On Ash Wednesday, (14 February 2018), the Holy Father, Pope Francis was at the Basilica of Santa Sabina to celebrate the Eucharist, signalling the commencement of the season of Lent.

Here is the English translation of his homily:

The season of Lent is a favourable time to remedy the dissonant chords of our Christian life and to receive the ever new, joyful and hope-filled proclamation of the Lord’s Passover. The Church in her maternal wisdom invites us to pay special attention to anything that could dampen or even corrode our believing heart.

We are subject to numerous temptations. Each of us knows the difficulties we have to face. And it is sad to note that, when faced with the ever-varying circumstances of our daily lives, there are voices raised that take advantage of pain and uncertainty; the only thing they aim to do is sow distrust. If the fruit of faith is charity – as Mother Teresa often used to say – then the fruit of distrust is apathy and resignation. Distrust, apathy and resignation: these are demons that deaden and paralyze the soul of a believing people.

Lent is the ideal time to unmask these and other temptations, to allow our hearts to beat once more in tune with the vibrant heart of Jesus. The whole of the Lenten season is imbued with this conviction, which we could say is echoed by three words offered to us in order to rekindle the heart of the believer: pause, see and return.
Pause a little, leave behind the unrest and commotion that fill the soul with bitter feelings which never get us anywhere. Pause from this compulsion to a fast-paced life that scatters, divides and ultimately destroys time with family, with friends, with children, with grandparents, and time as a gift... time with God.

Pause for a little while, refrain from the need to show off and be seen by all, to continually appear on the “noticeboard” that makes us forget the value of intimacy and recollection.

Pause for a little while, refrain from haughty looks, from fleeting and pejorative comments that arise from forgetting tenderness, compassion and reverence for the encounter with others, particularly those who are vulnerable, hurt and even immersed in sin and error.

Pause for a little while, refrain from the urge to want to control everything, know everything, destroy everything; this comes from overlooking gratitude for the gift of life and all the good we receive.

Pause for a little while, refrain from the deafening noise that weakens and confuses our hearing, that makes us forget the fruitful and creative power of silence.

Pause for a little while, refrain from the attitude which promotes sterile and unproductive thoughts that arise from isolation and self-pity, and that cause us to forget going out to encounter others to share their burdens and suffering.

Pause for a little while, refrain from the emptiness of everything that is instantaneous, momentary and fleeting, that deprives us of our roots, our ties, of the value of continuity and the awareness of our ongoing journey. Pause in order to look and contemplate!

See the gestures that prevent the extinguishing of charity, that keep the flame of faith and hope alive. Look at faces alive with God’s tenderness and goodness working in our midst.

See the face of our families who continue striving, day by day, with great effort, in order to move forward in life, and who, despite many concerns and much hardship, are committed to making their homes a school of love.

See the faces of our children and young people filled with yearning for the future and hope, filled with “tomorrows” and opportunities that demand dedication and protection. Living shoots of love and life that always open up a path in the midst of our selfish and meagre calculations.

See our elderly whose faces are marked by the passage of time, faces that reveal the living memory of our people. Faces that reflect God’s wisdom at work.

See the faces of our sick people and the many who take care of them; faces which in their vulnerability and service remind us that the value of each person can never be reduced to a question of calculation or utility.

See the remorseful faces of so many who try to repair their errors and mistakes, and who from their misfortune and suffering fight to transform their situations and move forward.

See and contemplate the face of Crucified Love, who today from the cross continues to bring us hope, his hand held out to those who feel crucified, who experience in their lives the burden of failure, disappointment and heartbreak.

See and contemplate the real face of Christ crucified out of love for everyone, without exception. For everyone? Yes, for everyone. To see his face is an invitation filled with hope for this Lenten time, in order to defeat the demons of distrust, apathy and resignation. The face that invites us to cry out: “The Kingdom of God is possible!”

Pause, see and return. Return to the house of your Father. Return without fear to those outstretched, eager arms of your Father, who is rich in mercy (cf. Eph 2:4), who awaits you.
Return without fear, for this is the favourable time to come home, to the home of my Father and your Father (cf. Jn 20:17). It is the time for allowing one’s heart to be touched... Persisting on the path of evil only gives rise to disappointment and sadness. True life is something quite distinct and our heart indeed knows this. God does not tire, nor will he tire, of holding out his hand (cf. Misericordiae Vultus, 19).

Return without fear, to join in the celebration of those who are forgiven. Return without fear, to experience the healing and reconciling tenderness of God. Let the Lord heal the wounds of sin and fulfil the prophecy made to our fathers: “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek 36: 26).

Pause, see and return!

**Dominican friars in Nigeria launch TV programme for youths**

The Dominicans in Benin City, Edo State, have launched a television programme aimed at engaging the youth, to shape their lives and ultimately evangelise them.

The Dominican community in the area said it had found new ways of addressing issues concerning today’s youths. The television programme, Catholic Faith Forum, airs exclusively every Sunday evening on R2TV on GOTV, with a repeat broadcast every Tuesday.

Coordinator of the programme, Rev. Fr. Jude Owoh, in a recent encounter, said there were plans to make the programme, which he described as the first of its kind in the country, available on YouTube.

“It is the first time a Catholic youth programme, a talk show, is airing on Nigerian television. The programme enjoys a viewership of mostly younger people from 13 and above, with many parents endorsing it as wholesome and educative.

“It is one programme that has created awareness that the Catholic Church in Nigeria is aware of the moral and spiritual gap that exists in the society, which strict attendance at Sunday Masses cannot solve. It is also one that addresses the misconceptions many non-Catholics have about what we believe in,” he said.

He recalled that the programme was the brainchild of Rev. Fr. Collins Akhigbe, O.P., who was in charge of the Dominican Campus Apostolate: “Catholic Faith Forum was a dream he had over a decade ago while ministering to young people in different higher institutions. So, he recently received an offer from Royal Roots TV (R2TV) to produce a programme that was meant to address issues affecting young people, from a Catholic perspective.

“At that point, he remembered that, since there was a media team charged with the responsibility of handling everything media for the Dominicans, why not hand the idea over to it? So, he humbly handed it over to us and we graciously accepted it.

“That was how we started to work on Catholic Faith Forum on television, while he continued with Catholic Faith Forum in higher institutions across the country.”

Recalling his life-long road to television, Fr. Owoh told Daily Sun that television had been a good part of his childhood but he could not remember Catholic programming being a part of his growing up years.

“Everything I know about my faith was from my parents, my teachers in church and from books. It is no longer news that books have taken the back seat as sources of information. Our generation is more tuned to audio-visual mass media. Therefore, a Catholic show on television that will teach people the very fundamental ideas of how we think, what we believe and how we ought to live as Catholics and also enlighten non-Catholics about what we believe will be filling a gaping void that has been begging to be filled.
“So, I sat down with a team and injected some ideas into the raw plan. The vision we created is for young people to teach their peers their faith. It is not a very common phenomenon. It is not something you see every day.

“We held an audition session where we selected three presenters – a young man and two ladies, all Catholics with a passion for the media, and began to train them. We wanted to empower them to teach their peers.”

Fr. Owoh recalled that the first season of the show started airing on December 10, 2017: “Each episode is 30 minutes long. The presenters discuss the topic among themselves. At other times, they host a guest who is knowledgeable on the issue of the day.”

He appealed for sponsorship, while pleading with the society to key into the novelty, which he believes would change society for the better.

He also enlightened the public about the Dominican Order, also known as the Order of Preachers.

“It is a religious group in the Catholic Church composed of men (friars), women (nuns and sisters) and lay persons (men, women and young people) working together to spread the Catholic faith through our unique gift of preaching.

“The Dominican Order, founded by Saint Dominic, is over 800 years old and has been in Nigeria for almost 70 years. We are most famous for our parish in Lagos, which is St. Dominic’s Catholic Church, Yaba. Recently, we received a licence to begin the Dominican University,” he said.

Uche Atuma

The First Nigerian Dominican, Bro Chukwunonye Osunwoke goes home

The Province of St. Joseph the Worker, Nigeria and Ghana has lost its very first Nigerian Dominican, Brother Chukwunonye Linus Osunwoke, O.P., popularly known as Brother Nonye, aged 85 years. He was a Cooperator Brother. Born in January 15, 1933, he joined the Order in the early 60s, made first profession on October 7, 1964 and solemn profession on October 7, 1970.

Brother Nonye established the popular Dominican Arts in Ibadan in the early 70s. It was well known in Nigeria for the design and production of church vestments and robes, and African traditional wears. In 1977, he went to the United States for the provincial chapter in River Forest. After the Chapter, he was approved to do some studies in the United States. In 1985, he came back with a Masters degree in Clinical Counseling. On his return to Nigeria, he was assigned to the formation house, Ibadan, as Assistant Student Master, (my Assistant Student Master). He loved farming; in the early 1990s, he got over 30 hectares of land and started the Ibadan Farm Project, known as “Moniya Farms”, which today is the Center for Human Resources and Development.

As he advanced in years, he was transferred to St. Dominic Catholic Church, Yaba, Lagos. He was fully involved in the pastoral life of the parish, teaching catechism to the young and old, had ministries to different pious societies in the parish, marriage preparation, administered Holy Communion to the sick and elderly, and helped with the distribution of Holy Communion on Sundays and weekdays, a major ministry in the parish. Brother Nonye was very faithful to this service until his health started to fail. He was also the sacristan for the priory chapel.

Brother Nonye loved his Dominican life and gave all of us a great example. He had a very strong and disciplined personality. As our Assistant Student Master, we used to call him “Lion”. However, he was at the same time a jovial person, and very free with the younger brothers who called him “fellow novitiate”. He loved community life and activities and was regular in observing them. He was regular at community rosary and often led it. He was very meticulous in maintaining the sacred vessels, linens and cloths in the priory chapel. One would often find him alone in the chapel praying the rosary.
He remained strong in health until he celebrated his 80th birth anniversary five years ago. Immediately after that celebration, his health went south. He started becoming weak, there was no specific sickness but he could no longer climb steps easily or do what he regularly did before. He held on to his faith to the end. On January 15 this year, the brothers in St. Dominic Priory celebrated his 85th birthday in his room, sang for him while he watched gleefully. That was his last birthday as he died on February 17. He will be laid to rest at the provincial cemetery, St. Thomas Aquinas, Priory, Ibadan, on March 2. May the soul of Brother Nonye and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace.

fr. Charles UKWE, op

CSW 62: Empowering Rural Women and Girls

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is an exclusive UN body dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW is an essential instrument that brings together UN member states, UN entities, and civil society organizations on behalf of fostering and creating new norms about the treatment of women and girls everywhere. Each year the Commission meets for two weeks in March. This year the Commission will be in session 12th to 23rd of March to discuss the priority theme of “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.”

Earlier this month, the official CSW62 Zero Draft agreed conclusions document was released. The document acknowledges the fact that rural women and girls are the most vulnerable group in society in terms of social, economic, and political injustices. The draft highlights key areas to be addressed such as access to basic rights such as education, health services, economic assistance, and legal aid. The document also highlighted the importance of investing in rural women’s agricultural businesses, of taking measures to protect rural women and girls from climate-induced disasters, and the need to include the participation of rural women in the political processes that impact their lives. The draft went further and called upon UN Member States, the private sector, civil society groups, and other international institutions to implement and uphold rural development policies. National measurements should also be applied to new policies and programs as these measurements translate into statistics that can be referenced to gain a better idea on how we can all improve the standard of living for rural women and girls.

In response to the draft, the civil society led NGO Committee on the Status of Women issued a Zero Draft Document Recommendations that brought up crucial points not addressed in the agreed conclusions. These points included an emphasis on protecting female migrants; implementing safe public transit in rural and urban cities; putting an end to child marriage; educating boys and men about the dangers of gender stereotypes; investing in rural clinics and preventative care programs; and providing access to technologies needed for an ever interconnected society.

The Recommendations document brought up two very important points that I thought were instrumental to this year’s Commission. The first point made was the role media outlets play in shaping stereotypes surrounding rural women and girls. The media has the power and capacity to create positive narratives in communities and broader society. These outlets can be used as a platform to voice and document the lives of rural women and girls and can be used to inspire new societal norms. The second important point made involved health services that specifically called for investment in frameworks that increase provider density by working with rural communities to recruit, train and retain medical professionals in these areas. There is no need to reinvent the wheel; health programs already exist on the ground. What needs to be done is to offer these professionals the support they need in order to meet the demands of the community. This recommendation made it a point to mention the importance to “Integrate local and indigenous knowledge and practices into health infrastructure.” If and when medical aid is provided to rural communities, outsiders cannot
approach these communities with a western medical point of view. It is essential to recognize and respect the
cultural and religious of beliefs of these peoples.

Civil society groups once again offer crucial gender perspectives to UN activities. These groups make it a point
to hold UN entities accountable for the implementation of fair policies and for providing remedies to cultural
insensitivities. As the CSW drawers nearer the DLC looks forward to the stimulating dialogues surrounding rural women and girls in the efforts to leave no one behind.

By Viviana Garcia-Blanco, Dominican Volunteer

The Dominican Friars and Civil Engagement

The Dominican Friars are no stranger to public debate of contested ideas. Among medieval scholastics, disputations on contentious questions often took place before large crowds and according to highly formalized rules of debate. Today, in a society wracked by fundamental divisions, the friars seek to elevate the discourse and find common ground while upholding the truths of the faith and natural reason.

In the United States;
Fr. Boniface Endorf, O.P., recently addressed Ohio lawmakers in support of a proposed bill protecting pastors from officiating at civil unions in violation of their religious convictions. “The issue here is whether an American has the right to believe what all the Founders of this nation believed about marriage and the human condition, or not,” Fr. Endorf stated.

Fr. Nicanor Austriaco, O.P. professor of biology and bioethics at Providence College, was called before the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee to testify against a bill that could roll back regulation of the abortion industry. “You end up having this situation where a woman struggles with the incoherence of what she has done. This bill does not acknowledge that,” said Fr. Austriaco, speaking of his experience at Project Rachel counseling women who regretted having abortions.

Fr. Pius Pietrzyk, O.P. is one of the Republican members of the bipartisan board of the Legal Service Corporation (LSC), which provides civil legal aid to low-income Americans. “In my tenure on the LSC Board, I have tried always to emphasize that the primary goal of LSC is to help the poor—not federal bureaucrats and not ideologues,” writes Fr. Pietrzyk in an article calling for continued funding of a successfully restructured LSC.

By supporting the formation of Dominican Friars, you ensure that the charism of St. Dominic and the wisdom of St. Thomas continue to serve as leaven in our society during these difficult times!

Fr Benoît (Bernard) Montagnes, OP (1924-2018)
Born on the 17th of December 1924 in Toulouse, Bernard Montagnes joined the Order of Preachers in this same city seventy-five years ago at the age of 18. At the end of his novitiate, he made profession on the 18th of October 1944 and received the name, “Bro. Benedict”. He continued his studies at the House of Studies of the Province of Toulouse, Saint-Maximin, in Provence.

Ordained a priest on the 25th of March 1950, Fr Benedict was appointed as a philosophy lecturer the following year. He taught this subject, mainly metaphysics up until 1969 at Saint-Maximin and then at the faculty of Le Saulchoir where he was elected Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in 1963. In 1970, he
became a visiting professor at the University of Montreal (Canada). His thesis on La doctrine de l’analogie de l’être d’après saint Thomas, presented at Louvain in 1962 became a notable reference in this field of philosophical research for a long period.

With the closure of the canonical faculty of le Saulchoir, Fr Benedict was reassigned to his province of origin. Now assigned in Marseille and without the possibility of pursuing his research in philosophy, he developed interest in medieval archaeology. In 1977, he obtained in Aix a doctorate in Medieval Architecture in Provence. In the same period, he was invited to Rome to support the archivist of the Order. He moved to Santa Sabina in September 1976 and the Master of the Order appointed him as assistant archivist of the Order. He returned to Marseille in 1978. From 1985 to 1989, he was assigned to Santa Sabina again and this time, he worked in particular on the review; Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum (IHOP).

In 1989, Fr Benedict was assigned to the convent of Toulouse where he resided until his death on the 17th of February 2018. He held the position of Provincial Archivist until 2006 and was engaged in numerous studies concerning the history of the seventeenth century Dominican reformer, fr. Lacordaire and Blessed Hyacinthe-Marie Cormier. He was a member of the Archaeological Society of the South of France, the Committee of the Cahiers de Fanjeaux and several academic societies. Fr Benedict was honoured with the “Master in Sacred Theology” in 2010.

The name of Fr Montagnes remains particularly attached to the cause of the beatification of Fr. Marie-Joseph Lagrange to which he devoted himself since 1987. Thanks to the quality of his historical work, he became one of the best historians of the Order.

**Have you thought about a social media fast for Lent?**

There has been some serious conversation about social media among Dominican sisters lately. Should we, or shouldn’t we, shut down our congregational social media accounts for Lent? Ultimately, we’ve decided to keep these channels for communication open, the critical argument being that ceding our place in the media sphere, as modest as it is, would mean our voice for kindness and justice might be filled by a less discriminating replacement.

**Cutting Back for Lent**

You will see fewer posts from us this Lent, however. We will take the traditional fast days off from posting, and we’ll focus on the spiritual and justice concerns that come with this 40-day journey of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Though breaking the iGadget habit is becoming a real thing, a quick, unscientific poll of Springfield Dominicans has revealed that few of the sisters are choosing a personal social media fast for Lent.

“I will stay connected during Lent so that I remain aware of the needs of my friends and the needs of the world,” Sister Judine Hilbing said. She added that it is her practice to review her social media news feed before bed so she can bring the concerns of the world and her family and friends to her prayer.

For Sister Rose Miriam Schulte, it’s about better boundary-setting. “I don’t intend to give up social media, but am resolved to practice better boundaries as to when I use social media, i.e., never during a time I’ve already pledged to prayer or spiritual reading, nor at a time when I am committed to the service of others in my ministry,” she said.

For Sister Kathleen Kenny, whose family spans the globe, the access to her loved ones lives via social media is too precious to abandon.
Opting for the Both/And
One sister said she intends to take a both/and approach. Sister Bernice Juip will intensify her use of social media “to keep up with my family, community and friends’ needs and respond in prayer” and to respond to “pressing social justice issues so that I can pray about them and be actively involved in an appropriate way,” she said. At the same time she intends to curb her social media use “when I am or should be in conversation with others who are physically present.”

Other sisters said they weren’t giving up their internet fix because they already use it rarely, or not at all. Still others were unclear about what constituted social media, as might be expected among our older demographic.

Giving it all up
It appears that only one theology teacher and the community’s communications staff is doing a techno-purge for Lent.

Sister Mary Jo Sobieck, who teaches at Marian Catholic High School, Chicago Heights, Ill., says she’s done this every year. “It frees me up to be more intentional about the good things and more productive with my time,” she said.

The congregation’s communications director, Sister Beth Murphy, says she’s deleted her social media accounts from her devices and is looking forward to immersing herself more fully in her community life, spiritual reading, and opportunities for service during Lent. “I’m curious to see what this does to the rhythm of my day,” she said. “Because it is my responsibility to monitor our social media and that of other religious and social organizations, it often feels burdensome to be connected all the time,” she said.

Her colleague Aaron Tebrinke and she will share the responsibility of monitoring social media feeds during the workday from their desktop computers, but both plan to forsake the apps on their devices for the duration of Lent.

“Twenty years ago, after completing many years in a ministry that required consuming tons of media—print, radio and TV back then—I gave up news for Lent,” Sister Beth said. “At first, I had real withdrawal symptoms, but soon I found it freeing. I learned about what was happening in the world from those around me and became reflective about my un-mediated life. I realized that I didn’t need to know everything that was happening to be mindful of the world’s needs. This led me to a deeper, more contemplative prayer. I anticipate that might be one effect of my social media fast, too.”

There are valid reasons for choosing a social media fast, as well as for not choosing one. Which might you choose?

Lent is for Lovers
The Dominican Friars of St. Gertrude Parish in Cincinnati, OH have developed a unique preaching program for the season of Lent: Lent Is For Lovers.

Drawing on the coincidence of Ash Wednesday and Valentine’s Day falling on the same day, the program includes both daily Lenten reflections posted on YouTube as well as several talks and a Parish Mission drawing on the theme of how prayer, fasting, and almsgiving grows out of love.

How are you going to observe Lent?
Living Lent is not simply a matter of giving things up. It is about taking on new life.
You can get closer to Jesus alone in your room, but he made us to know him in a group: the Church. This Lent we are offering reflections on the transformative power of love. Join us in person at St. Gertrude and online right here.

Click here for a reflection on the logo for Lent is for Lovers from the illustrator who designed it. Fr. Gabriel Torretta and Fr. Clement Dickie are the authors of the programme.
Visit the Lent Is For Lovers website to sign up for daily emails and to learn more about the program.

**Two Diocesan Priests make Final Profession in the Priestly Fraternity of St Dominic, USA**

On 7 February 2018, Fr. James V. Marchionda, OP, Prior Provincial of the Province of St. Albert the Great, USA, received the final profession in the Priestly Fraternities of St. Dominic of Fr. Mauro Rodas, a priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, and Fr. Jordan Fetcko, a priest of the Diocese of Gary.

The Province of St. Albert the Great was the first of the four Provinces of Dominican friars in the USA to establish a stable fraternity of diocesan priests with an organized local council headed by its president Fr. John Mary Lovitsch of the Diocese of Joliet.

Since the inaugural meeting of invited diocesan priests on 25 June 2014 at the Priory of St. Vincent Ferrer in River Forest, the Province has witnessed the steady growth of the fraternity under the guidance of Fr. Tom McDermott, OP. The same fraternity has also taken the lead in the formulation of a local directory.

Recently, a second group of priests has started to develop in St. Louis in Missouri under the direction of Fr. James Dominic Rooney, OP.

**Why does the Pope celebrate Ash Wednesday Mass at Santa Sabina?**

In a tradition dating back to the fourth century, the Pope will spend Ash Wednesday at the Basilica of Santa Sabina, currently the worldwide headquarters of the Order of Preachers.

After the legalization of Christianity in 313, the faithful began a custom of processing through the streets of Rome to visit various churches and to honor the holy martyrs who were often buried there. Singing hymns and praying a litany of the saints, they would often be joined by the Bishop of Rome. During his pontificate, Saint Gregory the Great established the order of churches to be visited, and decided the custom should be a Lenten practice — a spiritual pilgrimage with Jesus and the saints.

Why Santa Sabina was chosen as the first church to be visited is not entirely known. Some say it’s because Saint Gregory fell in love with the church when he found refuge there during the plague. Others believe it is because of Santa Sabina’s location on Aventine Hill. Any wishing to visit the church must make a steep climb, symbolic of the climb Christ made to Golgotha and his crucifixion. Still, others think it is because of the church’s historical significance.

Santa Sabina is one of the “house churches” in Rome. During the early persecutions of the Church, Christians would secretly gather in the homes of the faithful to worship. One of these homes belonged to a woman named Sabina, who was martyred in 125. Between 422-432, a basilica was built on the site of Saint Sabina’s home.
and named in her honor. Her relics remain there to this day, along with those of Saint Alexander, Saint Eventius and Saint Theodulus.

Although it has undergone a number of renovations over the years, Santa Sabina takes great pride in the fact that it still uses the original doors of the church, which are made of cyprus wood and carved with scenes from the Old and New Testaments, including one of the earliest depictions of Christ’s crucifixion.

In 1218, Santa Sabina was given to the Dominicans by Pope Honorius III, two years after he approved the foundation of the Order of Preachers. Since then, it has served as the generalate and headquarters of the Master of the Order of Preachers and the Dominican curia.

For nearly 100 years the Pope joined the Dominicans at Santa Sabina for Mass on Ash Wednesday, until the papacy moved to Avignon in 1309. Thankfully, Pope Leo XIII revived the tradition of starting Lent at Santa Sabina, and it has been the normal custom ever since.

Today that custom begins with a short prayer at the Basilica of Sant’ Anselmo, the international headquarters of the Benedictines. From there, the Pope, the Benedictines, the Dominicans and all present process up the hill while chanting the Litany of the Saints. Once they arrive at Santa Sabina, the Pope offers Mass. After the homily, he blesses the ashes, which are then sprinkled on his head by the Titular Cardinal of Santa Sabina. The Pope then distributes ashes to the cardinals, Dominicans, Benedictines and members of the faithful.

Since the Dominicans were founded to reconcile those who had fallen away from the faith, the custom is an important one. It reminds all of us that we are to be preachers of mercy, especially during the season of Lent.

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**Dominican Sisters Hosts Event on Naming, Understanding, and Dismantling the Structures of Racism**

On Saturday, January 20th, the Dominican Sisters in Committed Collaboration (OPSCC) sponsored an educational gathering to explore the meaning of white privilege, the impact of racism and white privilege on people in the U.S., and to explore possible ways to begin creating equality among peoples. The Blauvelt sisters welcomed 110 participants to the day and were joined by over 100 people participating through Livestream. It was a stretching and energizing day led by Ceil Lavan, O.P. and one of many that OPSCC will be hosting throughout 2018.

White privilege is a system of unfair advantage that is woven into societal norms and practices for members of one race over another. White privilege in western society affirms elevated worth, greater social status, and increased freedom to move, act, and speak in society to white people. White privilege also enables the experience of white people to be understood as the normative experience by which everyone and every event is measured.

White privilege is a system of ordering the value of persons and their experiences that has been structured into societies throughout history and in the United States since its inception. As a system it renders the privileged blind to the scope of their advantage and subjects those excluded from privilege to injustices in major and minute ways. White privilege and racism intersect with other “isms” (sexism, ageism, ableism, classism, heterosexism) and create complex layers of valuing and devaluing persons and groups of people.

In the United States, white privilege is a primary vehicle for continuing the structure of racism. Understanding the unearned privilege that white skin provides in the U.S. and the limitations imposed on those who do not have white skin is essential to identifying and dismantling the structure of racism. In Peggy McIntosh’s article, White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, the following experiences highlight how white privilege is operative in our experience of life:
- I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
- If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
- I can be pretty sure that neighbors in such a location will be neutral/pleasant to me.
- When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
- I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
- I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
- I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge", I will be facing a person of my race.
- I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.
- I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
- The remainder of the article is well worth reading! McIntosh helps us to see the many expressions of white privilege and the impact it has on our society and on the lives of people caught in an unequal and preferential social system. Click here for the complete article.

This and so much more was presented by Ceil Lavan at the January 20 OPSCC study day on white privilege. Ceil, many thanks for the excellent presentation and the process you led us through during the meeting.

By Didi Madden, O.P.

Dominican Friars Invite You to Journey with Them This Lent

The Dominican friars of the Central Province invite you to journey with them through Lent via their latest publication, GROWING IN FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD: DISCOVERING THE JOY OF LENT (New Priory Press, 2018).

This book serves as a convenient resource on the daily Lenten readings, providing reflections from friars across the province—some young, others not so young, and even some who have gone before us. Fr. Andrew Carl Wisdom, O.P., offers contemplative accompaniments to each reflection in the form of daily prayers, challenges he calls, “Doer of the Word Received,” and simple hints to make your Lenten journey impactful, memorable, and transformative.

Visit www.newpriorypress.com/lentwisdom to order your copy today!
Contact: Terry Jarbe, Production Editor, New Priory Press, 312-243-0011 - T.Jarbe@opcentral.org

Letter of the Master of the Order for the International Assembly of the Dominican Laity Fatima 2018

Dear lay sisters and brothers of the Order of preachers,
It is in the momentum of the celebration of the Jubilee of the Order that I address you who, during these coming months, will prepare the International Assembly of the Dominican Laity. In all regions, this Assembly will be without doubt a very important event for the celebration of the grace that is given to the Order, to have lay brothers and sisters as active members of its mission. According to the specificity of each region, this will also be the opportunity to consider again the way in which today the lay vocation is more essential than ever if the Order is to inculturate better the proclamation of the good news of
the coming of the Kingdom. For the entire Order, and in the perspective opened during the congress on the Mission of the Order that ended the celebration of the Jubilee in January 2017, I express the wish that this Assembly might be the occasion for a demanding call to an apostolic creativity that truly integrates the specific participation of the Laity of the Order. This is how the latter can best serve the world and the Church by preaching. Eight hundred years after the determination of Dominic to send his brothers to the four corners of the world, it seems to me that this sending must today find its actualization, not only keeping in mind the concerns of a « geographical » dispersion, but also in seeking to establish the preaching of the Order by making it rich from a diversity of cultures and of states of life. And discovering that it is through the richness of this diversity that the Order is today called to manifest its identity of being a single « preaching body », rooted in communion in one and the same call to « be totally devoted to the evangelization of the Word of God ».

We all know that the reality of the lay fraternities of the Order is very diverse according to the regions, their dynamism is very different here and there, and their full integration in the life of the Order is variable. We also know how we can take too much time and spend too much energy asking ourselves about the Dominican « identity » of the fraternities, without it always bringing the fruits of life for which we hope. But with many of you, I am convinced that the life of the Laity of the Order will not come from a focus on the formalities and structures, but from the audacity to hear the call made to the Order, because it is the Order of Preachers, to serve the mission of the Church which, People of God on pilgrimage in history (Lumen Gentium), continuously becomes what it is called to be in proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom. Is not this the path on which we are guided by so many lay Dominicans such as Pier Giorgio Frassati and Giorgio La Pira? Following the Second Vatican Council, it is essential to recall that the laity, by their Baptism, « are made participants in the sacerdotal, prophetic and royal functions of Christ » and « perform for their part, in the Church and in the world, the mission which is that of all the people of God » (Lumen Gentium, 31).

The sign of fraternity

The decision to designate the lay Members of the Order without mentioning anymore the « Third Order » but speaking instead of « Dominican Lay Fraternities », highlights a central aspect of the proclamation of the Kingdom that, with the Order as a whole, you are called to deploy. For Dominic, who from the beginning of his mission in Languedoc wanted to be called « brother Dominic », the Fraternity is intrinsically linked to the proclamation of the Kingdom. Brothers and sisters, who do not come together after choosing one another, but who receive each other as friends of God, learning from each other how to become members and actors of a family of sons and daughters of the same Father. To be a sign of fraternity, in the heart of secular life, is to be a sign that humans carry within them this ability to live as brothers, that is to say to establish relations which, even with all their diversity, they are united in the same sonship, and in the same desire to be sent to this world as witnesses of the Word and of the life of the grace of God.

In my visits throughout the Order, I am more and more convinced that this is, for the whole Order, each branch in its own way, a means of responding to the call of Paul VI when, in Evangelium nuntiandi, he wrote: « Modern (woman or) man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if (she or) he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses » (EN, 41). As « preachers of grace », we are called to be such witnesses, « parables of communion », awakener in the world of all our human capacities for becoming brothers and sisters, at the heart of the concrete history of humanity which is thereby transformed. Writing this, I would also like to expand my remarks beyond a single « branch » of the Order to emphasize that, considered in this light, the Order’s own charisma of evangelization cannot be defined by the sum of the different « functions » of evangelists, but rather falls within this « almost sacramental » reality of the incessant becoming of human fraternity. It is also often the living experience of the fraternity which, in return, leads us to deepen our desire for the «Proclamation of the Kingdom ». It is also from the point of view of this sign of fraternity that, it seems to me, we can consider the diversity of the « secular » ways of being linked to the Order: not only as allies in the realization of a function, project or task, nor only as a bond of friendship with this or that individual or community, but as engaged in the adventure of a fraternity that aspires to speak in the world about that of which this world is, essentially, capable. In this sense, I think that we must, more than ever, consider together all the various ways in which the Laity wish to be « linked » to the Order of Dominic, that is to say both to make the experience of the Church that the Spirit establishes as a fraternity, and to invite others to find their joy in this same experience.
It is in this horizon that I would like to highlight some of the challenges that the Laity of the Order must help the Order to welcome and to highlight, for the good of the mission of preaching of all.

Download the full letter here:

Brother Bruno Cadoré, op
Master of the Order of Preachers

**Restoration of Choir Vault and Apse in the Dominican Basilica, Valletta, Malta**

The ancient feast of Candlemas was a special one for the Dominican Community in Valletta, the capital of Malta which also holds the title of European City of Culture throughout 2018.

Indeed, the evening Mass concelebrated by the Prior and Parish Priest Fr Michael Camilleri O.P. and members of the community was the prelude to the unveiling of another major phase in the four-year long conservation and restoration of Valletta’s mother church. This was that of the choir vault and main apse of the church behind the main altar. The restoration was carried out by Agatha Grima Conservators.

The apse is the work of Maltese artist, Peter Paul Caruana who was commissioned to carry out the work on April 28, 1845. This huge fresco depicts an allegory of the titular dedication of this first church in Valletta, Our Lady of Safe Haven, and shows the Church symbolised by a ship in a storm out at sea making it safely back to port under the protection of Our Lady who is presenting the Infant Jesus as our Saviour and surrounded by Saint John the Baptist, St Peter and Saint Paul in the background and St Dominic, St Thomas Aquinas and St Vincent Ferrer kneeling before Our Lady to intercede for the faithful.

The vault of the choir is the work of Malta’s greatest painter, Giuseppe Calì – himself a son of the parish where he was born, bred and worked for the main a part of his life, except for the time he spent studying art at the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Naples. This vault is, like the others by Calì in this Basilica, painted using the secco technique and depicts the vision of Our Holy Father St Dominic placing the Order under the protection of Our Lady. The lunettes at the side of the central choir vault represent the patron saints of the Order.

The Dominican Community is grateful to the Government of Malta through the National Lotteries Good Causes Fund and the Bank of Valletta for financially supporting these major and long awaited restoration projects.

Alfred Gritti, Lay Dominican, Parish Basilica of Of Lady of Safe Haven and St Dominic, Valletta, Malta.

**Dominican Liturgical Foundation Center Krakow, caring for the beauty of the liturgy**

Four countries, 350 workshops participants, 200 people on retreat, a few thousand website followers and festival recipients – the Dominican Liturgical Center works for the Church in Poland and all over the world.

One year ago, on 21st of January 2017, the Choir of the Dominican Liturgical Centre in Krakow had the opportunity to prepare the liturgical music for the Holy Mass of the Closing of the Jubilee of the 800th year of the Order of Preachers at the Lateran Basilica in Rome. The Mass was led by Pope Francis.
The group of over 50 singers had a couple of months to prepare for this event, directed by fr. Dawid Kusz, a Dominican, composer and conductor. Selecting the choir and the repertoire, organisers perceived a heritage connected to Dominican monasteries and the Niepojeda Trójco (eng. The Inconceivable Trinity) songbooks published in Krakow. We also presented a few new tracks in the three official languages of the Order, and the traditional Dominican anthems: “Salve Regina” to the Blessed Virgin Mary and “O Lumen Ecclesiae” to St Dominic.

As the Master of the Order of Preachers, fr. Bruno Cadoré said, the songs prepared by the Dominican Liturgical Center were highly appreciated by the participants from all over the world: friars, sisters, lay Dominicans, friends of the Order, and numerous bishops. The songs expressed a deep prayerful character.

Teresa Bosak, a member of the choir and an associate of the Foundation expressed her hope, that her visit would be a pilgrimage and a source of inspiration for her and the Foundation all through the year, as they will be facing many challenges, plans and dreams. From Rome, the eternal city, we brought nothing but our minds and hearts filled with new hopes and ideas.

**Extraordinary Music Workshop**

The new energy was indeed necessary for us, as we were preparing for our next events, a key event for our mission: an Extraordinary Music Workshop in August and the Mysterium fascinans retreat in September. In 2004, the Dominican Liturgical Center had initiated the liturgical music workshops, followed by similar future events in Poland. Beginning from 2013 (then 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019), the Extraordinary Music Workshops are the greatest events of its kind in Poland, with the participation of hundreds of people from Poland, as well as Italy, Germany, United States, Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus.

These Workshops provide a learning space for beginners and advanced melodists, both polyphonic adepts, responsible for choirs, Gregorian cantors, instrumentalists (like organ players as introduced this year). The novelty for this year was the course for the “Masters” as requested by advanced and more qualified melodists from previous years. The course was guided by Divna Ljubojević.

Last year, the workshops were followed by the Extraordinary Music Festival which consisted of 5 evening concerts of European famous ancient sacred music: Alamire from Great Britain, Graindelavoix from Belgium, Linnamuusikud from Estonia, Divna Ljubojević with Melodi from Serbia featuring workshop participants, Floripari, Perfugium and Sancta Trinitas choir. The concerts took place in the most natural space for sacral music, that is, one of Krakow’s monumental churches, and the concerts were open and free for all. Concert guests did not only consist of workshop participants, but also local visitors from Krakow and guests from around the country, coming especially for the event.

After that magnificent week, we began to miss the participants of the Workshops, so we started to prepare plans for the next ones in 2019.

**Mysterium fascinans**

However, in the middle of September, we welcomed the next 200 participants of the Mysterium fascinans retreat – Jubilee 10th edition. Over the past decade, the aim of the organisers has been an attempt to translate a complex theology into clear and intelligible language, along with harmonic combination of scientific thought, spiritual symposies and common celebration of splendid liturgy.

This year’s guest was fr. Cassian Folsom, Benedictine father and professor at the Anselmianum – the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome. Together with fr. Wojciech Węgrzynek and other speakers, fr. Folsom initiated us into the secrets of celebrated mysteries, showing how both forms complement each other. Simultaneously, the motto: “The Spirit of the Liturgy”, contained a question about living the liturgy every day, or in other words – how the liturgy inspires the Christian spirituality.

Although all roads led to Rome, the eternal city, we also visited the United States and participated in a gathering of Catholic Leaders in Orlando titled, “The Joy of the Gospel”, where we were asked to prepare the liturgical music based on the experience of World Youth Day in Krakow. In October we led the liturgical music workshops in the Dominican Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in London.
It was also an important year for the Dominican Liturgical Center Choir, which presented itself as the best among others at the concert in Rzeszów, at St Padre Pio Foundation, during patron day of St Anne Basilica in Krakow and on advent evening.

Step by step
The Foundation’s BookShop in the cloister constantly invites fans of good books, music and art; the online shop ships more and more orders to the whole country, creating new ways to fulfill our mission. After a redesign at the beginning of the year, our website Liturgia.pl is now ready. At the beginning of the academic year, we opened anew our important regular projects. The new catechumenate year has begun, preparing adults to receive baptism, confirmation and first communion. After a whole year of weekly meetings, studying the faith and experiencing the community of the Church, candidates will make their initiation in Spring.

We also started the 7th edition of the School for Cantors, training people to be competent and responsible leaders in their churches. This year we proposed to our graduates to continue their study next year in the third and more advanced courses.

As in every year, we prepare on every Sunday the Holy Mass in the Church of Saint Mary of the Snows “on Gródek”, Krakow, and every Tuesday the Votive Mass of St Dominic in his chapel in the Basilica of the Holy Trinity in Krakow. We dedicate our prayers there for all associates, benefactors and friends of the Foundation. Last year was a time of personal changes at the Foundation, changes that began since 2016. We have entered 2018 with renewed enthusiasm, working dynamically and rapidly on new ideas and specific plans. We are glad to see that the implementation of our mission involves not only our team, but also numerous Dominican friars and groups of trustworthy volunteers, without whom we would not be able to fulfill our most important projects.

As a non-profit organization, mostly we rely on the generosity of our donors and we are very grateful that many people share our values and the way we accomplish our goals. Therefore, we encourage you to continue to share information about our activities and we ask for your renewed generosity which will enable us to create and implement new projects.

Translation by Paweł Połeć

Centennial Wing Groundbreaking at Dominican Monastery, Summit Hill, NJ
Our Groundbreaking Ceremony and Site Blessing for our Centennial Wing on Saturday, January 20th, exceeded all expectations, with over 90 guests attending the event. The Lord blessed us with sunshine and unseasonably warm weather.

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Archbishop of Newark, arrived at 10 a.m. to meet with the community before the ceremony began. Right before 11 a.m., we nuns went out to the enclosure door in the sanctuary and took our places in the first rows of pews. It was exciting to see our guests gathered in the chapel, and a few of us exchanged smiles and waves.

As the Cardinal and ministers entered the sanctuary, we sang "Nisi Dominus," the Dominican Latin Chant of Psalm 127 ("If the Lord does not build the house..."). After the opening prayer, Sr. Mary Martin, prioress, welcomed those present, particularly the Cardinal and Nora Radest, Mayor of the City of Summit. Sister noted with gratitude the presence of many of those involved in the design and building of the new wing. After Sr. Judith Miryam's brief reading from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians ("we are God's co-workers; you are God's field, God's building..."), Sr. Denise Marie and Sr. Mary Catharine chanted Psalm 121 "The Lord will guard your coming and going, both now and forever," an apt expression of trust in God's protection for the construction crew.
Cardinal Tobin preached a brief homily in his identified us nuns as those who "hunt for the face of the living God" on this hill in Summit. George and Margaret Roeck, both dedicated members of our Centennial Committee, offered the intercessions. We then processed out the chapel, chanting the Dominican "Salve Regina" ("Hail O Queen...") in honor of Our Lady, patroness of the Order of Preachers and our monastery, followed by the "O Lumen" ("Light of the Church..."), calling upon the prayers of our Holy Father St. Dominic.

We went down the chapel stairs and down the drive through the open gates to our enclosure grounds, followed by the Cardinal, the visiting priests, and the long line of guests.

After the Prayer of Blessing of the site by the Cardinal, Sr. Judith Miryam invited the ceremonial diggers to come forward and take their places behind the line of beribboned shovels, each with a hard hat on top. After a bit of positioning, all were behind a shovel, hard hats on, and the digging began, in some cases with great gusto, as the cameras snapped away. At one point, Sr. Mary Catharine shouted encouragement to our two project managers, Nick D’Amore and Mike Schettino, "Don't stop! Keep on digging!"

When the ceremony had concluded, we had the opportunity to mingle and meet each other, before the guests headed to St. Dominic's Hall for light refreshments prepared by us. We thank God and all who attended for a grace-filled day, a most memorable and impressive prelude to the construction of our new wing.

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**Official News**

**Fr Javier Abanto Silva is the New Promoter for Communications**

The Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadoré has appointed fr Javier Abanto Silva as the New General Promoter for Communications in the Order. Fr Javier is a son of the Province of St John the Baptist in Peru and he succeeds fr Eric Salobir who has concluded his tenure.

Fr Javier was born at Cajamarca, north of Peru in 1974. He made his first profession in the Order in 1996 and was ordained to the priesthood in 2011. He studied Philosophy and Theology in Peru. He has a Masters in Pastoral Theology and a Licentiate in the Theology of the Media from Colombia.

He has worked with the Radio Santo Domingo in Chimbote and for the past six years, he has been working with Radio Santa Rosa de Lima as its Director. He has also been the Media Promoter for his home province. In recognition of this passion for communications, the National Association of Journalists of Peru inducted him as an honorary member.

Communication has been an integral part of the life of fr Javier. The task of his new office will be the promotion of the life and mission of the Order through very possible means of communication. According to him, “The technologically advanced “new world” is a great pulpit for a Dominican from which he can preach the mercy, the hope and the truth of Jesus Christ, the great communicator”.
Fr Pawel Kozacki is reelected as Provincial of Poland

Gathered at their Provincial Chapter, the friars of the Province of Poland have reelected fr Pawel Kozacki as their Prior Provincial for another term. The Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadoré has confirmed the election and fr Pawel has accepted. Father Pawel Kozacki was born in 1965 in Poznań. He joined the Order in 1983 and made his first profession the following year. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1989. The first three years of his ordination was spent in the Parish of St Dominic at Szczecin, where he was a vicar, catechist and student priest. He also collaborated with the Szczecin Radio station and Radio "As". From 1993 to 1995, he was the editor-in-chief of the Dominican Publishing House in Poznań, and for the next 15 years the was the head of the monthly magazine, "W drodze". While in Poznań he was also the Prior of the community and in 2010 he was elected Prior of the community in Krakow and he served for two terms. In 2014, he was first elected Prior Provincial of the Province of Poland.

Fr. Rómulo Vásquez Gavidia is the New Provincial of Peru

The capitular friars of the Province of John the Baptist in Peru have elected fr Rómulo Vásquez Gavidia as their Prior Provincial. The Master of the Order, Fr Bruno Cadoré has confirmed the election and fr Rómulo has accepted. He succeeds fr Juan José Salaverry Villarreal who has just concluded his tenure as Provincial.

Fr Rómulo was born in 1971 at Cajamarca, Peru. He had his postulancy in the Convent where St Martin de Porres lived and where the tomb of St Rose of Lima is preserved. He had his novitiate at Cuzco and made his first profession in 1996. After his profession, he was assigned to the Convent of St Albert the Great from where he studied Philosophy and Theology at the Instituto Superior de Estudios Teológicos San Juan XXIII (ISET). He was ordained to the priesthood in 2002. He has been a formator both at the postulancy and at the novitiate. He was the Superior of the Community and Parish Priest at San Pedro Martir, Trujillo. Since 2015, he has been the Prior of the Convent of Santo Domingo of Cusco. He has been the Spiritual Director of the Lay Fraternity of St Dominic.

Calendar of the Master of the Order for March 2018

Feb 26–Mar 5: Canonical Visitation to the Province of England
13-15: New Provincials’ Workshop at Santa Sabina
16: Canonical Visitation to the Convent of San Clemente, Rome
19-26: Canonical Visitation to the Province of Ireland
29 March – 1 April: Holy Week and Easter Celebration at Santa Sabina

All articles are available on www.op.org