



***THE DOMINICAN COOPERATOR BROTHERS:
MINISTERS OF MERCY AND COMPASSION***

©

*“Before time began, God called men to become – Dominican Cooperator Brothers –
Preachers of Grace – to bring healing hope, and an enduring peace to our world.”*

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I. Introduction

In his letter to the Master of the Order, *Praedicator Gratiae* Pope Francis wrote: “*In our own age, characterized by epochal changes and new challenges to the Church’s evangelizing mission, Dominic can thus serve as an inspiration to all the baptized, who are called, as missionary disciples: to reach every “periphery” of our world with the light of the Gospel and the merciful love of Christ; to cooperate with others to overcome unjust economic and political structures; and to give birth to a new world where all of us are brothers and sisters where there is room for all those whom our societies discard.*”¹ He calls all Dominicans to be in the forefront of a renewed proclamation of the Gospel, one that can speak to the hearts of the men and women of our time and awaken in them a thirst for the coming of Christ’s kingdom of holiness and peace.

Brother Gerard Francisco Timoner III, OP, Master of our Order, in elaborating on Pope Francis’ call to our Order states “*Speaking either with God or about God, St. Dominic embodied a synergy of contemplation and action and exemplified a disciple-missionary, called to follow and sent to preach the way of the Gospel. It is worth pondering that the Holy Father uses the term missionary-disciple instead. Perhaps, Pope Francis is inviting us to realize that the God who sends us in mission is the same God who is present everywhere and constantly invites us to follow Him as disciples.*”²

The call of Pope Francis and the Master of our Order, to all Dominicans to serve as missionary-disciples, was a prophetic moment especially as the *Permanent Commission for the Vocation of the Dominican Cooperator Brother* continued the work entrusted to it by the 2019 General Chapter of Bien Hoa (cf. ACTA 189-198). This act of the 2019 General Chapter was an historic event but, more importantly, it was a defining moment that re-affirmed the essential presence of the vocation and ministry of Dominican Cooperator Brothers in carrying out the mission and charism of our Order in our contemporary world.

In this work, we are reminded of the invitation of Jesus “*let us cross to the other side*” (Mk: 4:35), and follow Him and his disciples as they travelled deep into pagan lands to announce the message of the kingdom, to be unafraid to cross all frontiers even to the ends of the earth, and to welcome to our common home the lost, the last, the least, the unloved, the unwanted, victims of bondage and human trafficking, and those forced to live on the periphery of human life in deafening anonymity. Amen³

Dominican Cooperator Brothers have been called by God to:

- follow St Dominic and so to follow Christ in his preaching mission;
- grow into this mission by the Word of God, by the Church, and by our Constitutions;
- respond to the need of our brothers and sisters to whom we are sent to announce the Good News of salvation (cf. Trogir 2013 n.124);
- respond especially by the poor, the blind, and the afflicted, by prisoners and offenders, by the oppressed and the marginalized (cf. Luke 4:18);
- embrace an enduring formation that envelopes the Word of God which abides in us, in the studies which we pursue, the men and women we meet, the mentalities which challenge us, the places and events in which we are immersed.

Both Pope Francis and the Master of our Order, Brother Gerard, encourage us in our deliberations to center on the needs of the Church today. With that challenge before us, the Permanent Commission believes the time has arrived to design a program of renewal for the vocation and ministry for Dominican Cooperator brothers in the Church.

II. THE BROTHER'S CALL

As followers of Christ and sons of St. Dominic, Dominican Cooperator Brothers by their Solemn Profession, as men consecrated to the Word, are commissioned to enthusiastically proclaim the Gospel in every place and in every circumstance in the world where the Face of Jesus is dimmed or not yet known. With the same passionate spirit as expressed in the life and ministry of St. Dominic and his early brothers and sisters, as they encountered the culture of the day and evangelized it, today Dominican Cooperator Brothers are uniquely called by name to catch the fire of the New Evangelization, go into world, illumine it, and to bring hope and healing to the world, especially to those living in the peripheries of human life, to talk about Jesus but to also show His Face as well.

The need for Dominican Cooperator Brothers in the work of the New Evangelization in the universal Church is urgent. Preaching and the salvation of souls is the exclusive ministry assigned to the Order of Preachers since 1216. It is the principal ministry of Dominican Cooperator Brothers but now in a new time and in a world in need of healing and hope. As we read in the Vatican Document, *“Identity and Mission of the Brother in the Church”*:

The vocation of the Brother is part of the answer that God gives to the absence of brotherhood which is wounding the world today. At the root of a Brother's vocation lies a profound experience of solidarity that essentially matches that of Moses before the burning bush: he discovers himself as the eyes, ears and heart of God, the God who sees the oppression of his people, who hears their cry, feels their anguish and comes down to liberate them. In this intimate experience, the Brother hears the call: “Come, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people out of Egypt.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The Dominican Cooperator Brother is an extraordinary treasure of the Church and absolutely essential in assuring the authentic fulfillment of our Order's world-wide mission of evangelization as envisioned by our Holy Father, St. Dominic. The biographies of Dominican Cooperator Brothers are filled with rich and storied experiences of how they have taken God's Word to millions of persons (including those with whom they live in community), some wounded, addicted and stigmatized, others unloved, unwanted and alienated or far from the faith, many living in desperate conditions, along the lines of brokenness and in places both far and near, and to those who death was imminent. It is not the work that defines the Dominican Cooperator Brother; rather it is the prophetic and evangelical witness, the unfolding of the mystery of their call to Dominican life that transforms lives, societies and cultures. The Acts of the General Chapter of Bien Hoa of 2019 emphasized this prophetic witness when it stated:

The cooperator brother is a prophetic witness to essential aspects of our common vocation as friar preachers. The fraternal character of our vocation is represented by the

*cooperator brother. He reminds us that our apostolic life, rooted in our Baptism and in our Religious Profession, is, in the first place, our way of living together. He reminds us that we are to create communities in which the Word is contemplated and mercy is shared. The brother makes an essential contribution to the particular character of our community life, strengthening it in fraternity mutual service and tenderness.*⁴

III. BEARERS OF FRATERNAL LIFE

Dominican Cooperator Brothers are consecrated men religious whose vocation is rooted in Baptism and Confirmation. Brothers are men who have freely, without condition or limitation, heard and responded to God's call to come preach with Him. In responding to this call, Brothers believe that the lived expression of their Dominican vocation, through the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity, is centered in, and radically dependent on a fraternal life devoted to prayer and liturgy, study, preaching and other ministries, and especially by caring for one another. As noted in the ACTS of the General Chapter of 1989, "*Our truly enculturated community life is our first preaching; it is a prophetic witness to and an authenticating sign of what we communicate by word of mouth.*"^vAs bearers of fraternal life, Brothers are centered at the very core of Dominican life and give witness and viability to the Holy Preaching, the ineradicable foundation for the Holy Preaching that will evangelize the world.

As men called to embrace Dominican life as non-ordained friars, Brothers are committed, courageous, free, happy and holy. As spiritual persons within the human experience, Brothers freely endure suffering and loss and willingly become vulnerable in their personal transformation and in their path to holiness in order to integrate and then to share the Gospel Message of healing with brothers in their community and then with the whole world.

The vocation of the Dominican Brother is centered in his universal call to holiness, and his mission within that call to bring himself, other brothers in his community, and all people into an intimate relationship with Jesus. This remarkable vocation, a mystery unfolding, provides a unique witness that all Dominican Friars are first consecrated religious bound together by their common religious profession, consecrated to the Word, and their commitment to the four pillars of Dominican life, namely, prayer, fraternal life, study and preaching. It is their religious profession that makes the Friars full, unlimited and unrestricted inheritors of St. Dominic's vision and the charism of our Order, expressed in our contemporary world. All are brothers of our brother St. Dominic but called to different ministries.

IV. PREACHERS OF MERCY AND COMPASSION

The identity of Dominican Cooperator Brothers is actualized in their vocation by living the worldwide mission of the Friars of the Order of Preachers. The General Chapter of Bologna of 1998, as well as several earlier General Chapters, reiterated that the ministry of Dominican Cooperator Brothers flows from their dignity as persons, and as Dominicans. The General Chapter reiterated the vital importance of the Brothers' identity and ministry in the Order. In the proceedings of the Chapter, the delegates stated unequivocally:

Since it is the whole community which preaches, the Order's mission and community life is weakened in the absence of our Brothers. Proclaiming the good news to people and in places that others cannot reach is the special charism of the Dominican Brother.^{vi}

The ministry of Dominican Cooperator Brothers, conjoined with that of their priest-brothers, is the dynamic expression of St. Dominic's vision. It empowers Brothers to enter into the lives of people and travel to places wherever the Holy Preaching is desperately needed, especially where their priest-brothers have not yet entered. Their ministry is exciting, challenging and life-giving because it is imbued and driven by the power of God's Word. The Brothers' life-long commitment through the Vows and regular observance, together with their various ministries cooperate with this Word to transform their own hearts and minds, as well as those of their brothers in community and all those to whom they are sent. Preaching from many pulpits, Brothers respond – not merely with words - but with the Word of God that lives in their hearts. Brothers can be found in ministry in many areas, for example, evangelization, education, research, fund-raising and development, management of Dominican facilities and community services, nursing and health care, health care ethics, retreat and social work, parish and pastoral ministries, caring for the poor and marginalized in our cities, and in foreign lands.

Emphasizing the gifts and talents of the person, the ministry of the Dominican Cooperator Brother is given full expression and lived out in response to the needs of his community and the Church. Dominican Cooperator Brothers, like their priest brothers, are called by Divine Providence to be contemplative preachers in the Third Millennium and are, by profession, committed and obligated to the Holy Preaching, to one another and to the whole world.

Dominican Cooperator Brothers share fully without limitations, the privilege and responsibility to announce the Kingdom of God to all those yearning for and needing His message of salvation in their lives. As authentic theologians with every breath, every action, every suffering, every joy, Dominican Cooperator Brothers preach God's message of salvation, a message of hope, a message of enduring love for all persons.

V. DOMINICAN COOPERATOR BROTHERS: A UNIQUE CALL FOR A PROPHETIC MISSION

In His love for the Church, in every age, Christ calls persons to take care of His people. Dominican Cooperator Brothers are called to participate in the New Evangelization for this time, for this age, and for the world. Dominican Cooperator Brothers 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, and every person is part of the Body of Christ regardless of the reasons for their circumstances or their station in life. Dominican Cooperator Brothers accept the radical call to open their hearts to:

- those who seek healing and hope;
- welcome the sick, the broken, the abandoned, and the unloved in their darkest hour wherever they may be and wherever they call home;

- welcome those living on the outmost fringes of society, fringes which society has itself created;
- welcome those into the human family whose voice has been drowned out by the humiliating indifference of others;
- heal these wounds through reaffirming their human dignity, freedom and promoting human flourishing.⁵

Dominican Cooperator Brothers, impelled with the power and grace of the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Charity, “go forth into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation” (Mk 16:15). As witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which crowns human history in God’s,⁶ Dominican Cooperator Brothers freely bring to others the gifts of their presence and their lives vowed to the mission of evangelization through preaching. But the greatest gift Dominican Cooperator Brothers are privileged to bring to others is the person of Jesus in the Eucharist, made flesh in each of them. This is the unique and treasured role that the whole Order serves in the *New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith (NETF)*.⁷

As a fraternal community in mission, Dominican Cooperator Brothers join with other members of the Dominican Family and proclaim God’s message of salvation, a message of hope, a message of enduring love for all person, and all those committed to their care with every breath, every action, every suffering, and every joy. As Jesus directed his apostles to “go forth into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation” (Mk 16:15), Dominican Cooperator Brothers must do the same.

As ministers of mercy and compassion, Dominican Cooperator Brothers are called to:

- a. care for one another in community, as their first preaching, and help create and then empower the Holy Preaching that will transform the world;
- b. journey with courage and daring ingenuity in bringing the Face of Jesus, the Face of Mercy, to those who are far from the faith, to those do not know God and those who have lost hope;
- c. create caring pathways and new bridges for those brothers and sisters who have been forced to live in a culture of waste to be welcomed to the human community and a common home where human dignity, freedom and human flourishing can be affirmed and protected;
- d. collaborate with others to change systems of oppression that violate human dignity, freedom and crucify humanity;
- e. redesign programs of formation, education and ministry that will welcome new vocations as well as focus on the development of ministers of mercy and compassion; and
- f. to have the courage and authentic commitment to journey with the least, the last and the lost, the unwanted and the unloved to listen to them, and accompany them as pilgrims of Calvary in search of healing, hope and the Resurrection.

Dominican Cooperator Brothers share fully with their priest brothers, without limitations, the privilege and the responsibility to announce the Kingdom of God to all those yearning for and needing His message of salvation in their lives. Brothers preach God's message of salvation, a message of hope, a message of enduring love for one another and all those committed to their care with every breath, every action, every suffering, and every joy.

The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (*Rom 12:4-8*) captures the dignity and diversity of the identity and ministry of Dominican Cooperator Brothers called to serve as ministers of mercy and compassion in the Third Millennium:

For as in one body we have parts, and all parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophesy in proportion to the faith; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

As men of faith and witnesses of hope and with courage and confidence in the *Digitus Dei*, Dominican Cooperator Brothers do not come into this world alone; they did not come to Jesus alone as they sought mercy when they asked for it as they professed their Vows; and they do not go alone to the peripheries of human life as they bring Jesus to the lost, the least and the last among us. In this prophetic journey as Dominican Cooperator Brothers of the Church we are reminded the words of St. John Paul II who wrote:

You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending in order to do even greater things.⁸

In their prophetic journey as theologians of evangelization, Dominican Cooperator Brothers, empowered by the charism of the Order and its mission, give life to the mandate of St. Paul in his letter to Timothy when he wrote:

I charge you in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and kingly power: proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and be diverted to myths. But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry (2 Tim 4:2-5).

Now let Dominican Cooperator Brothers come to Jesus, to rest, to contemplate the mystery unfolding in their midst and catch the fire of the New Evangelization. Preaching from many pulpits, Brothers respond - not merely with words - but with the Word of God that lives in their hearts.

In this work, we are reminded of the invitation of Jesus “*let us cross to the other side*” (Mk: 4:35), and follow Him and his disciples as they travelled deep into pagan lands to announce the message of the kingdom, to be unafraid to cross all frontiers even to the ends of the earth, and to welcome to our common home the lost, the last, the least, the unloved, the unwanted, victims of bondage and human trafficking, and those forced to live on the periphery of human life in deafening anonymity. Amen.

We believe that we have been called by God to follow St Dominic and so to follow Christ in his preaching mission. We are called to grow into this mission by the Word of God, by the Church, and by our Constitutions. We are called also by the need of our brothers and sisters to whom we are sent to announce the Good News of salvation (cf. Trogir 2013 n.124). We are called especially by the poor, the blind, and the afflicted, by prisoners and offenders, by the oppressed and the marginalized (cf. Luke 4:18). All this urges us towards a permanent formation: the Word of God which abides in us, the studies which we pursue, the men and women we meet, the mentalities which challenge us, the places and events in which we are immersed.

In the words of the late Pope Francis, the ministers of mercy and compassion of Dominican Cooperator Brothers must center on the needs of the Church today and in the future where peace, justice, and fraternity, hope and healing must prevail in our wounded world by embracing these principles:

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.*

As disciples and advocates of human dignity, freedom and human flourishing 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;⁹

- ❖ 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.

VI. REFLECTIONS:

For many decades the discussion of the vocation and ministry of the Dominican Cooperator Brother has been largely internally focused. We are now in a new age today where the process of listening, dialogue and caring in response to the voices and experiences of a suffering Church and world has nearly disappeared. Cardinal Radcliffe's book, *Listening Together: Meditations on Synodality* carefully articulates the need to listen again and offers suggestions in how this process can be employed. Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship* also addresses the need to engage the many groups of people, often marginalized and forgotten, into the synodality process.

As Dominican Friars, a community in mission, we are preaching God's message of salvation, a message of hope, a message of enduring love for one another and all those committed to our care.

With a prophetic vision, let us not be hesitant to re-vision the vocation of the Dominican Cooperator Brothers for ministry in the Third Millennium. Let us work in every way together to embrace and implement the call of the Holy Father, Pope Francis and Brother Gerard, Master of our Order, to be *Preachers of Grace* as missionaries and disciples. With courage and confidence in the *Digitus Dei*, bound together through our Solemn Profession in community and in mission, let us move quickly from protracted debates to definitive actions for the sake of the Gospel. Amen!

Both Pope Francis and the Master of our Order, Brother Gerard, encourage us in our deliberations to focus our attention on the urgent needs of the Church today and for the future. With that challenge before us, the Permanent Commission believes the time has arrived to design a new focused model for the vocation and ministry for Dominican Cooperator Brothers in the Church.

We believe that the vibrant and sustained renewal of our vocation and invite others to become Dominican Brothers can only occur when, like St. Dominic, we listen and then respond to the needs of all the People of God. As Preachers of Grace to the whole world, we, like our priest brothers, have the moral responsibility to listen to one another and the Church and to respond to their needs

As we move forward in inviting men to discern their future in the Church as Dominican Cooperator Brothers, let us always remember that Jesus is calling all people to help Him in

transforming our wounded world to a world of hope and an enduring peace where every person is loved. The implementation of the new vision and ministry of the Dominican Cooperator Brother is essential if we are committed to joining Jesus' ministry.

VII. Prayer to ST. MARTIN DE PORRES, O.P. FOR VOCATIONS (1579-1639)

*HE BROUGHT HEALING AND HOPE TO ALL PERSONS:
INFANTS AND CHILDREN, THE SICK, THE DYING, THE ABANDONED
THE UNWANTED. THE UNLOVED., THE WEALTHY, THE OLD,
THE DIFFERENTLY ABLED AND THE CONFUSED, THE ABUSED, THE HOMELESS,
THE POOR, THOSE IN BONDAGE, THE IMPRISONED, PERSONS OF COLOR
THOSE FAR FROM THE FAITH AND VICTIMS OF DISCRIMINATION.*

*RESPONDING TO A CALL TO FOLLOW JESUS MORE CLOSELY, HE RESPONDED TO GOD'S CALL TO
BECOME A DOMINICAN FRIAR. AS A DOMINICAN FRIAR HE WAS ASSIGNED THE MINISTRY OF HEALING
FOR THE FRIARS IN HIS COMMUNITY AND THEN FOR THE SICK, THE POOR, THE UNWANTED AND
UNLOVED IN LIMA, PERU.*

*EMPOWER ST. MARTIN TO ENCOURAGE MEN TO ACCEPT GOD'S INVITATION AND ANSWER HIS CALL TO
BECOME DOMINICAN COOPERATOR BROTHERS. AMEN*

*Permanent Commission for the Vocation of the Dominican Cooperator
Brother*

20 JULY 2026

- ii. 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.
- iii. Timoner, Gerard Francisco, (2021). *"Predicator Gratiae and the Grace of Preaching in the Church,"* (Rome, Italy: Convento Santa Sabina, Curia Generalizia).
- iv. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, (2015). *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church.* (Rome, Italy: The Congregation).
- v. *ACTS of the General Chapter of Bien Hoa.* (2019). Rome, Italy: Curia Generalizia at Santa Sabina. Chapter V. No. 189.
- vi. *ACTS of the General Chapter of Oakland.* (1989). Rome, Italy: Curia Generalizia at Santa Sabina. Chapter II, No. 3.
- vii. *ACTS of the General Chapter of Bologna* (1988). Rome, Italy: Curia Generalizia at Santa Sabina. Chapter IV. No.135,2.
- viii. Tenth General Ordinary Synod of Bishops. (2012). *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.* Rome, Italy: The Vatican.
- ix. Saint Pope John Paul II. *Vita Consecrata.* Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, No. 110.
- x. Pope Francis, (2020) *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship.* Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, pp.130-132.

