



On 14 July 2014, the Master of the Order, fr. Bruno Cadoré, inaugurated the new Liturgical Commission of the Order (CLIOP). This new Commission is chaired by me, fr. José Filipe da Costa Rodrigues, of the Province of Portugal. Other members include:

fr. David Caron (Province of St. Martin de Porres, USA), fr. Thomas Moller (Province of Teutonia, Germany), fr. Dominik Jurczak (Province of Poland), Sr. Ragnhild Bjelland (The Dominican Sisters of Notre Dame de Grâce, Chatillon, Oslo), fr. Joseph Nguyen Van Hien (Province of Vietnam), fr. Manuel Eduardo Solórzano Zerpa (Vicariate of Venezuela, Province of the Holy Rosary).

The last two brothers were appointed as auxiliary members.

Some of us were already part of the previous committee but now the Master of the Order has asked us to collaborate with him to ensure the unity of the Order through its liturgical life. Beyond this more general task, in his letter of appointment, the Master of the Order asked the Commission:

- to promote the liturgical life in the Order,
- to monitor the work of the translation of the *Proprium Ordinis praedicatorum*,
- to inform the Order on important official news regarding liturgy,
- to inform those responsible for liturgy at the provinces on issues relating to the liturgical patrimony of the Order.
- to maintain contact with brothers and sisters in charge of initial and ongoing formation at the provinces with regards to the liturgical life,
- to help prepare for the Jubilee of the Order through the publication of significant texts,
- to promote scientific research on liturgy within the Order.

In line with this mandate, to resume the publication of *Infocliop*, the bulletin created by the previous Liturgical Commission, hoping that it will be dedicated to one of the main pillars of our Dominican Life – Preaching. According to the Master of the Order at the last meeting of the Commission, our celebrations are public because of the preaching and it demands from the community, the joy of receiving.

Therefore, in this issue of *Infocliop*, we publish four articles of our brothers to whom we are grateful for their cooperation.

- The first article is by fr David Caron, OP of the Province of St Martin de Porres, USA and member of the CLIOP and the title is, "*Happiness is an Internal Joy with External Implications*".
- The second article is by fr Paul Philibert, OP, theologian and Promoter of Ongoing Formation in the Province of St Martin de Porres, USA and the title is, "*Preach the Joy of the Gospel: Dominican Thoughts on Evangelii Gaudium*".
- The third article is by fr Jorge Presmanes, OP, D. Min, of the Province of St Martin de Porres, USA and the title is: "*Preaching as a Dialogue between Faith and Culture: a Spanish-American Perspective*".
- The fourth article is by Sr Mary Frances Fleischaker, OP, D. Min, of the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Michigan, USA and it is titled, "*Liturgical Catechesis and the Arts: A Pastoral Response to Evangelii Gaudium*".

We hope that reading these articles will help us reach a deeper understanding of our preaching and may St Magdalene, the first preacher help the whole Dominican family to live and preach the gospel of grace that Christ has entrusted to us.

fr. José Filipe da Costa Rodrigues, O.P.

Joy is an Inside Job with Outside Implications!

David G. Caron, O.P., D.Min.
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Introduction

“Don’t worry—be happy!” Thus says the refrain from a popular song known world-wide. “Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth,” states the lyrics of a recent Pharrell Williams song entitled, “Happy.” Frequently, our modern culture incorrectly uses the words “happiness” and “joy” synonymously. However, there is a difference between joy and happiness that comes from faith that is not captured by today’s cultural reality.

A dictionary defines happiness as “a state of well-being, a pleasurable or satisfying experience.” The definition of the word, “rejoice,” from which the word joy derives, is “to feel great delight, to welcome or to be glad.” Depending on the translation, the Bible uses the words “happy” and “happiness” about 30 times, while “joy” and “rejoice” appear over 300 times. Joy comes from the Greek root word *chara* and means “to be exceedingly glad.” James 1:2 refers to joy in the following way: “Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials.” The deep, abiding joy to which the author James is referring comes with God’s help as faith is matured and strengthened and is the fruit of authentic conversion. Happiness tends to be fleeting and depends on external factors like people and circumstances. Joy is the contentment that comes from internal factors, like faith in the Lord. True joy is everlasting and is not dependent on circumstances. Joy is based on a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Is it any wonder that the Second Vatican Council document *Gaudium et Spes* and Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* both refer to the joy of knowing Jesus and making him known? *Gaudium et Spes*, often called the Magna Carta of the church’s commitment and involvement in the world, stresses the imperative of evangelization as it invites all to interpret the signs of the times in the light of the gospel. For Pope Francis and the Church, this means the light of Christ. The outcome of such joy, put into action, is what the Council has stated as the church’s only goal – that the reign of God may come and that the salvation of humankind may be realized. *Gaudium et Spes* describes it this way: “The church is the universal sacrament of salvation.” (GS #45)

Pope Francis, in his daily preaching and in *Evangelii Gaudium*, refers to this joy as he speaks about the New Evangelization as a joyful going forth from the Center (Christ) to bringing the Good News of Christ to all, especially to the most needy. He reaffirmed this call to joy when he said at World Youth Day in Rio, “You too, dear young people, can be a joyful witness of his love, contagious witnesses of his Gospel, carrying to this world a ray of light. Let yourselves be loved by Christ. He is a friend who will not disappoint.”

Is it any wonder that he writes in the opening chapter of his *Evangelii Gaudium*: “The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly being born anew.” It is this joyful encounter that liberates the imagination. Our Holy Father, St. Dominic, has been described throughout the ages as a joyful friar. For the members of the Order of Preachers, we seek to promote and partner in this same joy through our communal study of and enhancement of the liturgy, liturgical catechesis and preaching. We seek to offer an alternative to the powerful and influential consumer catechumenate of Western culture, which states, “Don’t worry—be happy!” In other words, the culture claims that happiness is found in “Don’t worry—be happy!: Purchase Posses and Accumulate!” Instead, we invite ourselves and others into the joy that is the enfolding and unfolding of the Mystery, who is God. For us, the risen Jesus is the joy of all human desire. He is for every disciple, the joy of the gospel.

In the following scholarly article, Paul Philibert, O.P., theologian and Promoter of Permanent Formation for the Province of St. Martin de Porres, makes the distinctions among liturgical catechesis, preaching and *Evangelii Guadium* necessary for ministerial formation and reflection. This will be followed by two pastoral articles, situated in a U.S. context, but having universal implications. Jorge Presmanes, O.P., the Director of Barry University's (Miami) Institute for Hispanic/Latino Theology and Ministry writes on preaching as a dialogue between faith and culture which finds the liturgy as one locus. Mary Fran Fleischaker, O.P., a liturgist and adjunct professor of theology, also from Barry University (Miami), argues from her experience of teaching that the aim of liturgical catechesis is to help people to prepare, reflect and live out the mysteries they celebrate; especially through the arts.

The joy of Christ is the thread that both holds these articles together and propels all in the direction of the inexhaustible Mystery that we praise. May those who read these articles come away with profound pastoral insights as we are reminded in the words of St. John of the Cross, “The soul of the one who loves God always swims in joy.”

Preaching the Joy of the Gospel: Dominican Reflections on *Evangelii Gaudium*

Fr. Paul Philibert, O.P., S.T.D.
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On the Feast of Christ the King, 2013, Pope Francis published his apostolic exhortation following the synod of bishops on “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Faith” that was held at the Vatican between October 7 and 28, 2012. An apostolic exhortation typically appears within two years after the close of the synod. What is unusual in this case, however, is that it has been written not by the pope who convened the synod, Pope Benedict XVI, but by his successor. In addition, although *Evangelii Gaudium* reflects the concerns and the ideas of the world’s bishops addressed at the synod, it has the broader purpose of serving as a vision statement by Pope Francis of his goals and hopes for the church.

This is a long document written not in a juridical style, but in very fluid pastoral language. It ranges over many topics, beginning with the missionary character of the Church, the crises faced by the Church, the proclamation of the Gospel and the social dimension of evangelization. There are remarkable passages that illustrate Pope Francis’ ideas about a church that is missionary in all its parts, whose local bishops should take responsibility for solving problems and proposing pastoral solutions, a church that is preoccupied with the poor of the earth, and that has the mission to spread the joyful good news of the mercy of God.

Some key words appear again and again in this document: love, joy, the poor, peace, justice and the common good. The pope’s concern for the common good has received perhaps the greatest attention from the news media, since he is so clear that the prevailing subservience of the world’s economies to the supposed equilibrium of market forces is a source of injustice and great harm. The problems of the poor can only be resolved “by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality...” (§202) He does much to revitalize the idea of the common good despite its general neglect in political discourse.

From a Dominican perspective, however, what seems to me most notable is his extensive treatment of preaching and specifically of the homily. Pope Francis has a robust appreciation for the power of the word of God, a clear understanding of the liturgical setting for Sunday preaching, and a strong conviction that effective preaching emerges from study and contemplation. As we shall see, he gives a psychological and theological primacy to the kerygma—he calls it “the first proclamation”—as a presupposition and requisite for all other developments in catechesis and evangelization. My focus here is essentially on pastoral liturgy. So these reflections will examine the document’s teaching about proclamation, preaching and the liturgical setting in which the homily is given.

Establishing the Context

The opening lines of *Evangelii Gaudium* call the church to “a new chapter of evangelization” marked by the joy of encountering Jesus. (§1) Francis invites Christians to a “renewed personal encounter” with Jesus Christ that will entail a frank openness of heart before the Lord, seeking forgiveness and help where we need it, and receiving the impulse of new life from experiencing Jesus’s love. (§3) Citing Pope Benedict, Francis writes: “Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.” (§7) This encounter is meant to grow into a friendship that carries us beyond ourselves. “For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?” (§8) Making friends with Jesus is at the core of evangelization.

Preaching, which calls people to faith in Jesus, can be revitalized by “recover[ing] the original freshness of the Gospel”; out of that, new avenues, new creativity, and new expressions arise to address present needs. Real evangelization will always be “new” in this sense. (§11) This requires deeply knowing both Christ and his words in the Scriptures. Further, all the Church’s activity should follow the paradigm of missionary outreach, moving “from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry,” from maintenance to mission, in other words. (§15) A sub-theme that runs through much of the document is the warning not to let administrative preoccupations curtail the primary role of the ministry of the word.

When we undertake “ordinary” preaching (such as a Sunday homily), we need to keep in mind that it always entails both a radical experience of the Gospel as its source and a call to conversion as its goal. However, for many people in Christian countries, religious language has become just verbiage that they have heard over and over again, so that it makes little difference to the way they live. So Francis writes: “Pastoral ministry in a missionary style is not obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines... [T]he message has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary.” (§35)

There is a “basic core” that proclaims the love of God manifest in Jesus Christ. As Vatican II taught [*Unitatis Redintegratio* 11], there is a hierarchy of truths that vary in their relation to this basic core. (§36) This requires a fitting sense of proportion in preaching with respect to the frequency and emphasis given to certain themes. It would be disproportionate to overemphasize temperance and neglect charity and justice. A similar imbalance occurs “when we speak more about law than about grace, more about the Church than about Christ, more about the Pope than about God’s word.” (§38) Most of all, the Gospel invites us to respond to God’s love, to see God in others and to seek to help others in their need.

Beneath this exploration of Catholic pastoral life lies the fundamental conviction that the Church exists to evangelize, and that evangelization brings others to the joy of knowing Jesus through the preaching of the Gospel. This is a mission shared by the entire people of God, most of whom have little idea of their role in evangelization. This “new chapter of evangelization” interprets all the life and activities of the church as a witness to the joy of knowing Christ.

Questions for Personal and Group Reflection:

1. *What is our personal and community record with respect to “sharing the joy of the Gospel” as the fundamental task of preaching? Are we more attentive to articulating moral or disciplinary rules to God’s people rather than persuading them of the gratuity of God’s love and grace? Are we even conscious of this dimension of our ministry?*
2. *Do we focus on sharing discipleship—friendship with Christ—as the chief purpose of our preaching? From our personal experience, what are the best ways of doing that in the culture that we live in?*

The Proclamation of the Gospel

Chapter Three of *Evangelii Gaudium* has four sections: the entire people of God as the subject of evangelization, the homily, preparation for preaching, and understanding the kerygma. All four of these concern the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord. Citing Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis describes evangelization as “the joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (§110)

The entire people of God proclaim the Gospel. The people of God, moreover, “are incarnate in the peoples of the earth,” each with its proper culture. “Grace [pre]supposes culture, and God’s gift becomes flesh in the culture of those who receive it.” (§115) This is how the Church expresses her catholicity, introducing peoples “together with their cultures, into her own community.” This means that Western culture cannot suffice to address the cultural needs of non-Western peoples. The full effect of Christ’s incarnation is not complete until it is proclaimed and believed in every language, culture and place on earth. Evangelization is at the service of the fullness of incarnational grace.

Further, the Holy Spirit sanctifies and prompts all the faithful for the work of evangelization. God furnishes all the faithful with a *sensus fidei*—an instinct of faith—to allow them to discern what is God’s plan, giving them a connaturality with divine truths and a wisdom that guides them. (§119) “The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. ... Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus...” (§120) We see here again Pope Francis’ insistence on personal

encounter with Jesus and on the contagious joy that flows from that. Each believer has a unique gift of witness to contribute.¹

All the faithful (including the Church's ministers) also share the ordinary context of bearing witness person to person in the course of daily meetings and conversations. This "informal preaching," whether with strangers or with friends, means bringing the love of Jesus to others in any place or situation. This entails personal dialogue—conversation—and sharing, in whatever ways appropriate, the fundamental message about how God loves us in becoming human, living with us, and offering us salvation and friendship. The Gospel needs to be preached in categories proper to each culture, and in this way it "will create a new synthesis with that particular culture." (§129)

The Holy Spirit also enriches the entire Church with charisms. Pope Francis indicates that the sign of a charism's authenticity is its ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God's people for the good of all. Somewhat surprisingly, he does not give examples of such charisms here, but we can easily imagine charisms of group leadership, of artistic and musical gifts, of community service, and, in these days especially, of developing and utilizing new forms of electronic communication. The Holy Spirit also reconciles people in their diversity: "he alone can raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity." (§131)

In addition, proclaiming the Gospel to different cultures also involves addressing professional, scientific and academic circles. "The charism of theologians and their scholarly efforts to advance dialogue with the world of cultures and sciences" is a necessary service to the church's saving mission." (§133).

Questions for personal and group reflection

1. *Does our preaching address the apostolic mission of the laity in such a way as to prepare them for their evangelizing role? Do we communicate to them the Gospel's respect for their agency as disciples who are also "sent"?*
2. *What charisms can we identify among the faithful whom we serve? How can these charisms become a source of new life for the community? What charisms do we ourselves need as ministers of the word and as preachers?*

¹ Although Pope Francis does not address lay preaching within the liturgy here, it is clear that he sees the laity as critically important witnesses to the power of God's word. This fact is important for the formation of the Dominican Laity in their apostolic life. The pope's instruction about the qualities of preaching and about preparation for it are likewise important for laity who are engaged in any ministry of the word. This represents an encouragement for the many lay persons who regularly minister in ecclesial leadership, in catechesis, and in preaching in various contexts.

The homily is the test of the pastor's ability to communicate with his people. In reality, the homily is often a source of suffering: for the laity because of their disappointment with what they hear, and for preachers because of the labor and vulnerability of spirit that preaching demands of them. Nevertheless, the homily is where the majority of the Christian faithful hear and come to understand the word of God. It is evangelization *par excellence*.

The proclamation of the word of God within the liturgy, especially within the Eucharist, is neither a meditation nor a catechesis. It is part of the liturgy's dynamic action as a word that calls God's people together in obedience of faith, inaugurating a dialogue with them "in which the great deeds of salvation are proclaimed and the demands of the covenant restated." (§137)

Then the people of God, who are the active subject of the Eucharistic celebration, can respond in word and sacrifice, chanting the glory of God and offering themselves along with Christ their head to the Father. Therefore liturgical preaching "is part of the offering made to the Father and a mediation of the grace which Christ pours out during the celebration." (§138)

Liturgically this means that the homily is not an ornament to make the rite interesting; it *is* the rite. This also means that the function of the homily is to express the word proclaimed in this particular Eucharist within the context, the needs and the hopes that this present community needs to understand. While this may seem to make the task of the homily extremely difficult, in fact, it clarifies the task. The homily must become God's word proclaimed in our situation. The goal of the homily, says Pope Francis, is to "guide the assembly, and the preacher, to a life-changing communion with Christ in the Eucharist." (§138) Such preaching should be brief and avoid sounding like a lecture. The Holy Spirit is a spirit of love that inspires the preacher to recognize the faith and the pastoral needs of the people. "Christian preaching thus finds in the heart of people and their culture a source of living water, which helps the preacher to know what must be said and how to say it." (§139) This demands risk and faith on the part of the preacher.

Because the liturgy is a dialogue between the Lord and his people, the preacher must communicate by his personal closeness, the warmth of his voice, the simplicity of his speech and the joy of his gestures the Lord's own love and tenderness. (§140) Therefore preachers have to realize that they are speaking in the name of the Lord, that they are inviting a dialogue with the people that will be expressed for their part in their prayers and responses and, above all, in their self-offering. Pope Francis adds that Jesus's success in preaching "lies in the way Jesus looked at people, seeing beyond their weaknesses and failings. ... The Lord truly enjoys talking with his people; the preacher should strive to communicate that same enjoyment to those who listen." (§141)

The homily possesses a quasi-sacramental character because it communicates the Lord's own message by way of a heart-to-heart communication. The faithful must come to know that "each word of Scripture is a gift before it is a demand." (§142) Preaching inculturates God's word by bringing about a synthesis between the life of the word and the culture in which it is proclaimed. "The difference between enlightening people with a synthesis and doing so with detached ideas is like the difference between boredom and heartfelt fervor." (§143).

When the faithful recognize God's word as present to them in their own circumstances, they find their hearts moved and filled with love. During the homily, the faithful are silent and allow God to speak to them. They want someone to "serve as an instrument and express their feelings" so that afterwards in thousands of different ways they will continue their conversation with the Lord.

Our Christian identity is lived between the embrace the Father gave us at our baptism and the merciful embrace of the Father awaiting us in glory. "Helping our people to feel that they live in the midst of these two embraces is the difficult but beautiful task of one who preaches the Gospel." (§144)

Questions for personal and group reflection:

- 1. Do we fully understand that the homily is integral to the rite of the Eucharist? It is the culmination of the Liturgy of the Word, leading the assembly of the faithful to their profession of faith and the renewed sacrifice of their baptismal priesthood. Do your people understand this role of liturgical preaching? Do we ourselves understand it properly?*
- 2. Do you grasp what Pope Francis means by the "dialogue" that is expressed in liturgical preaching? Does this help you to understand why the object of liturgical preaching must be the living word of God proclaimed in the celebration for this particular day? How can we invite the faithful to continue this dialogue in their liturgical participation in the Mass?*
- 3. Pope Francis calls liturgical preaching a quasi-sacrament. What ideas theologically and pastorally does this phrase suggest to you?*

Preparation for preaching is so important that Pope Francis offers an extended explanation of a method for preparing homilies. He emphasizes the necessity of devoting quality time to preparation, explaining that trust in the Holy Spirit's assistance entails offering ourselves and all our abilities "as instruments which God can use." (§145) This presupposes calling upon the Holy Spirit in prayer.

The first step in preparation is to give our full attention to the biblical text that is the basis of our preaching. We take time to study it, are patient in fathoming its depths and put other concerns aside as we concentrate upon God's word "with humble and awe-filled veneration." (§146) Preparation for preaching requires lingering with love over God's word, as we pray like Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Sam 3:9). Using familiar tools of literary analysis we need to be sure we understand the meaning of the text, written in language very different from what we speak today. Our principal goal is to discover the message that gives structure and unity to the text. "This calls for recognizing not only the author's ideas but the effect he wanted

to produce.” (§147) We also need to relate the text’s meaning to the teaching of the entire Bible, since the Holy Spirit has inspired the Bible as a whole. We cannot weaken the specific emphasis of a text upon which we preach. “One of the defects of a tedious and ineffectual preaching is precisely its inability to transmit the intrinsic power of the text which has been proclaimed.” (§148)

The preacher needs to have a great familiarity with the word of God, approaching it with a prayerful, contemplative heart. We also need to remember that, in Pope John Paul II’s words, “the greater or lesser degree of the holiness of the minister has a real effect on the proclamation of the word.” (§149) Our own determination to be “hearers” of the word we preach will be clear to God’s people.

Here Pope Francis turns to the famous words of St. Thomas Aquinas that have become a motto for our Order, saying that preaching will consist in the activity of “communicating to others what one has contemplated” (S. Th. II-II, q. 188, a. 6). Put another way, “we need to let ourselves be penetrated by that word which will also penetrate others, for it is a living and active word...” (§150) And in words that are emblematic for this new pope: “What is essential is that the preacher be certain that God loves him, that Jesus Christ has saved him and that his love always has the last word.” (§151) The Lord wants to use us as free, creative beings who let his word enter our hearts and convert us before passing it on to others. This passage of *Evangelii Gaudium* powerfully evokes the charism of the Order of Preachers, with a special emphasis that Pope Francis puts upon the joy of contemplatively knowing the Lord and the joy of sharing that treasure with others.

This entails a “spiritual reading” or *lectio divina* of a text. This must begin with the text’s literal sense, to make sure we don’t bend the text to our desires or prejudices. But then we must inquire in the presence of God: “Lord, what does this text say *to me*? What is it about my life that you want to change by this text?” (§153) We might be tempted to think about what the text means for others without applying it to our own life. God invites us as preachers to grow in faith, and God always understands our situation. “[God] simply asks that we sincerely look at our life and present ourselves honestly before him, and that we be willing to continue to grow, asking from him what we ourselves cannot as yet achieve.” (ibid.) Preparing to preach in this way is an on-going call to conversion involving a surrender of our lives to the living word that we are called to preach.

In addition to contemplating the word, the preacher “also has to contemplate his people.” Preachers need to be able “to link the message of a biblical text to a human situation,” using language and signs and symbols that the people recognize. (§154) Earlier Pope Francis referred to this as the inculturation of the word. It requires an “evangelical discernment” concerning how God is calling believers in the precise context of their lives. So we need to avoid addressing questions that no one is asking, and to avoid bringing up news or television programs merely to awaken interest. Our job is to invite “conversion, worship, commitment to fraternity and service.” Preachers are called to discover what the faithful really need to hear.

We need to be concerned about *how* we preach as well. We need to respond to God's love by using all of our talents and creativity. It is important to learn how to use images that can make a message seem familiar and practical. To make people savor the message, a good homily should have "an idea, a sentiment [feeling], and an image." (§157).

"The greatest risk for a preacher is that he becomes so accustomed to his own language that he thinks that everyone else naturally understands...it." (§158) We have to adapt to people's language by sharing their lives and paying loving attention to them. We need to ensure that the homily has "thematic unity, clear order and correlation between sentences" so that people can easily follow it. (ibid.)

A good homily is also positive, not pointing out what's wrong, but urging what we can do better. Positive preaching always offers hope.

And as a final word on preparation, Pope Francis adds: "How good it is when priests, deacons and the laity gather periodically to discover resources which can make preaching more attractive!" (§159)

Questions for personal and group reflection:

1. *St. Thomas Aquinas described Dominican life as a "mixed" life of contemplation and action, refusing to accept the prevailing dichotomy in his day between these two forms of religious life. (S. Th., II-II, q. 188, a. 6) Does this exhortation of Pope Francis offer you insight into our special charism as Dominicans? Today it is especially when we approach the preparation for preaching that this "mix" is most important and most clear. But how does this "mix" extend beyond study and explicit sermon preparation into other areas of our community and pastoral life?*
2. *Evangelii Gaudium stresses that the Holy Spirit needs the readiness of all of our gifts and talents to effectively inspire and guide us. Can you assess what are the special gifts that you bring to preaching? Are there areas where you could be more generous in placing your gifts in the service of preaching?*
3. *Do you have any way of knowing whether the people who regularly hear you preach understand your language and your style of preaching? What possibilities do you have for getting an evaluation of your preaching from the people?*

The kerygma, or first proclamation, is the foundation for the faith and catechesis that follow it. This kerygma is the center of all evangelizing activity and of all efforts at church renewal. It must be repeated over and over: "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you." (§164) This is the foundation upon which all Christian formation rests. It is Trinitarian: "The fire of the Spirit is given in the form of tongues and leads us to believe in Jesus Christ who, by his death and resurrection, reveals and communicates to us the Father's infinite mercy." (ibid.)

The centrality of the kerygma calls for stressing what is most needed today: God's saving love that precedes any moral or religious obligation. "It should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance" that can't be reduced to a few doctrines. (§165) This presupposes that the evangelizers will be approachable, ready for dialogue, patient, warm and non-judgmental.

The centrality of the kerygma for awakening and sustaining faith was one of the great principles of Père Pierre-André Liégé, O.P., who created for Pope Paul VI the draft document that became *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.² The kerygma is the moment of encounter that leads to faith in a Lord who is the source of life beyond death, of meaning beyond absurdity and of love in a world of betrayals. Building doctrinal structures upon anything other than a solid kerygma is building on sand, for we are saved not by ideas but by our relation with our saving Lord. So Pope Francis says, "Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation." (§165) This is the principal message that needs to be heard over and over at every stage of the Christian life.

Recent decades have also developed the process of mystagogic initiation that structures the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It involves the progressive formation of the entire community and it stresses above all the liturgical signs of Christian initiation. Communities need this mystagogical renewal that is a renewal of the entire community as it undertakes the initiation of newcomers. It transforms the meaning and the importance of the liturgical rites for everyone. (§166)

Pope Francis then stresses the role of beauty "as a means of touching the human heart" and encourages the use of the arts in evangelization. (§167) He explains the importance of spiritual accompaniment in leading others closer to God. (§169-173) Here he stresses the art of listening, describing it as "an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur." (§171)

Finally, all evangelization is based on the word of God "listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated and witnessed to." (§174) The word of God has to become more central to every ecclesial activity. This necessary familiarity with God's word requires that dioceses, parishes and Catholic associations provide for serious study of the Bible and prayerful individual and communal reading. "Let us receive the sublime treasure of the revealed word." (§175)

In substantial ways, this part of *Evangelii Gaudium* is a challenge to the Order of Preachers to rediscover itself in the dynamics of preaching as a fruitful contemplative act. Stressing the kerygma insists on the experiential dynamics of a call to faith, a call that requires depth of faith in the preacher. Appealing to beauty and to the arts also reminds us of our rich Dominican tradition in the arts, whether Fra Angelico or Kim en Joong, whether Thomas Aquinas or André Gouzes. There are masterpieces of artistic witness to the faith in all the languages and cultures of the Order even in our day. There is no doubt that our mission and our charism are vital to the church's future life.

² The most complete study of Liégé's life and work is Gérard Reynal, *Pierre-André Liégé: Un itinéraire théologique au milieu du XXe siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 2010).

Questions for personal and group reflection:

1. *Père Liégé observed that most Catholics in modern times were baptized as infants and so were never exposed, as were the converts of Paul in Asia Minor, to the “shock” of the kerygma. Paul expressed this life-changing good news powerfully when he wrote: “All I care for is to know Christ, to experience the power of his resurrection, and to share in his sufferings, in growing conformity with his death, if only I may finally arrive at the resurrection from the dead” (Phil 3:10-11) Can you see how doctrines without kerygma cannot communicate the experience of this mystery? How do you see kerygmatic shock occurring in the life of your community?*
2. *Pope Francis underlines the change of heart or ongoing conversion that is integral to the preacher’s growing authenticity. In what ways is this emphasis a challenge to you as individuals and as communities?*
3. *Where do you find the arts playing a life-giving role in evangelization? To what degree is the act of preaching itself an art that we need to learn to exercise more skillfully and beautifully?*

Concluding Observations

In his last chapter on “The Social Dimension of Evangelization,” Pope Francis begins with these words: “The kerygma has a clear social content: at the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others.” (§177) This underscores the centrality of the kerygma in his pastoral vision. Further, throughout this section, he refers to the encyclical letter of Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and its insistence upon the “integral promotion of each human being.” (§182) It is worth noting, then, that Père Louis-Joseph Lebret, O.P., was asked by the pope to compose this document for him. Pope Paul acknowledges Lebret in paragraph 14 of the encyclical. Many passages of *Populorum Progressio*, and likewise of *Evangelii Gaudium*, ring with the unmistakable themes that Lebret had elaborated over the years of his work as an economist and social theologian.³

Finally, I would like to note that there are foundations presupposed to the theology of this apostolic exhortation that are largely unrecognized by the clergy or the faithful, even though they are central to the theology of Vatican II. Among them are especially these three teaching of the council:

³ A brief biography of Lebret is found in Thomas F. O’Meara and Paul Philibert, *Scanning the Signs of the Times: French Dominicans in the Twentieth Century* (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2013), 59-78.

- 1) The celebration of the church's liturgy is the work of the entire body of Christ—all the baptized faithful. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 26 affirms: “Liturgical services are not private functions but are celebrations of the Church which is ‘the sacrament of unity,’ namely, the holy people... Therefore, liturgical services have to do with the whole body.”⁴ The ministry of the word can never be imagined as an entertainment or diversion for observers of liturgical action. It is the nourishment and engagement of those who themselves are the acting subject of Christ's worship of his Father expressed in his body, the Church.
- 2) The sacrifice of the Eucharist is, as St. Augustine taught so boldly, the sacrifice of the head and the members of the body of Christ. The faithful offer their lives and themselves as spiritual sacrifices along with the body of Christ, as *Lumen Gentium* 34 so clearly explains.⁵
- 3) The Eucharist as *res et sacramentum*, the consecrated bread and wine, is an immense gift, as all the faithful realize. But too often they do not understand that the *res et sacramentum* is the means of creating “one body, one spirit in Christ.” St. Thomas calls this the *res tantum* by which “we enter into communion and are mutually united by it” (ST III, q. 73, a. 4). The Eucharist thus strengthens the unity of the mystical Body by intensifying the union of the faithful with Christ and the mutual union of the members. This is the heart of Thomas's vision of the Church.⁶ In this light, we can say that the faithful are invited not just to participate in the Eucharistic rite, but also to live Eucharistic lives. *Lumen Gentium* 34 expresses this by saying, “Therefore as worshippers who every act is worship, the faithful consecrate the world to God.”

Pope Francis's theology, aiming at an apostolic people of God who are fully participants in the church's mission of evangelization, integrates these three themes: a people who celebrate the paschal mystery of Christ as members of the body of Christ, who offer their lives and their work in solidarity with Christ's self-offering to the Father, and who live out the Eucharist as the motive and shape of their Christian discipleship. All of these themes are close to the fundamental kerygma in the sense that they express the generous grace of Christ's love for those who come to

⁴ The classic study of the theology behind this text is: Yves Congar, “The *Ecclesia* or Christian Community as a Whole Celebrates the Eucharist” in *At the Heart of Christian Worship: Liturgical Essays of Yves Congar*, trans. P. Philibert (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 15-67. [The original French text is “L' 'Ecclesia' ou communauté chrétienne, sujet intégral de l'action liturgique” in *Vatican II: La Liturgie après Vatican II—Unam Sanctam* 66 (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 241-282.]

⁵ See Gilles Emery, O.P., “Le sacerdoce spirituel des fidèles chez saint Thomas d'Aquin,” *Revue Thomiste* 99:1 (Jan.-Mar. 1999), 211-243. Also, Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *A Priestly People: Baptismal Priesthood and Priestly Ministry*, trans. Peter Heinegg (New York: Paulist, 2013). [The original French text is *Un peuple sacerdotal: sacerdoce baptismal et ministère sacerdotal* (Paris: Cerf, 2011).]

⁶ See Gilles Emery, O.P., “The Ecclesial Fruit of the Eucharist in St. Thomas Aquinas,” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, 2:1 (2004), 43-60. [Available on line at: doc.rero.ch/record/31423/files/Emery.Church.Eucharist.pdf.]

him in faith and also the transforming effects of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that configure the people of God to Christ.

This is catechesis—important catechesis—that could enhance our understanding of the message about the ministry of the word that Pope Francis gives us in this powerful apostolic exhortation. For the moment, let it suffice that Pope Francis has called us as the members of the Order of Preachers to a renewed awareness of our charism and our mission.

Preaching as Dialogue between Faith and Culture: A U.S. Hispanic Perspective

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Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, “do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to my brothers and sisters and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, “*I have seen the Lord*” and that he had said these things to her. (John 20:17-18)

With the words “I have seen the Lord” and Mary Magdalene’s subsequent narration of what the risen Christ had said to her, the preaching ministry of the Church commences. The declaration that the Lord had risen from the dead and was in their midst gave the bewildered disciples the vigor to joyfully persevere in the eschatological mission with which they had been entrusted. Today, Christian preaching, born of the joy that is found in the presence of the risen Christ in our midst, continues to engender the hope that moves disciples to work on behalf of the building up of the Church and of the Reign of God. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis calls for a renewal of this mission and invites the faithful to preach the joyful news of God’s infinite love as revealed in the crucified and risen Christ.¹

From *Mediator Dei* (1947) to *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963) to both the 1969 and the 2000 editions of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, the Church has spoken of the four-fold presence of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist, claiming that Christ is present in a substantial and continuous way in the Eucharistic species, in the person of the minister, in the Word of God that is proclaimed, and in the people of God gathered in celebration of their faith. In the pages that follow I will explore the latter of these four, the presence of Christ in the people of God through the prism of the preaching ministry of the Church. I begin with Pope Francis’ contention that preaching is a dialogue between God and God’s people. This dialogue however does not take place in a vacuum but in the context of the culture of a particular community of faith. Here I propose that this culture-bound dialogue between God and humans is the crux of the process of inculturation. I will conclude this brief reflection with some insights that are product of the processes of inculturation that have framed the work of Hispanic ministers and members of the Academy of Hispanic Catholic Theologians of the U.S. (ACHTUS) that may be of value to preachers in the Latino community and beyond.

Preaching as Dialogue between God and God’s People

In his Apostolic Exhortation Francis borrows from John Paul II’s *Dies Domini* to define preaching as a “dialogue between God and his people.” As he sees it, the homily is an event that

¹ *Evangelii Gaudium*, § 11

“surpasses all forms of catechesis as the supreme moment” in God’s dialogue with the faithful.² For Pope Francis, preaching is first and foremost a locus for the faithful to encounter the love of God. This encounter with God’s love on the part of the human person “blossoms into an enriching friendship” that becomes a catalyst of conversion and liberates them from “narrowness and self-absorption.” As a result of the encounter with God’s love, the faithful are moved to share that love with others. “For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives,” he says, “how can we fail to share that love with others?”³

One should be mindful of the fact that authentic love is never an abstraction and thus in their homilies preachers make their hearers aware of the concrete manifestations of God’s love as revealed in Sacred Scriptures, in the Tradition of the Church and in the life of the assembly. Most preachers have been well schooled in identifying the manifestations of God’s love in Scripture and Tradition but less so in the living reality of the assembly. To achieve competency in the latter, it would behoove preachers to be observant to human experience; for it is there that they will find a primary source for their preaching: the presence of the Risen Lord.⁴

Preaching that mediates a dialogue between God and God’s people and is attentive to God’s self-revelation in culture, remains relatively non-existent in the training that most preachers have received. Instead what most have been taught in seminary is a method of adaptation which begins with the scriptural text and its exegesis and which in turn is adapted to a fixed message that is understood as culturally neutral. In adaptation there is very little dialogue between the culture of the faithful and the Church tradition. Unlike the unidirectional approach of adaptation, a dialogical model of preaching sets up a critical correlation between faith and culture. Perhaps the best example of this dialogical model is St. Paul’s preaching to the Gentiles. As a result of his preaching of the Gospel not only did many of his hearers convert to the faith, but so also did the Church convert to culture. It changed a fundamental tenet of the faith; that justification would no longer be found exclusively in obedience to the Law of Moses but uniquely through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul’s preaching to a Gentile culture changed his fundamental interpretation of what it meant to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Preaching and Inculturation

Inculturation is the theological term that refers to dialogue between “faith” and “culture” in the evangelizing mission of the Church. Contemporary scholarship on the topic of “culture” has placed much emphasis on a semeiotic understanding of the term. In other words, it is focused on the meaning-making of a society through the use of symbols and social systems. Consequently, to understand a culture one must be able to read the patterns of meaning embodied in the symbols and social practices of a specific human group. In the context of the Church’s evangelizing mission, “culture” is the gateway through which the Gospel can be communicated;

² *EG*, § 137

³ *EG*, § 8.

⁴ See: Mary Catherine Hilbert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum), 1997.

for it is through culture that the dialogue between God and God's people occurs. The word "culture" appears 74 times in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Dialogue with culture is fundamental to evangelization because it determines how a human group understands itself and the world around it and how God is expressed through its social practice and symbolic activity. Moreover, *Gaudium et Spes* reminds us that the human person can "achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture" and that whenever "there is a question of human life, nature and culture is intimately linked together."⁵ Consequently culture is an all-encompassing reality that frames every aspect of human knowledge and action.⁶ "No human society and no human individual," says Orlando Espín, "can even dream of the possibility of existing without culture. That dream itself would be a cultural exercise, made possible precisely by the culture of the dreamer."⁷

Two final points in reference to culture as it pertains to the preaching mission of the Church need to be made. First, each culture is unique. There are no two cultures that are identical because each is shaped by the uniqueness of climate, history, geography, social practices, symbolic structure and the cultural markers that are outgrowth of acculturation. Thus, while culture is a universal reality, it is always manifested in the particularity of a specific society in a specific moment in history. Second, culture is a dynamic reality. Therefore it is always changing because of the natural processes of acculturation, historical movement, changes in climate patterns, technological advances, evolutionary processes and a myriad of other factors. Because culture is a dynamic reality, the Church's evangelization praxis must also change and evolve if it is to remain relevant to the culture in which it subsists.

Faith can be understood generically as a relationship between God and humanity wherein God initiates the relationship. It is God who communicates unconditional love for us and invites us to in turn love God's creatures. In essence this is an invitation from the Father to build the reign of love, peace and justice in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. For the Christian faithful this invitation is most often mediated through the words and deeds of preachers and evangelizers in the particularity of time and culture.

Because culture is the fundamental interpretative lens for human understanding, faith must be communicated through the specific culture of a people so they will know that they are loved by God and are called to pass that love on in faith. The message of God's liberating love for the human person is made to all humanity but it can only be heard and understood when it is enveloped in the patterns of meaning of a specific human group in a specific moment in history. In other words, faith is only realized in the particular; universals are only determined from the particular.⁸

⁵ *Gaudium et Spes*, § 53.

⁶ *EG*, §115.

⁷ Orlando Espín, "Grace and Humanness: A Hispanic Perspective," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Studies* 2 (1994), 134.

⁸ Yves Congar, "Christianity as Faith and Culture," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 18, no. 4 (1981): 304.

But faith necessitates that the human person affirmatively respond to God's call to love God and neighbor. Consequently, not only is the faith proclaimed through culture, the human response to the call of faith is also bound by culture because faith is always manifested in the concrete. The response to God's call is not primarily a private matter; a simple "yes" to God articulated in the silence of the believer's heart. The affirmative response to God's call to love is a concrete act and therefore it occurs within a specific culture in time and space. For example, faith that is expressed in the loving acts of feeding the hungry, tending to the needs of your child, caring for a sick relative or forgiving a friend are concrete actions that take place in the context of human interaction in history and thus in culture. So also is the ritual celebration of the faith through symbolic and metaphorical activity in the liturgy.

Finally, preaching as dialogue between God and God's people must be rooted in a theology of revelation that sees culture as locus of God's self-disclosure. This is no novelty for those who believe in the incarnation, in the Bible, in the presence of Christ in the Church throughout history and in Christ's four-fold presence in the liturgy. Through a theology of revelation the preacher presides over a dialogue between faith and culture aware that these are both loci of God's self-revelation. Thus, preaching as inculturation is a critical correlation between faith and culture. Consequently, the Church in its evangelization effort calls the culture to conversion but it must also be open to being converted by the culture through which the risen Christ is encountered by the workings of the Spirit.

Inculturation and U.S. Hispanic Catholicism

As demonstrated, inculturation can only be understood in the concrete. To this end I move to the prism of U.S. Hispanic experience. There has been a Hispanic presence in what is now the U.S. since the year 1513. In 1565 the first Hispanic township was founded in what is now St. Augustine, Florida. To the west, Hispanics had settled parts of New Mexico by 1598. Today there are 53 million Hispanics in the nation, making the U.S. the second-largest Hispanic country in the world following Mexico. There are more Hispanics in the U.S. than in Spain, Argentina, Colombia or any other Spanish-speaking country.⁹

Most U.S. Hispanics are of Mexican descent (65%), followed by Puerto Rico (9.4%), El Salvador (3.8%), Cuba (3.6%), and the Dominican Republic (3%). While the Hispanic population in the U.S. is poorer and less schooled than the national average, Latinos are well represented across the socio-economic landscape of the republic. There are Latino families that have been in the country since the 16th century and those that have recently arrived. Some speak Spanish primarily, others code switch between Spanish and English, and some speak no Spanish at all. As these statistics demonstrate, the U.S. Hispanic community is not a homogenous group. The diversity within the Hispanic community has led to a systematic reflection on the topic of inculturation in the context of this highly diverse community on the part of pastoral agents and theologians alike.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013.

While U.S. Latino theologies and pastoral praxes have engaged many different aspects of Hispanic culture, there are four markers that have been recurrently addressed by Hispanic ministers and the theological academy. First, in “modern liberal” Western cultures the prevailing anthropology is one that sees the human person as an individual, autonomous and independent self. Hispanic cultures tend to reject this individualistic understanding of the human person.

Instead, the operative anthropology for many Hispanics is one that sees the “self” defined by one’s webs of relationships. The “modern liberal individual” of the West does find value in relationships and in community but these are not seen as essential to the development of the person. In contrast, Hispanics tend to see relationship and the sense of belonging to a community as inseparably linked to their identities and intrinsically essential to human flourishing.¹⁰ Second, the Hispanic experience can be said to be, for better or worse, one of “otherness.” This notion is rooted in the fact that Hispanics of Latin American ancestry share the experience of *mestizaje*—a genetic and/or cultural mixture—between Spaniards and Amerindians, or Spaniards and Africans, that renders them neither Spanish nor Amerindian nor African. The same can be said of the *mestizaje* that is fruit of the Hispanic-American experience.¹¹

Third, our Hispanic co-religionists in the U.S. have embraced an ecclesiology of communion in faith and mission and in the commitment to fully participate in the life and ministry of the Church.¹² From this ecclesiology flows a theology of ministry rooted in the priesthood of the faithful. The emphasis that is placed on the baptismal responsibility to ministry among U.S. Hispanic Catholics in part has come out of necessity. For example, there are approximately 34,000,000 Hispanic Catholics (45%-50% of the Church in the U.S.) yet only 7.45% of the priests are Hispanic (approximately 3,000)¹³ and the percentage of Hispanic religious is under 5%. For many Hispanic Catholics the “silver lining” in being underserved by clergy and religious is that they have embraced their baptismal call to ministry. Today, in the Latino community the tradition of faith is handed on primarily by lay ministers who enthusiastically exercise their baptismal priesthood.¹⁴ Finally, and perhaps most importantly for the theology of preaching outlined here, is that Hispanics tend to share a sacramental imagination that sees God’s presence in created reality and in the common and ordinary objects and events of daily life. This sacramental imagination is often revealed in popular religiosity and its expressions in rituals, in the devotions to Mary and to saints, and the significance placed on their images, in home altars, and the like.¹⁵

As noted earlier, a preacher’s homily preparation is an exercise of inculturation where the homilist places the faith tradition in dialogue with the culture of the assembly. When preaching

¹⁰ See: Robert Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesus: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995).

¹¹ See: Virgilio P. Elizondo, *The Future Is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet*, Rev. ed. (Boulder, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 2000).

¹² See: *Encuentro & Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002), § 33-36.

¹³ See: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Hispanic Ministry at a Glance,” in www.usccb.org, (15 May 2014).

¹⁴ See: Paul Phillibert, *The Priesthood of the Faithful: Key to a Living Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005).

¹⁵ See: Orlando O. Espín, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1997),

in the Latino community the preacher engages the cultural markers outlined above: a relational anthropology that places emphasis on family and community, the Hispanic experience of *mestizaje* and the experience of dislocation that marks the life of many Latinos, an ecclesiology of communion and participation that respects the priesthood of the faithful, and a rich sacramental imagination rooted in the belief in God's immanent presence in the world. The latter of these is perhaps the most important for preaching as inculturation because without a sacramental imagination the process of inculturation is subverted. Inculturated preaching renders the homily preparation a quest for God's presence in our world which, as Pope Francis states, requires a "spiritual sensitivity for reading God's message in events." When the homily preparation is approached in such fashion it "becomes an exercise in evangelical discernment, wherein we strive to recognize—in the light of the Spirit—a call which God causes to resound in the historical situation itself."¹⁶

Through the years, I have searched for and experimented with various homiletic styles and theologies of preaching that resonated with my own preaching praxis, but I have yet to find any that surpasses what Mary Magdalene did on the day of the resurrection. In her telling of her encounter with the Lord, a fundamental theology of preaching is revealed: To preach is to unveil and point to the presence of Christ in the Scriptures, the tradition of the Church and in the culture of the assembly. Yet this task is unachievable unless the preacher authentically engages in the process of inculturation.

¹⁶ EG, § 154.

“Liturgical Catechesis and the Arts: A Pastoral Response to *Evangelii Gaudium*”

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“We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life...” (1 John 1:1)

Encounters with the living Christ are always incarnational, whether in the first or the 21st century. They are experiences of the whole person, mediated through the spoken and written word, human relationships, creation, liturgy and beauty in all its forms, and can never be reduced to abstract ideas, no matter how enlightening. All this we know as Dominicans who are an “evangelizing community” along with the entire Church, encountering and contemplating God’s eternal Word and sharing the fruit of our study and prayer in diverse ministries and styles of life. And so, the apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), resonates deeply within our minds and hearts. The “Joy of the Gospel” is something we have all experienced and are eager to share.

My response to this inspiring document is influenced by who I am as a Dominican, pastoral minister, and educator. For the purposes of this essay, I will focus on those areas of EG which serve as a springboard for reflection on liturgical catechesis and the arts. My hope is that you will find something of interest and value here to stimulate your own further thought and study.

Part One: Liturgy and Contemplative Participation

“The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.” (EG §24)

In this succinct statement, Pope Francis declares his conviction concerning the integral relationship between our mission as a Church and our communal worship. He reminds us that through participation in the liturgy we remember and express our identity as disciples and evangelizers of the Gospel, and are strengthened to live accordingly. In this he echoes the vision of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) which states that liturgy “... is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.” (SC §14) This lofty claim is realized whenever believers enter into and allow themselves to be touched by the transforming grace of God revealed in Christ and made present in the liturgy “by means of signs perceptible to the senses.” (SC §7)

We know that liturgy invites and engages our external and internal participation in multiple ways and at many levels, both verbally and non-verbally. Among these are the symbolic languages of space, time, sight, speech and sound, embodied postures and gestures, taste, and smell. Alone and together, they open potential pathways for sacramental encounter with Christ through the action of the Holy Spirit. In particular, the attraction of beauty, expressed through multi-sensory art forms which serve the liturgy, has the ability to captivate the human spirit and make us more attentive to the divine presence in our midst.

None of this takes place automatically or without our willing cooperation and personal engagement. But with these, members of a gathered assembly gradually grow in their ability to recognize the hidden dimension of the sacred mystery they celebrate through sacramental forms. Encounter with and response to the presence of Christ in presiding minister, Eucharistic species, Word, and praying Church depends upon consciousness of this four-fold presence, an awareness fostered by liturgical arts as well as preaching. More than one writer has identified the quality of authentic liturgical participation as “contemplative,” not in a restrictive or exclusive sense but rather as the mature flowering of grace available to all believers. Becoming more attentive to God’s saving action within the liturgy often leads the way to a deeper perception of divine presence in the ordinary events of life as well.

Mary Collins, O.S.B., has this to say: “Contemplatives are *attentive to presence*. They are *present to* the mystery within which all life is lived. They are *alert to* and *wait for* manifestations of the sacred within the mundane. They see traces of divine grace even in the shards of human brokenness and absurdity.”¹ Collins connects the cultivation of such alertness within life and within liturgical participation. In a similar vein, Kathleen Hughes, R.S.C.J., suggests that liturgy might rightly be called “contemplation in common” since it is there that we are invited to develop an awareness of divine presence expressed in multiple modes, even in the faces of those with whom we gather.²

An indispensable component of such development or formation is regular reflection on the meaning of our liturgical experience, since liturgy expresses meaning not in an explanatory, didactic fashion, but in a metaphoric, evocative way.³ This meaning is embedded within symbolic actions as well as words and engages the totality of who we are: emotion and imagination, memory and reason, mind and body.

Part Two: Liturgical Catechesis and Mystagogy

“All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma, which is reflected in, and constantly illumines, the work of catechesis, thereby enabling us to understand more fully the significance of every subject which the latter treats.” (EG §165)

For Pope Francis, the Church is “first and foremost” a pilgrim people who advance together toward God on a communal journey of conversion, growth and transformation, always in need of going more deeply into the heart of the Gospel through ongoing catechesis and formation. He insists that this process is not primarily a matter of doctrinal instruction but of growth in Christ and that education and catechesis are at the service of this growth. (EG §163) The same might be said of the formative power of liturgy which, over time, shapes within engaged believers the spirit of Christian discipleship.⁴ The connection between liturgy and catechesis is acknowledged in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “Liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the sacraments to the mysteries.”⁵

¹ Mary Collins, *Contemplative Participation* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1990), p. 82. Emphasis is mine.

² Kathleen Hughes, *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999), p. 24.

³ Gilbert Ostdiek, “Liturgical Catechesis” in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, p. 171.

⁴ See Gilbert Ostdiek, “Liturgy as Catechesis for Life,” in *Liturgical Ministry* 7 (Spring, 1998) 76-82.

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: William H. Sadlier, 1994, §1075).

Liturgy, catechesis and kerygma were closely linked in the early church and once formed an integral cycle of pastoral practice.⁶ Throughout Christian history, however, multiple factors contributed to the weakening of this relationship. By the 19th century catechesis had become separated from worship, essentially reduced to a question and answer format associated primarily with children.

Major renewal movements in both catechesis and liturgy progressed on parallel but separate paths throughout much of the 20th century. In 1972, the renewed Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults reintroduced a more dialogical relationship between liturgy and catechesis once again. In particular, the revival of *mystagogy*, a process of theological reflection and interpretation occurring throughout the fifty days of Easter, opened up new possibilities for liturgical catechesis even beyond the Rite itself.

Mystagogy as a discreet period of post-baptismal catechesis is referred to by Pope Francis in §166: “[mystagogic initiation] ... is a progressive experience of formation involving the entire community and a renewed appreciation of the liturgical signs of initiation.” Mystagogy, more broadly understood as a method of liturgical catechesis, is a reflective process which may take place at any time.⁷ Indeed, liturgy itself is inherently mystagogical. For Kathleen Hughes, the liturgical event, when carried out in an intentional way which takes seriously the power of metaphorical speech and symbolic action to facilitate encounter with the mystery of God, is “first level mystagogy” or *mystagogia prima* if you will.⁸ The entire sacramental life and experience of a faith community is proper matter for mystagogical reflection. Hughes outlines a gradual and organic progression from liturgical participation and awareness to reflection on experience, to openness and reception of meaning, to transformation of life.⁹ A powerful example of early mystagogical reflection, familiar to many of us, is part of St. Augustine’s sermon on the Eucharist: “If you, therefore, are Christ’s body and members, it is your own mystery that is placed on the Lord’s table! It is your own mystery that you are receiving! You are saying Amen to what you are: your response is a personal signature affirming your faith.”¹⁰ His insight is timeless and continues to open our eyes to the deeper meaning of familiar liturgical actions and responses.

Full, active and conscious participation in liturgy is about mindful engagement, not mere formalism. The evocative power of the arts serves an irreplaceable ministerial role in fostering this kind of engagement. Artistic media such as music, iconography, poetic texts and architecture are therefore invaluable sources for mystagogical reflection and liturgical catechesis. Pope Francis implies such a connection in his treatment of the “way of beauty.”

⁶ Ostdiek, NDSW.

⁷ “Mystagogy” comes from the Greek, meaning “interpretation of mystery” or the “teaching of mystery.”

⁸ Her observation is based on the much-touted claim that liturgy is *theologia prima* or first level theology, the most immediate enacted expression of who we are and what we believe as a Church.

⁹ Hughes, pp. 25-28.

¹⁰ Augustine, Sermon 272.

Part Three: The Way of Beauty

“Every form of catechesis would do well to attend to the ‘way of beauty’ (via pulchritudinis)... Every expression of true beauty can thus be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus.”(EG §167)

Pope Francis develops the topic of beauty as an inherent quality of Christian discipleship and evangelization in the section entitled “Kerygmatic and Mystagogical Catechesis.” Beauty, of course, has traditionally been considered a divine attribute, along with goodness and truth. However, the pope’s reference to the “way of beauty,” or *via pulchritudinis*, specifically highlights a key theme explored by Benedict XVI during his pontificate and officially articulated on the occasion of the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture in 2006. A brief overview of that document is enlightening and relevant to our discussion.

The document, “*Via Pulchritudinis, Privileged Pathway for Evangelization and Dialogue*” eloquently proposes a creative ecclesial response to the signs and challenges of our times. Three pathways of beauty are outlined by Pope Benedict: first, the *Beauty of Creation*; second, the *Beauty of the Arts*; and third, the *Beauty of Christ*, especially as encountered in the beauty of the liturgy. Not surprisingly, considerable attention is devoted to the philosophical underpinnings of each topic. However, the three pathways also include concrete pastoral proposals for utilizing sacred art inspired by Christian faith in religious formation and catechesis, especially that which is part of the illustrious artistic heritage of the Church. Mention is also made of the “Letter to Artists” of John Paul II (1999) which attempted to rekindle the dynamic relationship existing between artists and the Church throughout the ages. It is abundantly clear that Pope Francis fully intended to affirm and build upon the initiatives of both his predecessors regarding the *Via Pulchritudinis*. In so doing, he stimulates the interest of pastors, catechists, artists and many others to further investigate both documents. We are certainly among them.

Dominicans have long understood artistic expression as a compelling way to preach the Gospel. Our tradition includes makers as well as patrons of the arts who recognized the revelatory power of artistic expression. The frescoes of Fra Angelico at San Marco and the poetic texts of Thomas Aquinas for the Feast of Corpus Christi readily come to mind as examples of numinous works of beauty inspired by contemplative encounter with Christ in the liturgy. In image and in poetic text our brothers interpreted artistically the mystery they celebrated liturgically. In so doing, they continue to open the doors of spiritual perception and imagination for countless believers and non-believers alike.

Our apprehension of their work, however, along with so many other works of artistic beauty inspired by Christian faith, occurs in a manner somewhat removed from their original historical context. We view and appreciate them through our own contemporary lenses. How, then, might we better understand the power of the arts to function as pathways to divine encounter and vehicles of mystagogical reflection and catechesis in our own day? Two perspectives are briefly offered here for consideration. The first is that of theologian David Tracy. The second comes from the work of liturgical scholar Janet Walton.

Tracy suggests there is a constant dialogue between persons and artistic media which is at the core of understanding their formative and transformative power. This process is a kind of “play” which involves setting aside habitual forms of control and self-consciousness which are part of everyday life. He writes: “In our actual experience of the work of art, we move into the back-and-forth rhythms of the work: from its discovery and disclosure to a sensed recognition of the essential beyond the everyday; from its hiddenness to our sensed rootedness; from its disclosure and

concealment of truth to our realized experience of a transformative truth, at once concealing and revealing.”¹¹ To enter into the play of interaction with the arts implies a certain receptivity and letting go; a willingness to be changed. Tracy continues: “In allowing ourselves to experience art we are transformed, however briefly, into the mode of being of the work of art where we experience the challenge, often the shock, of a reality greater than the everyday self, a reality of the paradigmatic power of the essential that transforms us.”¹²

Tracy’s insights apply equally well to interaction with art forms both outside of and within worship. They provide a glimpse into the process of participation into which we are lured by the external *percepta* or sensory modes of artistic expression: visual, auditory, spatial, kinesthetic, etc. Walton’s examination of the relationship between the arts and communal worship offer implications for mystagogy as well. She names and describes several qualities common to all artistic media which enable them to provide access to the transcendent dimension of worship.¹³ Of these, two are most pertinent here: *meaning* and *memory*.

The *meaning* disclosed by the arts is conveyed in a way unique to each medium. This meaning cannot be expressed in any other way nor translated into any other form. The meaning of the song is in the singing; the meaning of dance, in the dancing; the meaning of architecture in the experience of space. These meanings are not logical or linear but non-discursive, intuitive, embodied meanings open to multiple interpretations at multiple levels.¹⁴ In this sense, artistic forms have much in common with other symbolic actions and expressions integral to liturgy which can be explored through mystagogical reflection and catechesis.

Memory: Walton argues that the arts keep alive not only the sensory information associated with past experiences, but also the spirit embodied in them. This is true for both personal and communal memories. Such memories sometimes surface to conscious awareness during liturgical worship but are often stirred at deeper levels. This is why attention to feelings as well as memories is essential to the retrieval of liturgical experiences during mystagogical reflection. Artistic forms which sustain our attention during the liturgy also serve as avenues for reflection at a later time.¹⁵

¹¹ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), p. 114.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Janet Walton, *Art and Worship: A Vital Connection* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), pp. 70-87. Her list includes particularity, meaning, revelation, illusion, emotion, awareness conversion, memory and values.

¹⁴ Philosopher Suzanne K. Langer distinguishes between two kinds of symbols: *propositional or discursive* symbols related to logical, linear or sequential thought; and presentational or non-discursive symbols such as music, poetry, dance and the visual arts and related to intuitive insight. See *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953).

¹⁵ Two writers who have explored the use of liturgical music as vehicles of mystagogical catechesis are: Edward Foley “Musical Mystagogy: A Mystagogy of the Moment” in *Finding Voice to Give God Praise* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998) and Michael Driscoll, “Musical Mystagogy: Catechizing Through the Sacred Arts” in *Music in Christian Worship* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005).

Conclusion

This essay set out to explore key areas of EG which offer implications for liturgical catechesis and the arts. These have included Pope Francis' thought-provoking views on liturgy, catechesis and the "way of beauty." Along the way we have also reflected on the incarnational nature of personal and communal encounters with Christ, the contemplative dimension of authentic liturgical participation, the value of mystagogy as a form of liturgical catechesis, and the multi-sensory ministerial role of arts both within liturgy and in the process of mystagogical reflection.

We have touched upon our Dominican tradition of preaching through the arts which continues to unfold today in our sisters and brothers who are contemporary painters, writers, musicians, composers, dancers, photographers, iconographers, calligraphers, film makers, videographers and architects. Through the beauty of their work, countless women and men will be invited to encounter the beauty of Christ, the Word incarnate.

The Joy of the Gospel is something which all people are called to see, hear, taste, touch and celebrate. Melody, color, line, texture, space and movement can be provocative vehicles for expressing this intangible reality which ordinary language is scarcely able to communicate. Yet we know that the most beautiful manifestation of Christ's presence will always be a radiant community of faithful disciples, nourished by Word and sacrament and aware of its mission of service to a world incredibly loved by God.