health, he received a hand written letter of encouragement from Pope Pius X. On the 10th of August 1912, he received the anointing of the sick and five days later, on the 15th of



August 1912, on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, he passed on. He was 75 years, one month and nine days old

He was buried in the Cemetery of Misericordia in Florence and his tomb instantly became a place of pilgrimage for the faithful. On the 12th of October 1925, his body was moved to the crypt of the Monastery of his spiritual daughters at Via Bolognese, Florence. In 1942, the Diocese of San Miniato initiated the process for his canonization. The process is ongoing at the Congregation for the Causes of Saint at the Holy See.

In February 2001, in the presence of Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, 4 bishops, 15 priests and other dignitaries, his remains was canonically recognized.

On the 9th of October 2013, Pope Francis recognized his heroic virtues. With the approval of the miracle attributed to his intercession, his spiritual daughters are hopeful that his beatification will be imminent. The sisters have been in the forefront in the promulgation of his heroic life, virtues and teachings through various programmes and events. They have been doing these with the invaluable assistance of fr Antonio Cocolicchio, OP.

• [The Dominican Family in Indonesia Celebrates the Feast of St Dominic](#)

As the whole Dominican family celebrated the feast of its founder last August 8, 2015, a small part of the family had a wonderful time in Surabaya, Indonesia. Priests from nearby parishes came - diocesan, Salesians, and Franciscans.

True to our tradition, a Franciscan, fr Kees, OFM celebrated the mass and gave the homily. He highlighted that the charism of both St. Dominic and St. Francis shone at a time when the Church needed it most. With that he challenged all present to make a difference in the world and to share only the Gospel of Christ to all.

After the Mass the whole family gathered for some lunch and story-telling. We praise the Lord for such a successful event.

Brother Nilo Lardizabal, OP

• [A DOMINICAN INITIATIVE FOR PEACE-BUILDING IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION](#)

A Conference of Dominicans of the countries of the Great Lakes of Africa (Burundi, DR Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) was organized from 13-17 July 2015 in Nairobi, Kenya to explore how the Dominican Order can contribute more towards building peace in the region that has suffered wars for many decades. The Coordinator of the meeting, Fr. Mike Deeb (The Dominican Delegate to the UN and the Order's General Promoter of Justice & Peace) reminded the delegates that this meeting was the materialization of one of the resolutions made during the first meeting of the Dominican Promoters for Justice and Peace of the whole Dominican Family in October 2013 in Johannesburg (South Africa). The meeting was warmly hosted by the brothers, sisters and lay Dominicans based in Nairobi and it was facilitated by Mr. John Katunga of CRS (Catholic Relief Services).

Of the 37 participants (26 men and 11 women), 16 were leaders or representatives of the Dominican entities present in Burundi, DR Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda (8 friars, 5 sisters and 3 lay Dominicans), 8 were coordinators of Dominican mission and Justice and Peace at the global and African levels (5 sisters, 2 friars and 1 lay Dominican), 4 were Church leaders (including 2 bishops) from Rwanda, Tanzania, DRC and Burundi, 3 were Civil Society representatives involved in peace-building initiatives at the local level (from DRC, Rwanda and Uganda), 2 were local experts (one Jesuit and one Dominican) with one expert from the United Nations (UN), along with the facilitator and two interpreters. 6 of these also constituted the local organizing committee.

This three-day conference provided an opportunity for the Dominicans of the region to share what they are already doing to build peace, to deepen their analysis of the causes of the conflicts together, and to identify mechanisms to develop common or concerted actions for peace that would complement what others are already doing in the region.



In a context of great complexity with the presence of many different armed groups (more than 60 in the Eastern DRC alone), the root causes identified were: the struggle for control of land and resources; poor and undemocratic political leadership at all levels which does not respond to local issues (rooted in self centred interests as well as colonial models and postcolonial support for “friendly elites”); and the manipulation of ethnic divisions and nationalist prejudices to justify military action and assert dominance. The supply of mineral resources in the region that are vital to the economic interests of the USA, countries of the EU, China and an increasing number of other countries, including those of the Global South, results in a proxy war being waged to ensure access to these resources. The ongoing acceptance of impunity for criminal leadership, the lack of political space for discussion and healing, and increasing poverty and inequality are key obstacles to a peaceful solution.

There are many positive Church and Dominican initiatives to promote dialogue, reconciliation and peace in this context, through peace-building and reconciliation training and actions, support for refugees, civic education and the promotion of economic development and capacity building. However, our Dominican brothers and sisters have limited communication amongst themselves, are often restricted to traditional apostolates (in parishes, schools, health care and prisons), and lack the necessary expertise to engage in justice, peace, healing of memories and human rights advocacy.

Priorities identified for future Dominican action to promote peace-building were: Coordination of the peace-building efforts of all Dominicans in the region; the need to network and collaborate closely with other groups in the Church and Civil Society engaged in peace-building initiatives; to take advantage of our presence in many areas by providing regular information of what is happening on the ground, through documenting stories of actual events and diffusing this information through our Dominican network at all levels; and to provide formation to Dominicans in peace-building to enable them to play a more effective role in the region.

The following decisions were made to ensure that the process is taken forward

1. A structure of coordination is to be established.

a. Fr. Emmanuel Ntakarutimana from Burundi was unanimously chosen to be the focal person to coordinate Dominicans for Justice and Peace in the Great Lakes Region. This election was confirmed by the Dominican Superiors and Coordinators present (Friars, Sisters and Laity) and accepted by Fr. Ntakarutimana.

b. A focal person will be chosen for each country who in turn will establish a team consisting of a Dominican Friar, a Dominican Sister, a Dominican Laity and a Dominican Youth.

2. A meeting of the focal people will be called as soon as possible to define a clear vision and methodology and a plan of action to implement this vision.

3. The Coordinator will initiate a mapping process of what is concretely being done: internally amongst Dominicans in the region, and externally amongst potential partners in the region.

In this sad situation of perpetual war and conflict, the participants left the meeting with a sense that, as Dominicans together, we can contribute in offering some new hope to the region.

• [Getting to know the Dominican Nuns of Europa Utriusque region](#)

The region Europa Utriusque is a region of great diversity. It covers a large part of Europe: stretching from Norway in the North to Greece in the South, from Portugal in the West to Lithuania in the East, it embraces 20 monasteries in 12 countries: 3 monasteries in Germany, 3 in Poland, 2 each in Austria, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Portugal, 1 each in Ireland, Norway, Greece, Lithuania, Holland and the German speaking northern Italy.

The region Europa Utriusque can also be defined as a region of the non-federated European monasteries; with two exceptions: Oslo in Norway was founded from France and is part of the French federation; and Santorini in Greece is part of the Olmedo fraternal union. And, strictly speaking, there are some non-federated monasteries in Europe that are not part of this region.



The name Europa Utriusque means: both parts of Europe, the East and the West. It covers the rest of Europe – or what remains of the continent when you take away the three countries with great numbers of monasteries: Spain, France and Italy.

CONTACTS IN TWO SUB-REGIONAL GROUPS

Twelve different languages are spoken in our region. Nevertheless, many monasteries keep in touch, especially those who belong to two groups that have much in common geographically, linguistically and culturally. It is thanks to the late Master of the Order, fr. Damian Byrne, and the first promoter of the nuns, fr. Viktor Hofstetter, that the prioresses of these two groups now meet every year. Meetings of the novice mistresses as well as the sisters in formation are also held regularly. The two groups are the following:

the German-speaking group, consisting of Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the German speaking northern Italy;

the Central-Eastern European group consisting of Poland, the Czech Republic, Lithuania and – because of vibrant contacts – Ireland. Also Norway sometimes comes to these meetings but not always since they have their own in the French federation.

Each sub-regional group includes seven or eight monasteries. In the first group everybody speaks German. In the second group most sisters can speak or understand Polish, so when we meet, we only provide simultaneous translation individually for those who need it.

MEETINGS OF THE WHOLE REGION CALLED ‘EUROMON’

Meetings of prioresses and representatives of the whole region are held every third or fourth year. These meetings have been nick-named Euromon. The first meeting was prepared in collaboration with Fr. Manuel Merten, the second promoter for the nuns, in 2005, exactly ten years ago. I will return to these Euromon meetings in the end of this article.

To show you how we have learnt to collaborate as a region, I would like to share with you what we did together quite spontaneously last year.

AN UNEXPECTED CHALLENGE

Last year we had the two sub-regional meetings in August and September. A report on them was included in the previous issue of *Monialibus*. As a member of the ICN I was invited to both. The day before I left for the first meeting, I got a surprising e-mail from a Carmelite nun from Australia. She asked me about our collaboration as nuns of the Order of Preachers. She said she wanted to draw inspiration for their response, as Carmelite nuns, to the questionnaire from the Sacred Congregation for the Religious in Rome. I asked: What questionnaire? Could you please send it to me? She was greatly surprised I did not get it. As you may know, there were some problems in distributing the questionnaire. Only some monasteries got it, mainly those in federations. But most of the non-federated monasteries didn't get it.

As soon as I came to the meeting of German-speaking prioresses, I asked them if they got the questionnaire, but none of them had even heard about it! Fortunately a German friar who was present had a German translation of it (he got it from some other nuns, not knowing his own sisters did not have it). I asked the prioresses if they wanted to discuss it, and not only did they want to discuss it, they wanted to respond to it together! So we talked about it, then the prioresses returned to their communities, had it discussed, wrote down their answers and sent them to me. All this within a week. They asked me to invite the Central-Eastern European monasteries to join them and send our responses together as a region.

The Central-Eastern European prioresses met barely ten days later in Poland. Also at this meeting we spent many hours discussing the questionnaire. The Polish and Irish sisters had got it but the Czechs didn't. I proposed to them what the German-speaking nuns suggested, to send our answers together as a region. They agreed. So we discussed the questions, one sister noted down the discussion, each prioress brought the notes back to her community, had them discussed and sent the result to me the next week. Everybody confirmed what was said at the meeting and four monasteries made some additions. I put it all together, not mixing the answers but putting them side by side with the names and addresses of the particular monasteries. Of course I



stressed each monastery was absolutely free to send their responses on their own; I know some did. All this was done in agreement with our promoter, fr. César.

In the complex process of responding to the questionnaire I had two collaborators: a sister from Germany who collected the German answers, put them to English, organized them and sent them to me; and a Czech sister who did the same with the Czech and Polish answers. I added the responses from two other monasteries from the region which I received by e-mail.

So finally I got all the answers, put them all in English, printed them out and sent them to the Congregation in Rome at the last minute. It was all done within a few weeks. I think the story shows clearly that our region – although so diverse – is able to, and wants to, collaborate.

HOW CAN WE WORK TOGETHER?

Divided by many languages, different cultures and great distances, you may wonder: how can we work together? The answer is simple: because we have learnt to know each other. How? Back in 1996 the German sisters got the idea of inviting some of us, from Poland and the Czech Republic, to their meeting. Later we invited some German sisters to our meeting. Step by step, we discovered that even though our problems were different (due to various historical circumstances), we studied the same questions and it seemed we could enrich each other immensely. First we were thinking of a meeting of the two groups only. But finally the idea of a meeting of the whole region was born.

EUROMON

The first meeting took place in the Czech Republic. When we were sending out invitations to all the monasteries (most of whom we didn't know), we were not sure how they would react. Would they want to come? Would they leave the enclosure for such a meeting? Would they trust us, a small newly founded monastery? We waited. What a lovely surprise it was when almost all the monasteries of the region responded, were interested and many of them came! In the letter of invitation we stressed that the meeting was approved and encouraged by the Master of the Order. Our sharing at that first meeting was so good that everybody wanted to meet again. The next meeting was organized three years later mainly by the German nuns and took place in Germany in 2008. The third meeting was organized by a mixed group and took place in Poland in 2012. The fourth meeting is being prepared now by a mixed group of six nuns from five countries (Ireland, Germany, Poland, Norway and the Czech Republic). It will take place in September 2015 in Poland.

At these meetings, simultaneous translation is provided into the three main languages of the region: German, Polish and English. We have to use translation equipment and we need six or seven interpreters. Thank God we have been always blessed in finding enough Dominican brothers and sisters willing to help us in this way. We have been grateful to some provinces of friars and other benefactors for their financial help.

We celebrate the liturgy each day in one of the three official languages; some parts are sung in Latin (the Benedictus, Magnificat and the Ordinary of the Mass). Booklets with the liturgical texts are distributed to everybody so that all can participate. The Mass readings are printed out in all three languages. The homily is translated into one other language.

We are happy that the Master fr. Bruno Cadoré has accepted our invitation to come to the next Euromon as he had already come to the last one. Our dear promoter fr. César Valero will come, as well as fr. Vivian Boland, the Vicar of the Master, who will be our main speaker. The theme is: *Itinerantia* – a challenge for the Nuns of the Order of Preachers. And because of the Jubilee of the Order, the theme continues like this: Jubilee as *metanoia*. We entrust ourselves to your prayers.

I hope this article has been helpful in bringing closer to you the region with the mysterious name – Europa Utriusque.

Sr. M. Josefa Strettiová OP, ICN member for Europa Utriusque
Monastery of Nuns of the Order of Preachers, Prague, the Czech Republic



• Introducing the UN Summit on Climate Change 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Warm greetings to you all!

I am writing to inform you about a crucial UN Summit on Climate Change that will take place in Paris from 30 November to 11 December this year and to encourage you to send as many Dominicans as possible to participate in it.

1. This is the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP) - the countries that have signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It is commonly called "COP 21". After years of disappointments, it is hoped that the negotiations this year will culminate in reaching a fair, equitable and ambitious legally binding global agreement on climate change that will ensure that total global greenhouse gas emissions are reduced sufficiently to keep global warming below 1.5°C.

2. The urgency of the issue of Climate Change is, at last, being recognised more and more by people and governments throughout the world. Its effects are being felt almost everywhere, including through increasing numbers of natural disasters claiming unimaginable numbers of lives; more frequent droughts and floods that are forcing people to migrate to survive; and rising water levels that are threatening the existence of every small island and every coastal city. It is also already causing the extinction of many plant, insect and other species that threatens biodiversity and destabilizes ecosystems crucial for human survival. The vast majority of scientists (over 97%) agree that, while climate change is a natural phenomenon, the current excessive rate is largely caused by human activity. It is thus one of the greatest threats (if not the greatest) to life on our planet.

3. Pope Francis has highlighted this urgency in his latest encyclical, *Laudato Si* (23-26), and especially the urgency of an enforceable international agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (169-173). COP 21 is the most significant event in the foreseeable future where such an agreement should be made! Thus, the whole world will be focused on Paris in those days, hoping for an agreement. It is therefore very important that all those concerned about climate change do all they can to use this occasion to pressure the world governments to let go of narrow interests for the good of the whole planet. While hopes remain high that an adequate agreement will be reached there, we are not expecting to influence particular policy discussions during this meeting as most parties will have formulated their own positions before they arrive in Paris. However, this will be one moment in an ongoing process that, even if a good agreement is reached, will require sustained pressure to ensure that it is implemented.

4. The goal, therefore, of civil society groups like ours in coming to Paris is largely:

--- to network with like-minded groups and to build coalitions that will strengthen our capacity to have an influence on governments.

--- to engage informally with and lobby government representatives that we have some connection to.

--- to join in public activities with all other civil society groups in shows of strength to governments and to the world at large, that will inspire awareness of our message and assert more pressure for the future process.

5. In discussion with several Dominicans who are involved in climate change advocacy, we believe that, as Dominicans, we have an important role to play through our global network and institutions in influencing or pressurising governments to sign and implement a global binding agreement. Climate Change is not just an environmental or economic issue. It is a spiritual and ethical issue (as Pope Francis has profoundly pointed out), and we are well-equipped in this area, in close collaboration with the many people of other faiths who are passionately involved in this project, to make a contribution to inspiring enough political will and a concern for the Common Good to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions are reduced.

6. I therefore urge you

--- to share this letter with all the brothers, sisters and lay Dominicans in your entity;

--- to identify those who have a passion to take up the issue of Climate Change and to put them in touch with me at mike.deeb@un.op.org ;

--- to consider sponsoring travel and accommodation costs for some Dominicans to come to COP 21 in Paris to strengthen our presence there and to prepare them for future engagement.



7. For more information, you can consult the website of one of the main coalitions of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Coalition Climat 21 <http://coalitionclimat21.org/en> . You can also consult the website of a key coalition of Catholic organisations, CIDSE, which is developing a programme in collaboration with other CSOs and faith-based organisations in the context of a campaign Change for the planet – Care for the people. Finally, the French Bishops' Conference is coordinating several activities of faith based organisations during the COP 21, including inter-faith, ecumenical and Catholic gatherings and services, as well as accommodation. This can be consulted at <http://www.eglise.catholique.fr/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/06/Commu...>

8. While we cannot offer financial support, we have asked the Dominicans in Paris as well as the Catholic Church COP coordinators to assist in finding accommodation for those coming. To concretise this, we need precise numbers as soon as possible.

9. We are arranging a time during the COP for all Dominicans present to come together, to get to know each other and to start a discussion about future networking and focus. Once we have a list of all those coming we will communicate directly with them about these details and other possible events to participate in.

10. Finally, in order to be able to participate in the big marches/demonstrations being planned (29 Nov and 12 Dec), participants are encouraged, if possible, to arrive on 28 November and to depart on 13 December. However, even a presence for a few days will have value.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation in sending this letter to all the members of your entity and for putting interested brothers and sisters in touch with me.

May our preaching bring salvation to our planet!

Your brother,

fr Mike Deeb OP, Permanent Delegate of the Dominican Order to the UN and General Promoter for Justice and Peace. 23 August 2015

• [A Moment of Inspiration at the Funeral Mass of Fr Martin Crowe, OP](#)

I don't do funerals. By that I mean that I'm not a professional 'funeral goer'. I err on the side of missing funerals rather than on the side of going to too many.

Last Wednesday a Dominican friend sent me an SMS telling me that Fr Martin Crowe had died. Martin was a Dominican, five years older than I. He was living in our community in Ballybeg in Waterford.

I didn't know him very well. We had never lived in the same priory. Of course I had met him on a number of occasions and with 173 people in the Irish Dominican Province it's natural that I should know him.

Had we ever had a conversation with one another? We certainly had the occasional chat, but we seldom if ever crossed paths. I think I met Martin about four or five weeks ago when we said polite hellos. I remember on that occasion there was a great smile on his face.

Within a day or two of hearing of his death I decided to go to his funeral Mass. I decided out of solidarity with Fr Crowe to attend his funeral Mass. When he joined the order there was the practice of giving a person a new religious name. I have always thought the custom was an insult to our parents. In solidarity I decided to go to Ballygarret near Gorey in Co. Wexford to the funeral Mass on Saturday. Wexford is unfamiliar territory to me and I had never before been in Ballygarret.

The Mass was scheduled for 2pm but it must have been close for 2.20 before the hearse arrived. The parish church was filled to capacity. I counted 14 Dominicans and there was also a number of local clergy present. Bishop of Waterford and Lismore Alphonsus Cullinan attended. It was a prayerful occasion. It was liturgy well done, with meaning and dignity. The parish choir pulled out all the stops and added enormously to the solemnity of the funeral Mass.



The Dominican provincial Gregory Carroll in his homily spoke warm words of Fr Crowe. He recalled a woman once telling him that Larry/Martin was a great priest for lame ducks. At the end of Mass Martin Crowe, a nephew of Fr Crowe's gave a eulogy in which he filled us in on the life and times of his uncle. He told us how Larry/Martin was the linchpin of the extended family and how he played such a pivotal role in the lives of all his nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews. Both he and Gregory spoke in detail of how Fr Crowe always had time and energy to be with people who were fragile and weak and how he supported those who were hanging on by their fingertips.

After the Mass there were refreshments in the parish hall. It was a pleasant gathering, where people reminisced about the life and times of Larry/Martin.

Funerals are sad occasions. Saturday's funeral was a moment of inspiration. Before Saturday's funeral I really knew little or nothing about Fr Crowe. I may even have had some pre-conceived ideas about the man. All incorrect.

Almost by accident I turned up at the funeral and learned so much about a special priest, a special man, who spent so much of his time and energy consoling the weak and fragile. A priest for 'lame ducks'. Shame on me but a lesson learned. I hope.
Michael Commane, OP

• [Dominican Preaching in a hostile environment viz a viz Boko-Haram in Nigeria](#)

Introduction

As the church bolts off further into the third millennium, she is beset by forces, turmoil and conflicts on all sides. The church is being persecuted and is struggling for survival in hostile environments in different parts of the world. The Church in Nigeria has had her fair share of these disturbances particularly in the Northern parts of the country. Violent attacks in these parts have evolved from ethnical clashes which are coloured by religious sentiments to acts of terrorism by sectarian groups masquerading as religious zealots. The dreaded Boko Haram sect has spear-headed terrorist attacks over the course of several years culminating in the infamous abduction of over 200 school girls (the Chibok girls). Their actions are often terrifyingly indiscriminate, slaughtering entire villages seemingly at random; survivors fear for their lives and are hardly able to fully recover from the shock of their ordeal.

As a Dominican youth living in this part of the world, it is often a challenge understanding the situation and offering suitable responses in a bid to reassure victims and others of God's presence and injecting the fresh air of hope. It, however, behooves every preacher to read the signs of the times and offer favourable response. It is to this end that this article wishes to study the phenomenon of terrorism (Boko Haram) in Northern Nigeria and how this affects preaching and witnessing.

Who is Boko Haram?

Boko Haram is a popular sectarian group seeking to undermine the government of Nigeria. The congregation of the people of tradition for proselytism and jihad known by its Hausa name "BOKO HARAM" is a terrorist organization based in North-Eastern Nigeria, Northern Cameroon and Niger Republic founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002. The organization seeks to establish a "pure" Islamic state ruled by Shari'a, putting an end to what it deems as "Westernization". The group is known for attacking churches, schools and police stations. The group also kidnaps Western tourists and has assassinated members of the Islamic establishment who have criticized the group. Violence linked to the Boko Haram insurgency has resulted to an estimated 10,000 deaths between 2002 and 2013.

Traces of Terror

In one assault that killed 25 people in North-east Adamawa State last year, Mrs. Rifatu Bila, a 50 year old wife of a local politician, was told at gun point that she would be spared if she converted to Islam. "The gunmen heard me praying and told me I would be freed if I accept Mohammed", said Mrs. Bila, whose house was razed during the attack. "He then shot my husband in front of me". Mrs. Bila was spared as was Andrew a wheelchair-bound employee of St. Joseph's Minor Seminary a Catholic School another place which was attacked in March, 2013. On both occasions, it seemed the only reason for the gunmen's mercy



was to leave witnesses to their terror. During the Seminary attack, the gunmen wheeled Andrew around the Campus, making him watch as they executed four of his colleagues and blew up the Chapel and classrooms. He was also interrogated about his religion and was warned that it put him in direct danger.

Similarly, Fr. Bekeni buried four of his own parishioners murdered by Boko Haram during his eight-month stint at St. Joseph. He said that the psychological intimidation alone was enough to make him realize why so many parishioners had fled, “It was very frightening up there as the environment was so hostile” said Fr. Bekeni. “I found it made it hard to think clearly, so I would fall back to the sources of the Bible. It made me remember that Christians have historically been persecuted”. Most of the missiles that landed in his compound were thrown by members of the Al-majiri (young male pupils) of local Madarassas, who spend two years being forced to live by begging for alms.

The idea of the Al-majiri program is to encourage self-reliance and to remind youngsters of what it is to be poor. But in a part of Nigeria where most people earn on less than one Dollar (\$1) a day, the Al-majiri program raises an army of impoverished street urchins who are easy recruits of Boko- Haram.

Violence and Emmigration

It is very true that the Boko Haram insurgency is the current plague to Christians in Northern Nigeria, but we must not forget that for decades, there have been constant frictions between Christians and Muslims in those parts, resulting in riots and civil unrests. Therefore, everyday, week and month that passes, Christians in Northern Nigeria live in fear of different forms of hostility, basically because of their choice of religion. The most deadly challenges are those of aggression, conflicts and abduction when all Christians preach and practice is love and peace.

It is safe to say that the hostility of these ‘muslims’ is sometimes so intense and suffocating. This gives rise to fear; fear to declare and live out the Christian faith or even witness to it actively. All these have contributed to the mass relocation of Christians to other parts of the country.

Divine Command to Love: A Strenuous Challenge

In John’s Gospel, Jesus said “now I give you a new commandment; love one another” (13:34). It is becoming increasingly difficult to love someone who hates, hurts and is constantly opposing you. Many Muslims are aware of the Christian call to love and they take advantage of it by striking and then being the first to call out for mercy. This can be a tiring process for Christians, and many have since appealed to more drastic measure in a bid to protect themselves against violence of any kind. But when God gave the command to “love one another”, he did not attach conditions to the way we should express it; he did not exempt anyone from the list of those we should love. Despite hostilities, every Christian is called to show the face of Christ and make Him known and loved. If violence is ever to be an option, it must be in self-defense and applied prudently.

The Dominican as a Witness to Peace

As Dominicans our life is centred on Christ and his message, and this is the rule of faith by which our actions are guided. St Dominic modeled the Order on the apostolic community and its emphasis on prayer, fraternal life, celebration of the Holy Eucharist and sharing of goods in common. In the same way, every arm of the Order tries to reproduce this community of love wherever it finds itself. Since lay persons live and share their lives with the people, we are where the action is and by our words and deeds, we can bring others to Christ. The goal of a Dominican is to seek earnestly and ardently to save the souls of his/her neighbour (cf. Lk 10:27). In a largely Islamic environment, the mode of witnessing must be attuned to the cultural and religious sensibility of people.

The vocation of a Dominican is a response to the call to preach. He or she is called to bring the message of Christ to all men and women of the world. This he or she does in different ways and as a lay person, there is a lot of room for creativity: hospitality, corporal works of mercy, building friendship with non-Christians, initiating and sustaining dialogue, and living according to the values of the Gospel. Even a person’s mode of dressing could present an occasion for teaching about modesty and moderation, an esteemed value in a very conservative Northern Nigeria. These are opportunities to bring the Gospel to a people living in fear and uncertainty and even spreading the tentacles of the faith to persons who are of a different faith or persuasion.



For young people who are often unsure what should characterize authentic Dominican preaching, it is good to note that it should always be:

- Centred on Christ
- Faithful to Catholic teachings
- Born out of Prayer and Contemplation
- Responsive to the Needs of the Time
- Shared in a Spirit of Love, and
- Lived out in Conviction

Conclusion

Despite the threats, bombings, uncertainties of what tomorrow holds for us as Dominicans out here “in the desert”, our preaching mission cannot be abandoned. Preaching is the only adequate response we can give to a territory beset by civil unrest and terrorism. Every encounter with people and situations is an avenue to preach, touch lives, instill hope and brings others to Christ.

HEARTS AFLAME!!!

Blesses Jane of Aza Unit group Gusau, Nigeria.

TESTIMONY

The fear and anxiety was so intense especially at the beginning of this year with the general election approaching and the largely forecasted violence in this part of the country. We could almost taste the fear and it was written on every face. There was so much uncertainty in our hearts about everything including whether we would still live here in this Dominican community after the elections. I was so scared and worried about the fate of Dominican Young Heart Movement in my parish because most members including myself relocated during the election.

All the while we believed God’s will always prevails. The election was successful, we have all returned safely without any violence reported anywhere especially in this part. Even the much anticipated Boko Haram attack hasn’t happened yet. No human can do all these, no one foresaw a violence-free and uninterrupted election, but the Almighty did and kept his children safe. He heard our prayers and cries and here we are today, though struggling to regain what we seem to have lost in the past months on account of fear and tension. It has been him all the way. We are all overwhelmed with gratitude and awe.

Anthonia C. Umenwobi (Dominican Youth, Nigeria)

• RADYO DOMINIKO NG MANAOAG: GOD’S VOICE HEARD THROUGH THE AIRWAVES FOR SEVEN YEARS NOW

Every single day, 24/7, there is a little voice coming from Manaoag, a rustic and sleepy town in Pangasinan, Philippines, that comes alive when devotees from all over the country come to hear Mass, pray their novenas, and seek healing for their various illnesses through the intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary. This little voice is Radyo Dominiko, a radio station established by Fr. Gallardo Asor Bombase, Jr., O.P. when he was assigned in the Dominican convent in Manaoag seven years ago.

Through Radyo Dominiko, it is able to broadcast live the daily masses held at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary to various places in the country. Thousands of listeners tune in every day to hear inspirational messages, Christian music, prayers, as well as recent news and developments about the Catholic Church.

The founder of Radyo Dominiko is amazed at the widening influence and popularity of this little project, a proof that through God’s grace and human cooperation, even the smallest beginnings can produce great results.

St. Dominic de Guzman made his voice heard through preaching by word and example. In this age of great progress in technology, the founder of Radyo Dominiko believes that Dominicans must take the lead in using the contemporary means of communication to do what St. Dominic had done during his time. The radio is an



inexpensive means to reach out to people even in far-flung areas where electricity and the internet are not available.

After seven years, Radyo Dominiko continues to transmit insistently and consistently God's message of peace, joy, and hope especially to the poor. To them, Radyo Dominiko is a voice reminding them of the superabundance of blessings that God bestows on those who believe in the Good News. It is a voice reaching out to everyone telling them about God who forgives, cares, loves, and lives among us.

• A VISIT TO IRELAND

From 7 to 11 June 2015, five members of the Convent of St Mary Major, Rome visited Ireland. The Convent of St Mary Major, Rome is a convent under the direct jurisdiction of the Master of the Order. It houses the friars who serve as papal confessors at the Basilica of St Mary Major, Rome. We stayed in the retreat house attached to the Priory of Tallaght. From this Priory we made several trips and pilgrimages.

On the first day we travelled to Kilkenny to visit the venerable Black Abbey, a 13th century foundation still in Dominican hands. Mass was celebrated in the Church followed by lunch with our Irish brothers.

On the second day of our journey we stayed in Dublin, visiting St. Saviour's Priory. In the big church there we concelebrated the Holy Mass. After that we took lunch with the brethren.

On the third day we visited the monastery of the contemplative nuns, S. Catherine's, in Drogheda. In the parlour we had a fraternal conversation with them. Father Thomas McCarthy, one time secretary-general of Master Timothy Radcliffe in Santa Sabina, also took part to the conversation. He was then preaching a retreat for the nuns. At the end of the day we participated in vespers in the light-filled chapel of the monastery.

On the fourth day we visited the two Dominicans of the parish of St Aengus, Tallaght and discussed pastoral problems of mutual interest.

P. Hernan Jimenez, our prior, and P. Norberto Castillo, departed the first day with us, but because at Ciampino airport they didn't have a visa, necessary for them to enter Ireland, they had to go back to our Priory.

We are very grateful for the hospitality we found in Ireland and in the Dominican province. As well, many thanks to Father Vivian Boland, Vicar of the Master and assistant for Northern Europe and Canada, who prepared the itinerary and who was with us for the four days.

• INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE : DO RELIGIONS HAVE A SIGNIFICANCE FOR EUROPE?

8th-10th January 2016 (Mala dvorana, Lisinski Concert Hall, Zagreb) PROJECT (THEMATIC) DESCRIPTION

Ratio:

The history and progress of thought, society and mentality, as well as numerous changes that have affected the European continent, underline the need of intensive reflection on dialogue and coexistence with the aim of undertaking more fruitful and peaceful action for the well-being of the present and future generations of mankind. By this we mean attempting to make a cross-section of the rich but also intricate interpersonal relations in order to point to mutual encounter and cooperation as part of the construction of values and respect of human rights and freedoms in spite of a certain exclusiveness that can occur within each affiliation, including the religious one. The South East Europe region, which Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina – as spaces of historically rich and complex coexistence – belong to, also confirms the postulate that in a globalized world any dialogue, including the interreligious one, is not just an arbitrary choice, but a real and essential need. The key objective of the conference is therefore to try to observe in what fashion the relationship between religion and society is expressed, as well as the ones between the past and present, and religious and political determination and direction. Bearing in mind a better and more complete grasping of reality, we start from the belief that today's age is in strong need of dialogue through familiarization, understanding and action with the aim of eradicating violence and exclusionary tendencies at the expense both of many individuals and entire social groups. Given that the dominant mentality of modern Western



history and culture hinging on scientific and technical activities claims that "agnosticism and sceptical relativism are the philosophy (...) which corresponds to democratic forms of political life, those who are convinced that they know the truth and firmly adhere to it are considered unreliable from a democratic point of view, since they do not accept that truth is determined by the majority, or that it is subject to variation according to different political trends"¹, the question of coexistence of religious views and their presence in social movements becomes vital. Such an environment gives rise to complex human relationships which have strongly marked in particular the recent history of the Old Continent. In this regard, a special place in the reflection on society should be left to the relationship between faith and culture, religion and politics, education and action both private and public, as well as to the issue of dialogue in the complex question of the promotion of human rights and rights of vulnerable minorities on the one hand, and of the promotion of understanding and solving of the problem of violence in the name of religious views in as much as such views gain political importance on the other. On the basis of the aforementioned, the following question arises: Do religions have a significance for Europe? Under this aspect we wish to look at society in its basic features in order to point out, in a more systematic and thorough manner, the understanding and interpretation of human activity that are often subject to various calculations and economic burden of society, which may consequently result in very complex and often violent misunderstandings. Starting from the situation in Southeast Europe, we wish to reflect, through three thematic sessions, on the current state of society on the European soil and focus our attention on that issue.

The presentations and panel discussion will discuss the following topics:

- 1 State of Affairs in the Old Continent - Perception of dialogue in general after the 1960s - Current condition and status questionis in Southeast Europe - Relationship between religions and political structure in each society -The question of religious sectarianism and political options of individual states – whether the similarities and differences between them can be expressed - Relationship between faith and culture
- 2 Meeting of societies - Challenges based on theocracy, democracy and pluralism - Inculturation and human rights - Religions and international law - Relationship between education and societal development - Can religion help build a better society and better value standard, or do they represent a sort of an obstacle?
- 3 Rights of religious minorities in South-Eastern Europe a. Relations between Islam and Christianity, Muslims and Christians b. Ecumenical Issues and Challenges

A number of local and foreign institutions will participate in the organization of the conference, and the abovementioned topics and issues will be presented and discussed by various thinkers and experts.

Srećko Koralija OP, Project Manager and Regent of Studies

Contact: regens@dominikanci.hr

¹ cf. John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, no. 46

• [To Praise, To Bless, To Preach: The Value of Dominic in the Age of Big Personality](#)

I was walking along the beach with my five-year-old son. We walked past families with young children like ours who had inevitably pressed some adult into the forced labor of giant hole digging. I confess that this is a beach tradition that inspires my love and a bit of my loathing. I love watching kids build entire worlds out of a hole in the ground. Castles and homes complete with kitchens and living rooms, but I'll tell you big holes take time and digging for an hour or two on every beach excursion isn't exactly the swim-up bar at an all-inclusive! This is especially when you are digging with one of those made-for-kids plastic spades (even the big kind).

It was late morning and we had come to a part of the beach where there were fewer umbrellas and gatherings and my son could see a few remnant holes from recent days past. He asked, "Dad, why do you think the holes are still there? Why didn't the waves wash them away?" I turned the question back on him, "I don't know. Luke, what do you think?" He paused for a moment and then let go of my hand ran over to the edge of one that looked more like a dip in the beach than a living room. "Deep ones that you build well withstand the waves, Dad."

The Dominican tradition is deep and well built. We mark the 800th Jubilee of the Order in 2016. Beginning by mentioning the Order and not the man or even the saint on St. Dominic's feast is fitting. The earliest Dominican sources are not a life of the saint, but a text that is based on the founding of the Order, the establishment of a community of preachers as Dominic had intended. Like Jesus, Dominic lived in the



collective memory of the first Dominicans because they were so busy living the life which his example and invitation had shaped for them. Though Dominic de Guzman is one of the most revered saints of the Church, he is also, as one of his biographers, Simon Tugwell, OP puts it, “more coy, and hide[s] behind the works which live after them and the ideals which they prompted others to follow.”^[i] So in this age of charismatic leadership and big personality, what is the value of a saintly example of a coy, self-effacing itinerant preacher?

Laudare

Dominic praised God in relationship. Early sources point to the memory of a man who was easy to live with in community. Doing life together, as many of us know, is easier said than done. Dominic was good at community. “I never knew anyone whose service of God I liked so much. And he was more zealous for the salvation of souls than any man I ever saw,” wrote an early companion.^[ii] In one of the most famous episodes recorded in the tradition, Dominic stayed up all night in an inn in Toulouse to convince the innkeeper of the truths of the Catholic faith. Dominic could pull off medieval theology on tap with grace and skill that united heart and mind.

He was affable and generous and applied the structure of this new religious life more readily to himself than others. Tradition also tells us that Dominic prayed and wailed so loudly at night, keeping his sisters and brothers in the faith awake, that quiet prayer became enshrined in the constitutions for the novitiate. It was as if the stream of the Spirit flowed so openly and thoroughly in Dominic that he could not turn it off – ever – particularly vexing in those wee hours of the morning. In the light of day, Dominic told others that they should pray always because life in faith meant unceasing dependence on God. In a life of praise, contemplation becomes the central act and, in truth, it cannot be separated from action in the world. Dominic knew that to consider the life of God within us was to act powerfully for God’s presence among us in community.

Benedicere

Dominic traversed a diverse and textured world that is often flattened out in the twenty-first century popular imagination. Far from being a challenge, this diversity became one of the primary blessings of Dominic’s life. It influenced the way that the Order grew and allowed Dominic to recognize human dignity across difference, a deep blessing of others. The Order of Preachers was a diverse, multi-national community from its founding with Dominic engaging people with different worldviews and languages thought it had some political and structural unity through Latin. Even in Dominic’s lifetime communities were founded in Florence, Milan, Brescia, Toledo, Toulouse, Paris, and Narbonne.

His travels put him in contact with Muslims and Jews, heretics and those zealous for the Church. There were men and women, professed and lay that came to be integrated into the Dominican family. Dominic himself had significant contact with and helped monastic women to organize themselves into various communities.

Legend holds that Dominic saw a vision of a globe of flame light the night sky over Prouille from his vantage point in the village of Fanjeaux where one such community of women was founded. In my own life as a minister at a Sinsinawa Dominican-sponsored institution, I cannot help but think of that fire of the Spirit that ignited Dominic’s zeal for prayer, study, community, and service also providing the spark for so many lay and religious women. The Sisters certainly are the inheritors of that flame of blessing that is so evident in their lives and relationships with students. They represent the way the Order has navigated differences from its very origins to my life today.

Praedicare

Dominic’s ability to encounter others across difference, and personally take on pieces of their suffering and joy imprinted the Order with a paradigm for preaching. Paul Murray, OP recounts the thirteenth-century anonymous Dominican author who writes eloquently of the need to both know one’s self and the real life circumstances of one’s neighbor. Dominic’s accompaniment of individuals and communities allowed him to listen carefully to the other and to himself. Murray writes, “We are exhorted by our author first of all to understand ourselves and be attentive to all that we see in the world around us and in our neighbor, and to reflect deep within our hearts on the things that we have observed. But then we are told to go out and



preach: ‘First see, then write, then send... What is needed first is study, then reflection within the heart, and then preaching.’[iii]

Dominic’s desire to establish a community of itinerant preachers in the model of Jesus demonstrates his deep love for the world. Preaching flows in and out of the depths of one’s self. There is an awful lot of preaching in our world that is bereft of contemplation and study. In this age of big personality and charismatic leadership, we can benefit from a dose of Dominican humility that praises in relationship, blesses across difference, and preaches from the depths of self. This is a task that requires us to get our hands dirty and dig into the world because we love it and because God first redeemed it. As my son observed, “Deep ones that you build well withstand the waves.”

John DeCostanza is the Director of University Ministry at Dominican University in River Forest, IL. He is an ecumenical Doctor of Ministry candidate and Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Scholar at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, IL.

[i] Simon Tugwell, OP. *Saint Dominic and the Order of Preachers*. Dublin, Ireland: Dominican Publications, 2001, 4.

[ii] Tugwell, *Saint Dominic*, 45.

[iii] Paul Murray, OP. *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality: A Drink Called Happiness*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2006, 13.

• [Dominican Study Week on the Changing Landscape of the Family](#)

The Emaphetelweni Dominican Community in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, organised a study week from 13th to 17th July 2015 on the theme “The Changing Landscape of the Family”. Sixteen brothers of the Dominican General Vicariate of Southern African, many of whom are students at St Joseph’s Theological Institute, Cedara, took part in this event in a spirit of brotherhood, enjoying each other’s contribution as the proceedings unfolded.

The initiative originated from the desire to develop a spirit of research and critical enquiry among the Dominican students in order to equip them for their future ministry. It also came as a response to Pope Francis’s call to prepare at all levels of the Church the Synod on the Family. Many challenges face the family today. They concern both the model of family which is changing and diversifying and the cultural and socio-economic difficulties which families face today.

The conference was both an intellectual and a spiritual exercise that united the Dominican brothers when they enthusiastically presented papers after a period of research and interviews. The spirit of communion was evident during the lively and sometimes passionate discussions provoked by the papers.

During the conference, the spirit of Dominic ignited the brother's confidence to articulate issues that affect the family today, looking at their own community as part of the global family and critically addressing issues that impedes its growth. The conference dealt with various issues including; ‘families under stress’, ‘changing family patterns in Africa’, ‘the family in the world religions’, ‘family and liturgy’, ‘dealing with painful family issues’ and ‘family responses in an age of media culture’.

Throughout the conference, it became apparent that the traditional family model is in question. One sees a change from traditional and often conservative family structures to more liberal and diverse family models. These mutations can be seen, fifty years after Vatican II, as a sign of the times. Since culture or tradition is always in flux, the conference brought a realization that humanity has entered an age of change where traditionalism confronts calls for renewal and modernisation.

Similarly, the dichotomy between the society as it is and the Catholic Church’s response on issues such as same-sex marriages, divorce, contraceptives and so on cannot be ignored. This highlights a tension between morality and change. The manner in which the Church and different traditions and cultures respond to change needs further debate. Br Isaac Mutelo, o.p., theological student, Emaphetelweni Dominican Community, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.



• **2015 ASIA-PACIFIC COMMON STUDY: MISSION IN ASIA'S SHOPPING DISTRICT**

In March of 2007 in Japan, the major superiors of the Asia-Pacific region met, forging the path for the creation of the Asia-Pacific Dominican Common Study Program. The first Common Study Program (CSP) was held in the Philippines in 2008. Since then it has continually provided venues for inter-cultural gatherings endeavoring to strengthen the friars' "commitment to the Dominican intellectual and spiritual tradition" and in deepening their "formation for the mission in the region." This year the Asia-Pacific Common Study Program was held in Cheung Chau Island, Hong Kong, from June 15 to July 11, 2015.

Four delegates from the Philippines were sent to the 2015 Asia-Pacific Common Study in Hong Kong: Br. Carlo Rey Canto, OP, Br. Christopher Garinganao, OP, Br. Michael Sales, OP, and Br. Martius Richmond Lechuga, OP. Together with other delegates - five priests from India, three priests from Pakistan, two brothers from China, a priest from Solomon Islands and a deacon from Papua New Guinea, they made up the Dominican Asia-Pacific inter-cultural community. Unfortunately our brothers from Vietnam were not able to join due to visa application problems.

Encountering the same difficulty, but still fortunate enough to be able to join the CSP, our Pakistani brothers were not given an extension to stay in Hong Kong. Their status compelled them to arrive late in the program and to leave early. One event that saddened many of us, when despite the Pakistani friars' religious affiliation, having had tickets for the trip and having a host community, they were barred by the Immigration officers to go to Macau right at the ferry station. Such events heightened the sense of an inter-cultural community in ways where race, color, nationality, and culture become defining traits in the manner authorities perceive the individual. These experiences become means of educating us to get along with national policies, to suspend any talks of persons as *imago Dei*, and simply relish, in our case, the perks of having Philippine passports.

The Master of Students for the program was Fr. Amirtha Raj, OP. He has a peculiar way of expressing his complete trust in us and our guardian angels. According to him, we have our Octopus, a credit card used to pay for transportation in Hong Kong, together with the addresses of the retreat house and the Dominican convent in Hong Kong, in case we get lost. Hong Kong is small, he said, so he will not be worried in case we get astray. More or less his message cuts across like "You are old enough to find your way home." We all laughed the laughter of confident men. With a few words he admirably set his mark: it was his way of initiating us into the life of a missionary. But of course we were missionaries armed with Google map. Fr. Raj is a thoroughly pleasant man to be with. Intelligent but not intimidating, broad minded but focused, organized but not constricting; all throughout, he nurtured us as Dominican friars in mission.

Friar-Mentors

With the presence of other mentors from around Asia-Pacific, our Common Study has truly become quintessentially Dominican. As well, their cultural backgrounds alone opened up realities far beyond our own: Fr. John Kim, OP, from Korea and Fr. Jarvis Sy Hao, OP, from the Holy Rosary Province shared about Dominican Preaching and Dominican Missions in China respectively, during the first week; on the second week Fr. Amirtha Raj, OP, from India, shared on the psychological aspects of transitioning from initial to on-going formation; and Fr. Enrico Gonzales, OP, from the Philippines, shared on the basic principles on St. Thomas Aquinas, focusing on the importance of study for Dominicans. Their insights were well grounded on their experiences as pastors, missionaries, formators and academicians. Coming from varied fields and cultures they offered a unique landscape of the Dominicans in the Asia-Pacific region: incarnating our history, charism, and missions accordingly.

Hong Kong and Cheung Chau Island

Fr. Javier Gonzalez Izquierdo, OP, the Prior Provincial of the Holy Rosary Province, stressed that the best way to know Hong Kong is to experience it. Verily, experience reshaped the way we think of Hong Kong. Experience cures myopia.

On airplane arriving in Hong Kong, we saw tall condominium buildings more or less of the same design and color, neatly arranged like lego blocks. Practically the whole city was confined at the foot of the mountains. The mountains were green and rarely have any structures on them. According to Fr. Jarvis Sy



Hao, (a Chinese-Filipino and our excellent Hong Kong-Macau Dominican-tourist guide) Hong Kong has a law mandating to keep a certain percent of their country green. If there was anything we had in mind, it was superb urban planning. Such display of restraint on the part of Hongkongers (that is how they call themselves, not Chinese), reveal their strength, vision and a sense of national consciousness engendering citizens who are willing to make personal sacrifices, such that they thrive in narrow spaces while we on the other hand seem at a loss with our sprawling lands.

Fr. Jarvis confided to us that many rich people in Hong Kong do not own mansions. Some even live in condominiums twice the size of a Corista's room. Since wealth cannot be displayed or invested in real estate properties, they showcase their affluence in expensive cars, clothes and food. Parking lots are most of the time twice more expensive than cars, resulting to very few private cars on the streets of Hong Kong. Paradoxically Hong Kong has the highest density of privately owned luxury cars in the world.

As a country Hong Kong is an archipelago. The venue where the Common Study was held is located on a smaller island called Cheung Chau. The island is around 45 minutes away by ferry from the Central pier in Hong Kong. From the port of Cheung Chau, you will have to take a fifteen-minute hike to reach the Salesian Retreat House. Seated on a splendid spot, the retreat house faces the sea with waves hitting the rocks below it. In effect, you wake up to bird songs and the sound of the sea that made the Common Study a really pleasurable experience.

Practically you have to walk or ride a bicycle to reach any destination in the island. Motorized vehicles, a little bit wider than Mr. Bean's car, are limited to police cars and ambulances. The busiest part of the island is the bay area where restaurants, shops, schools, a public bath, off-track betting station, a Catholic Church, several Buddhist temples and wet market are located. The moment you go uphill everything begins to be quiet.

We were lucky enough to be housed in Cheung Chau because it is home to Hong Kong's "intangible culture." Despite having Catholic and Protestant retreat houses in the island, the people of Cheung Chau still retain the beliefs of their ancestors. Politically aware, its inhabitants freely express their sentiments to the government during their festivities. The beaches around Cheung Chau, with the rest of Hong Kong, are not clear, like Boracay is clear. In their case you have the color of Manila Bay's sea, only that it is safe for swimming. The presence of well trained life-guards, perimeter nets, rescue equipment and sun bathing Caucasian tourists around bay areas impressed us all. What they lack in natural resources they compensate for with efficient management, long term plans and excellent staff. Consider this; they are all government run. Most of us coming from poorer countries were extremely jealous. Even the farthest end of the island has garbage bin. Such discipline and meticulous planning is seen all over Hong Kong.

Macau

Macau is a little laid back compared to Hong Kong. The Dominican presence there is already more than 400 years old. One of the oldest churches in Macau, St. Dominic's Church (Our Lady of the Rosary Church), was founded by the Dominicans in 1587. It still functions as a church though under the care of the Macau government. Interestingly, since 1929 the statue of Our Lady of Fatima which is enshrined in the Church is honored in a procession every 13th of May. Portuguese footprints could be seen everywhere: hanging plants, ceramic street signs, a charming plaza and old tiled-roof buildings. Although known for its casinos, our experience in Macau is less of a commercial hotspot than a unique flavorful cultural experience.

St. Dominic's Priory is a building with an interesting story behind its purchase. Our brothers there sure told the tale in fascination. Nevertheless providence played a role since the building sits just by the main street. Also, we were fortunate enough to have witnessed the solemn profession of four Burmese brothers held in a chapel at the first floor of the Priory. It is worth mentioning that we were able to attend too the vestition and simple profession of our brothers in Hong Kong. To have attended these significant events in the religious life of our brothers is indeed a great blessing.

Inter-religious Dialogue: Buddhist and Taoist Experience

We went to one Buddhist temple and two Taoist temples. For our Buddhist inter-religious dialogue, we went to Po Lin Monastery in Lantau island. We were welcomed by the Buddhist monk Wang Ching who also gave



us a lecture in an elegant hall. Po Lin monastery manages the biggest outdoor, bronze and sitting Buddha statue in the world.

The first of the Taoist temples we went to was Yuen Yuen Taoist Temple in Tsuen Wan, Hong Kong. Dr. Tong Wai-ki, the president of the Taoist Hong Kong Association, greeted us and hosted an open forum together with his other officers. The second temple we went to is managed by the Sik Sik Yuen Institute. Located in Kowloon, the Wong Tai Sin Temple enjoys a bigger crowd combining both the faithful and tourists. No less than the Abbot himself Lee Yiu-fai welcomed us and hosted an open forum together with other priests and officers.

In all three visits, we were welcomed like dignitaries. We toured around religious sights only Prime Ministers and other very important persons have had access to. We took pictures of sacred objects Hongkongers probably did not even know exist. And most of all they arranged us lunch, which according to one of our guides, was prepared and served in every way fit for “very special people.” The generosity and dignity with which they received us are beyond words and truly heart-warming.

Challenges

Our month long Common Study made us feel the strong link between Hong Kong-Macau and the Philippines. Everywhere it seems there is a Philippine connection. We can go back to Catholic missionaries who either stayed or studied in the Philippines as preparation for their Chinese missions whereby they used Macau and Hong Kong as portals to China. Such connection continued on to our national hero Jose Rizal who stayed and worked in Macau and Hong Kong, and on to our national artist Nick Joaquin who briefly stayed in Rosaryhill, Hong Kong with an initial desire to become a Dominican. And to this day, the presence of Filipinas nurturing several generations of Hong Kong and Macau’s citizens (and probably their future leaders as well!), remains a strong unwritten bond we have between the two countries. The other side of this reality however demands much from the Church in terms of helping our migrant workers in these lands.

By seeing historically the importance of Hong Kong and Macau for the evangelization of Asia, especially China, the Philippines started to appear as an amiable spot in the scheme of things. It ceased to be the center as we are wont to imagine and become a springboard, and we still are, for the great work of evangelization in Asia. The Asia-Pacific Common Study is indeed a milestone for us in this region by providing a seedbed for collaboration among young Dominicans by broadening their minds and hearts as one in mission.

During the program several concerns surfaced. Our Pakistani and Indian brothers, for instance, confront entirely different challenges from our own, such as life threatening religious oppressions and as being a minority religion in their respective countries. Our Chinese brothers of the Holy Rosary Province are constantly under the watch of the Chinese government. One of our fathers there was recently abducted by the “police” and released only after several weeks. That priest studied at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, Philippines. Our brothers from Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea face pastoral challenges: they have limited ministries and usually attached to the diocese. The work ahead is still vast and promising.

In Gratitude

Our deepest gratitude to Fr. Bruno Cadore, Master of the Order, who sent his greetings to us through Fr. Vincent Lu, OP, the Socius to the Master of the Order for Asia-Pacific. To Fr. Vincent who joined us for several days and whose company strengthened our brotherhood. Special thanks to Fr. Javier Gonzales, OP, Provincial of the Holy Rosary Province for being so generous to us and never even hesitated to personally offer his help. The zeal for the mission of the Holy Rosary fathers have been most inspiring, considering the ever persistent difficulties and challenges of their Chinese missions.

Also a great many thanks to the Dominican Province of the Philippines, specially to Prior Provincial Fr. Gerard Francisco Timoner III, OP, to Santo Domingo Convent specially to our Prior Fr. Giuseppe Pietro Arsciwal, OP, and to the Dominican Studentate Community headed by Fr. Pablo Tiong, OP.

By Br. Christopher P. Garinganao, OP



• Sad Anniversary for Christians in Northern Iraq

"We are Living, But It's Like Living in a Cage" The 2014 expulsion from the Nineveh Plain, recounted by sisters who witnessed it firsthand

This Thursday, August 6, will mark the first anniversary of the expulsion from their convent of a group of Dominican sisters who had been serving Christians on Iraq's Nineveh Plain for many years. On that day, ISIS forced the women religious into exile in Erbil, capital of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Discovering that Kurdish militia had fled the ISIS assault, the sisters decided to leave their convent in Qaraqosh and march to safety along with thousands of refugees; they had just 30 minutes to pack their things.

"We were panicked when they told us ISIS had gotten into the roads, so many people left with even just their nightgowns on," recalled Sister Lyca.

"From 11:30 at night to the next morning we marched without any food or water," said Sister Diana, adding: "we're talking about August when the heat is unbearable: 100 degree temperatures, with no water." The effects of exhaustion and dehydration were compounded by horrible sights that left powerful impressions on the sisters. "When we got into the streets we saw thousands and thousands of people marching, cars and people walking," she said: "Cars meant for five people held eight to ten. We heard children shouting and crying, very afraid."

"When we got [to Erbil], it was even more horrible to see people scattered everywhere like sheep without a shepherd," Sister Diana said. "Some of these people had left behind mansions. They had so much. So much, and in just a few hours they became homeless. We began to realize that our displacement might not last days, but that it could take years and years."

Ever since, the Church has provided the refugees with humanitarian aid, eventually settling many thousands in apartments and opening a number of schools. But the community's needs go well beyond the material: "We lost our dignity here. We have been humiliated in so many ways," Sister Diana said. "We are living day-by-day, but the fact is that deep down, this is not the way that human beings should live. We're living, but it's like living in a cage. We don't have the power or strength to stretch our wings where we want."

The sisters worry their efforts are not enough. "Our kids come to school for two or three hours a day. It's nothing. Our college students are deprived of the chance to continue their studies. What ISIS is doing to us is killing a new generation, because if this generation does not get educated, neither will the next one," said Sister Diana. On top of this, hospitals lack the facilities to deal with all their patients, and there are concerns that the flow of aid may not last. "To the government and even the United Nations, we're just numbers. We're not considered as human beings," Sister Diana charged.

The sisters remain hopeful—despite the odds: "We have brought all these things into our prayers," Sister Huda said. "This is my faith. God is with us. God saved us when we came here. We want to thank all the people who think of us and who are helping us."

By Daniel Konstantinovic

• A Hard Reality: U.S. Bears Responsibility to Fix Iraq

Commentary from Sister Marcelline Koch, OP, co-promoter for justice, North American Dominicans

As we mark the 70th anniversary of the tragedy of Hiroshima, we must also mark the more recent tragedy of the mass displacement of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis as Da'esh (ISIS) swept across the Nineveh Plain in early August 2014. Christians, Yezidis, and Muslims fled their ancestral homes. On August 6, 2014, Qaraqosh, Iraq's largest Christian village, and fourteen other villages were emptied of people in a matter of hours.

Last summer, specifically August 6, also saw the displacement of our Iraqi Dominican sisters and brothers. They are indigenous to Iraq and members of one of the oldest Christian communities in the world dating almost from the time of Christ. Since 1999 when the first delegation of U.S. Dominican Sisters traveled to



Iraq, members of our religious congregations have joined in efforts of prayer, solidarity, and action on behalf of the people of Iraq.

Two days after the tragic exodus from Qaraqosh we received a letter from the superior of the Iraqi Dominicans. “When we arrived to the intersection of Mosul-Erbil, we were shocked to see a huge mess of cars driving very chaotically to Erbil,” “There were Christians, Muslims Shiites, Yazidis and Shabak.... What we saw was unbearable...We felt like we were in a nightmare ...But it was not the case; we were actually living a hard reality.”

A year later that hard reality continues for Iraqis who are in a forced exile and presents us in the U.S. with a hard reality of our own: When will we act on our responsibility for the violence unleashed by our failed policy? Iraq's internally displaced population now stands at 5.6 million people, according to UN reports, and is a significant part of the 59.5 million displaced people worldwide. The UN writes, "For an age of unprecedented mass displacement, we need an unprecedented humanitarian response and a renewed global commitment to tolerance and protection for people fleeing conflict and persecution."

The United States has been using military force in Iraq for more than two decades. The result has been greater instability and violence. Overcoming the threat of Da'esh requires diplomatic and political strategies, not US military intervention alone.

We urge the Administration and Congress to take the necessary diplomatic and humanitarian steps to respond to the suffering and dangers represented by this growing humanitarian crisis; to significantly increase funding to support the internally displaced populations and the Iraqi refugees struggling in nearby countries; and to take the lead in the world community's responsibility to protect vulnerable populations when their own nations are unable or unwilling to do so.

When we speak with our Iraqi Dominican Sisters and Brothers, they beg us to present to all who will listen the need for the protection of their human rights and religious freedom. They ask us to reject any U.S. military intervention that is not accompanied by pressure on the Iraqi government to adopt a more inclusive and equitable power sharing arrangement. They need a comprehensive arms embargo on Iraq and the region, and a united global response – through the efforts of the UN Security Council – to the threat posed by the Islamic State.

In that same letter we received two days after the exodus from Qaraqosh, our Iraqi Dominican sister asked a question she knew we, her sisters in the United States, would ask: “What can we do for you?” Her answer was not hypothetical, but quite sincere. A year later, she is still waiting for a response to her request:

”We would say, stop the blood, stop the oppression, and stop the violence....stop making us targets for your weapons. The world needs to stand as one to protect minorities against evil and injustice. People want to live [a] normal life in peace and dignity. Please help us stop the evil.”

A hard reality indeed.

Sister Marcelline Koch, a Dominican Sister of Springfield, Illinois, is the North American Dominican Order's Co-Promoter for Justice.

Official News

• [The New Promoter for Communication for IDYM](#)

Santi Vedrí is the new Promoter for Communication for the International Dominican Youth Movement (IDYM) which makes him a member of the International Commission of the Dominican Youth Movement. He succeeds Sean Mundy who resigned recently.

Santi Vedrí was born in Valencia (Spain). During his childhood he was educated in the School San Vicente Ferrer of the Dominican friars. Later, he studied Audiovisual Communication in the university, years in



which he was a catechist for Confirmation in the school of the Dominican friars and became part of the Dominican Youth Movement of Spain (Movimiento Juvenil Dominicano, MJD).

After his degree, he has worked in cinema, TV, advertising and in different communication departments of NGO and associations, such as ACOES (Honduras), Terre des Hommes, Educational Foundation Francisco Coll or MJD.

Passionate about cinema, tv series, music, working with young people and preaching following Saint Dominic's style, he is always editing videos and it is easy to see him with his camera.

At present, he lives in Madrid where he is the coordinator of the local group of MJD, "El Olivar", participating in the pastoral board of the parish and the vicarage. He is part of the Youth and Vocational Ministry (Pastoral Juvenil y Vocacional) team of the Dominican Family in Spain where he also works as a Community Manager. He is a filmmaker with eldiaFiLMS too.

We wish him the best in his new responsibility as the Promoter for Communication for IDYM.

• **The Master of the Order erects the new Province of Spain**

On the feast of St Dominic (8 August 2015), the Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadore signed the decree formerly erecting the new Province of Spain. The erection of the new Province will take effect from 1st January 2016 and its first Provincial Chapter will be held in Caleruega.

According to the decree:

"For the greater good of the Order and the Provinces, having heard the views of the friars and communities in the Provinces of Aragon, Betica and Spain, with the unanimous consent of the General Council, I hereby decree that from 1st January 2016, the Provinces of Spain, Aragon and Betica merge as one Province".

With these words, the Master of the Order has decreed the birth of the new Province which will fully take effect from 1st January 2016. The decree also states that the new Province will be called the Province of Spain and will be "Number One" in the official lists of Provinces in the Order. The territory, convents and houses of the new Province will correspond to those of the three old Provinces and all the friars affiliated to the three old Provinces are hereby affiliated to the new Province.

The Master of the Order has also convoked the first Provincial Chapter of the new Province which will begin on 2nd January 2016 in Caleruega. He has enacted special statutes which will establish the transitional rules which will be taken into account in the preparations for the Chapter.

In the coming months, the Master of the Order will appoint the first Prior Provincial of the new Province who will take charge of the first Provincial Chapter. During this time also, communities will elect their representatives to the Chapter and the various pre-chapter documents will be prepared.

This brings to a gradual conclusion, the process of renewal which was initiated a couple of years ago. This renewal is aimed at seeking a better organization, greater apostolic, missionary and spiritual life for the three Provinces.

Calendar of the Master of the Order for September 2015

3-5: Meeting with Nuns in Krakow

7-18: Plenary Council Meetings at Santa Sabina

19-20: Visitation to Tirana, Albania

22-24: Visitation to Turkey

26-28: Visitation to Brussels, Belgium

All articles are available on www.op.org