

SAINTS MARTIN de PORRES, O. P. & JUAN MACIAS, O. P. DISCIPLES OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

“The world exists for everyone, because all of us were born with the same dignity. Differences of color, religion, talent, place of birth or residence, and so many others, cannot be used to justify the privileges of some over the rights of all. As a community we have an obligation to ensure that every person lives with dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her integral development.”¹

Introduction

Our world today is suffering from the effects of many illnesses which have varied complex causes, for example, the coronavirus and infectious diseases, others due to chronic illnesses, still others caused by a society and culture infected with an ethic of discrimination, indifference and racial injustice. In these instances, human dignity, freedom and human flourishing through mercy and charity for every person who has ever been born remains elusive. Captured in this culture of suffering are most notably the lost, the last, the least valued among us especially victims of injustice, persons of color, discrimination, the unwanted, immigrants, those harmed by abuse, the unloved and our brothers and sisters who are abandoned, marginalized, and forced to live on the peripheries of our communities in deafening anonymity. The issues and concerns about the violation of the civil rights of persons of color, racial and cultural inequities, discriminatory legislative mandates, incivility and systemic prejudices, and intolerance of alternative views infects and disables our abilities to reclaim human dignity, freedom, human flourishing and secure an enduring peace

The whole Dominican Family assumes responsibility for preaching and the salvation of souls and exercises the privilege and obligation to do the Holy Preaching from wide varieties of pulpits; journeying wherever healing is desperately needed among the poor, the destitute, the abandoned, the unwanted, and victims of discrimination. Proclaiming the Word of God from many pulpits, Dominicans: Friars, Nuns, Apostolic Sisters, the Laity preach, not merely with words – but with the Word of God that lives in their hearts and in their actions in solidarity with others. It is indeed the privilege of all members of the Dominican Family to announce the Kingdom of God to all those yearning for the message of salvation.

We have been called to actively advocate and facilitate positive change, to remove oppressive conditions that crucify humanity and violate freedom, and to shape intervention strategies, legislation, social and public health policies that affirm the dignity and freedom for every person. Where should we begin to bring healing and hope to one another, to our families, colleagues, communities and nation?

Modeling the lives of Saints Martin De Porres and Juan Macias who promoted a trilogy of three critical behaviors in their care for others, helps us to understand the breadth and depth of the moral actions before us, namely:

- ❖ *diversity*: celebrating and valuing the uniqueness and differences among every person;
- ❖ *equity*: providing the fairness, equal treatment, and the conditions for protecting and achieving human potential among all persons, communities, and societies; and
- ❖ *inclusivity*: creating and promoting environments for welcoming, belonging, and valuing all persons regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, culture, and religious beliefs;

Through the art of human caring, we are gifted with the ability to be present to our suffering brothers and sisters and to listen attentively as only they can describe their unique experiences. Only when we are free and willing to carefully listen to them - to hear their pain and invite them to articulate their woundedness, their anger and frustrations, their hopes,, fears and experiences of abuse and experience something of their journeys, can we gain their respect as we enter into authentic healing relationships. Only then can we as a caring community in solidarity with our alienated brothers and sisters and one another, accompany them to an enduring peace sustained through human dignity, freedom and human flourishing which is the very foundation for assuring diversity, equity, and inclusion that can be acknowledged, protected and celebrated in every person.

Saints Martin de Porres, O. P. and Juan Macias, O. P.: Their Ministries

Saints Martin de Porres, O.P. and Juan Macias, O.P., seventeenth century Dominican Friars, lived in the same city of Lima, Peru with two other saints, Rose of Lima and Turibius of Mongrovejo, Archbishop of Lima. Their lives and ministries are the cause of great interest in the work of evangelization, not only because of their holiness, but also because of their presence and importance for the Church in Lima at that time.

How did Martin and Juan give expression to their vocation for preaching and the salvation of souls? How did Martin and Juan make Christ present to the world through their personal witness as Dominican Friars? Rather than offering a detailed review of their many miracles, acts of charity and compassion, some of the important themes and activities that will help in understanding the message these Brothers have for our lives in today's world will be reviewed.

Juan Macias served as the porter for the Priory of St. Mary Magdalene in Lima, Peru for twenty-two years. In this unique role, he was the first to meet those coming to the Priory, poor and rich alike, those who sought counseling, food and clothing, as well as those searching for Christ in their lives. Juan Macias was not simply an attendant at the door of the Dominican Priory – he opened wide the door of faith and welcomed the world with hope and compassionate mercy to every person in search of healing – even for the despairing, the unwanted, and those who had no place to call home. He greeted those seeking shelter or food, and all who sought refuge and security, especially those who were far from the practice of the faith. Through this unique and open door into Dominican life, he was a witness of Christ to others by his presence to them, by listening to them; especially to the sick, the disabled and the disfigured, the unwanted, homeless and victims of discrimination of the city of Lima. His basket of provisions, food for the body and the soul, was full and distributed from freely without limit. In addition, when he could not personally collect sufficient provisions for the poor, he would send his burrow alone, baskets on its back, into the city to seek rations of food. The heroic virtues and the many miracles, documented in the testimonies of his beatification and canonization, attest to the authentic expression of his Dominican vocation as a disciple of diversity, equity, and inclusion – the same qualities that are attributed to St. Dominic. This was Juan Macias' preaching – God's message of salvation, the message of hope, the message of enduring love for every person without exception or limitation.

Martin De Porres' ministry was expressed through a different door of evangelization, that of caring for the sick and the dying of his Dominican community, of those among the despised of the streets of Lima and beyond, and especially those who had lost hope. Assigned as the community infirmarian of Holy Rosary Priory in Lima, which at the time numbered nearly three

hundred friars, Martin applied his skills acquired as a barber-surgeon to the brothers of the community. Caring for his brothers was his first preaching. Like his brother, Juan Macias, who lived at St. Mary Magdalene Priory in another section of a then-sprawling city of Lima, Martin also cared for those who also came to the door of the Priory seeking help. So concerned was he with how he might find others who needed help, Martin would travel the streets of Lima and beyond and bring the sick home and into his cell to nurse their wounds. It was on more than one occasion that he was admonished by his religious superior for bringing the destitute and strangers into the Dominican Community. His example and persistence in caring for the unwanted and unloved of the city of Lima was transformative for his Dominican Community as they also embraced the role of disciples of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their own ministries.

Martin's compassion and charity for the sick and the aged, bringing the Gospel of hope and healing to those who were orphaned and homeless in the slums and barrios of Lima, to those suffering from stigmatized illnesses or lifestyle, was his lived expression of the life of St. Dominic. His influence in caring for the poor and the sick of Lima resulted in the establishment of an orphanage and a children's hospital.

It is reported in historical records that Martin De Porres, his Dominican Brother, Juan Macias, and their Dominican Sister, Rose of Lima, were friends who met on occasion. While there is little information about how they may have collaborated in their ministries, we are confident that they were the inheritors of the charism of St. Dominic and that each in his or her own expression of the Holy Preaching were faithful disciples of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Their encounters with one another and in solidarity with those they touched by bringing the Word of God, including those who had never heard about God, those who had heard and still did not believe, and those who were far from the practice of the faith, were for them an encounter with Christ, an authentic Dominican Moment.

Our Dominican Mission Today

What do the lives of our Brothers Martin de Porres and Juan Macias mean for us today? What themes evident in their lives of contemplative prayer, preaching, evangelization and caring with compassion have relevance for our global world and for our own response to the threats that violate the moral values of diversity, equity and inclusion?

If we have been awakened and informed of systemic changes in our world today, we cannot help but be aware of the plight of the poor, persons of color, the disenfranchised, the unwanted, the unloved, and those who have no place to call home. We find these persons, our brothers and sisters, in our families, in the places where we work, in our neighborhoods, schools and in the streets of our cities, and indeed throughout the world. Their numbers are legion. We know too well that the moral compass of life has dramatically shifted away from a moral ethic that promotes and defends human dignity and freedom toward an ethic built on moral relativism, individualism, absolute autonomy, and the commodification of the human person.

When preparing this essay, I searched for references to human dignity and how this moral principle may have guided the ministries of Martin de Porres and Juan Macias. I soon realized that "human dignity", is suitably applied to the needs of the poor and sick. It remains the case that the notion of human dignity, although the concept begins to develop in the sixteenth century, appears in Church documents only in the twentieth century. What is important to observe is that the fundamental ethical principles of human dignity, freedom, equality, and respect for all persons across the continuum of life from conception to natural death, as these values were

realized by Martin and Juan in their ministries of preaching and evangelization in caring for the poor, the sick, and the unloved, find expression today in the Dominican Family.

The ministry of disciples of diversity, equity and inclusion to those in distress that we find in the life of St. Dominic and which was lived, breathed and embraced by his brothers and sisters, finds its roots clearly in Jesus' own ministry to the sick, to the dying, to those troubled in any way and especially to the despised of his day. Saint Dominic clearly enjoined this mission on his brothers when he spoke his last words to them: *keep charity*. Caring for one another with compassion, affirming and protecting human dignity and freedom, living the virtue of charity and practicing forgiveness toward all, valuing the dignity and sacredness of human life of every person comprise the gift that these noble friars, Martin de Porres, O.P. and Juan Macias, O.P. embody. They shared St. Dominic's imperative toward charity with all those who came to them seeking healing and hope. This gift is deeply embedded in the genetic code of all those brothers and sisters who are called to Dominican Life. It is also the genetic code that should appear in those persons who are called to be followers of Christ. Thus, they become brothers and sisters to one another.

In his solicitude for the world, Christ calls, in each age, persons to take care of His people -- no exceptions -- every one of them. Each of us must be free and empowered to respond to the radical call that evangelization evokes; to open our doors to those who seek healing and hope as did Martin and Juan: to console the sick and the abandoned in their darkest hour wherever they may be found; to believe and then to proclaim that every person born into the world is worthy of our respect and of our unlimited love regardless of the reason for their illness or their station in life. The work of healing remains the work of Jesus Himself. We stand on holy ground inasmuch as we have become by Baptism brothers and sisters to one another and to Jesus himself.

Bringing Hope and Healing to Our World

Our world has been seriously wounded by many pathologies. In the healing profession, wound healing occurs only after all dead tissue has been removed and the virus or bacteria responsible for the infection has been eliminated through the use of medication and careful wound management. With excellent care, under the careful supervision of competent healers, new cells are free to grow, multiply and mature into vibrant and healthy tissues and immune systems that promote and support sustained strength to the world.

To accomplish this wound healing in the world, new ministries of women and men religious, qualified counselors, and clinicians experienced in health care and trauma, are urgently needed to respond to the moral catastrophe in our world and in our culture in new and different ways. Given the current issues, a new ministry of healing through education, collaborative initiatives and direct encounters with individuals and groups is urgently needed. It will require multiple initiatives with other established organizations, ministries and congregations. to bring an enduring healing and hope to our suffering sisters and brothers and to wounded communities of our global world.

Modeling the ministries of St. Martin de Porres and St. Juan Macias and responding to the call of Pope Francis² and the Master of our Order,³ as Preachers of Grace and as missionaries

and disciples of hope and healing, we must open our hearts and welcome those living on the outmost fringes of society; fringes which society has itself created. We must welcome those into the human family whose voices have been drowned out by the humiliating indifference of others; and to heal these wounds through reaffirming their human dignity, freedom and promoting human flourishing.⁴ This is a unique call of a prophetic mission where all members of the Dominican Family, committed to proclaiming the Word of God can bring healing and hope to a wounded world.

In His love for all persons, in every age, Christ calls persons to take care of His people, every one of them, without exception. All Dominicans are called to participate in the New Evangelization for this time, for this age, and for this world. Dominicans respond to the radical call that evangelization evokes: to believe and then to proclaim that every person born into the world is worthy of respect and of unlimited love regardless of the reasons for their circumstances or their station in life. Dominicans accept the radical call to open their hearts to those who seek healing and hope, to accompany all those affected by the circumstances of the cultures of abuse, incivility, human trafficking and discrimination due to age, color, culture, ethnicity, and life-style, the broken, the abandoned, the unwanted, and the unloved in their darkest hour wherever they may be and wherever they call home.

Following the ministries of Martin de Porres, O. P. and Juan Macias, O. P. as disciples of diversity, equity and inclusion, we are reminded of the call of Pope Francis where he appeals for peace, justice and fraternity in the following principles that we implement together:

- ❖ *In the name of God, who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love and peace.*
- ❖ *In the name of the innocent human life that God has forbidden to kill, affirming that whoever kills a person is like one who kills the whole of humanity, and that whoever saves a person is like one who saves the whole of humanity;*
- ❖ *In the name of the poor, the destitute, the marginalized and those most in need, whom God has commanded us to help as a duty required of all persons, especially the wealthy and those of means;*
- ❖ *In the name of orphans, widows, refugees, and those exiled from their homes and their countries; in the name of all victims of war, persecution, and injustice; in the name of the weak, those who live in fear, prisoners of war and those tortured in any part of the world, without distinction;*
- ❖ *In the name of peoples who have lost their security, peace and the possibility of living together, becoming victims of destruction, calamity and war;*
- ❖ *In the name of human fraternity, that embraces all human beings, unites them and renders them equal;*
- ❖ *In the name of this fraternity torn apart by policies of extremism and division, by systems of unrestrained profit or by hateful ideological tendencies that manipulate the actions and*

future of men and women;

- ❖ *In the name of freedom, that God has given to all human beings, creating them free and setting them apart by this gift;*
- ❖ *In the name of justice and mercy, the foundations of prosperity and the cornerstone of faith;*
- ❖ *In the name of all persons of goodwill present in every part of the world;*
- ❖ *In the name of God and of everything stated thus far we declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation in the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard.⁵*

As disciples and advocates of diversity, equity and inclusion, as Dominicans we are called to:

- ❖ bring healing and hope to one another in community and among all we serve;
- ❖ move with courage and daring ingenuity in bringing the Face of Jesus, the Face of mercy and compassion, to all those affected by this moral catastrophe who are far from the faith, and those who have lost hope and trust;
- ❖ create caring pathways and new bridges for those brothers and sisters who have been abandoned to be welcomed back to the human community where their dignity, freedom and human flourishing can be affirmed, protected, and celebrated;
- ❖ collaborate with others to change cultures and systems of oppression that violate human dignity and crucify humanity;⁶
- ❖ design programs of formation, education and ministry that will focus on the development of disciples that promote diversity, equity and inclusion among all person, families, communities and nations; and
- ❖ have the courage and authentic commitment to journey with the least, the last and the lost, to listen to them, and accompany them as pilgrims of Calvary in search of healing, hope, and an enduring peace.

Our lived response to fulfilling this mission will not be any easier today than it was in the times of Martin de Porres and Juan Macias. If we are to live out our call to be disciples and to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion among all people, we must remain spiritually grounded in prayer, in the Gospels, and be relentless in our devotion to the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Charity. Through various encounters with Jesus, we will have the courage and commitment, as he did, to engage in preaching and evangelization in radical ways – to open new and unfamiliar

doors and pathways and be unafraid to walk through them. Like St. Martin de Porres and St. Juan Macias, we too will discover that we are called to live and minister along the lines of human brokenness, to respond to all persons especially those who have been abused, to protect and rescue our brothers and sisters who live in families, in communities, and in nations, particularly those who live under oppressive conditions that crucify humanity in its flesh and in its unity.⁷ In this encounter, we will experience the privilege and the grace to see, to touch, to nourish, and to care for our brothers and sisters, all of whom reveal the very face of Christ in distressing disguise.

O Mary, Protector of our Order, St. Martin de Porres and St. Juan Macias, disciples of diversity, equity, and inclusion, accompany us through this darkness into the newness of life. Infuse the wounds of our world with the antibiotics of grace. Nurture the development of healthy disciples of diversity, equity, and inclusion who listen to all entrusted to our care as we bring healing and hope to the People of God. Be vigilant in watching over us and all persons entrusted to our care as the light of hope and an enduring peace is welcomed in our lives. Amen.

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¹ Pope Francis (2020). *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*. (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops): p. 51.

² Pope Francis. (2021). “Praedicator Gratiae: A Letter of the Holy Father to the Master of the Order of Preachers for the 800th Centenary of the Death of St. Dominic Caleruega,” (Rome, Italy: The Holy See Press Office.

³ Timoner, Gerard Francisco, (2021). “Praedicator Gratiae and the Grace of Preaching in the Church,” (Rome, Italy: Convento Santa Sabina, Curia Generalizia.

⁴ Ibid, Timoner (2021)

⁵ Pope Francis, (2020): pp. 130-132.

⁶ Radcliffe, Timothy. (1992). *Sing a New Song: The Christian Vocation*, (Springfield, IL: Templegate Publishers): p. 242.

⁷ Ibid. Radcliffe, Timothy. (1992).