



2014: The Dominican Laity and Preaching

As the Dominican Order approaches 2016, each year has been given a special theme to ponder and 2014 is dedicated to the role of the laity in the life of the Order. The Biblical theme is from the Book of Joel chapter 3 verse 1: "*Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.*" In this month's newsletter I wish to encourage us all to a deeper appreciation of the role the Dominican laity play in promoting and supporting the mission of the Order. From the first days of the Order people were drawn to the works of these mendicant friars-preachers. In 1971 the General Chapter held in Tallaght, Ireland equated the Dominican family with the universal Dominican Order. This includes the friars, nuns, sisters and laity. In May 1991 **Damian Byrne**, then Master of the Order wrote a letter on Collaboration in the Dominican Family" It reminds us of the prophetic nature of



Angelicum Aula during lecture

Dominic's vision and our need to see the Dominican charism as shared. He wrote: *We Dominicans have a very precise identity. We are all preachers. This is our vocation. Everything in our lives is directed to this. We share this vocation and I believe that we must as groups (not always as individuals) pursue our vocation together.*

The Dominican Order was born a family. This was Dominic's design. The first foundation at Prouille was a joint foundation with a prior and prioress!

If, indeed, we are a Family we should have much to share; insights, experience, a shared hope, we should inspire one another and dream a little together. There should be a cross fertilization of experience and insight, a sharing with one another that is creative. But more, I believe we should be collaborating in ministry. We have begun, but we have only scratched the surface.

He tells us that even after Tallaght at the Chapter of Rome in 1983 the Order recommended: "*That the office of teaching in Dominican Institutes of study be exercised not just by the brothers but also by members of the other groups of the Dominican Family.*" (no. 278) And a bit later fr. Damian states: *I renew the invitation of the Bologna Symposium, which was a gathering of Brothers, Sisters and Dominican Laity to prepare those who have the desire and the competence to teach in our different international institutions: I think in a particular way of the Angelicum here in Rome, but in other countries too.* The role of the laity in the Dominican mission has developed over time.

In 2000 Master **Timothy Radcliffe** addressed the Dominican Family in Manila on the "Mission of the Dominican Family" and concluded: *The Dominican Family is our common home. We are called to be chez nous, in la nostra casa. I know that sometimes the sisters and laity can feel that in our Dominican home, the brethren are in the upper room, and they have tried to lock out everyone else. One of our biggest challenges is building a shared consciousness of the Order as the place where we all belong. To be at home means that one does not have to justify being there, that one is at ease. One is accepted just as one is. Of course each community needs its own times and its own space. We cannot all go barging into the monasteries and demanding to share the lives of the nuns. The communities of brethren and sisters and the families of the laity need their own privacy.* (cont. p. 2)

This is obvious. St Thomas says that friendship does not consist in living under the same roof or even eating at the same table “like cattle”, but in communication, in the pleasure of conversation . It means that we recognize each other as brothers and sisters. It shows in our faces, gestures and words, in the welcome we give each other.



Master **Carlos Aspiroz Costa**, in his 2002 All Saints Day letter “Proclaiming the Gospel in the Order of Preachers” wrote” *The Order was born as a Family. Friars, contemplative nuns, sisters, members of secular institutes and lay and clerical fraternities and other groups in some manner associated with the Order (among these: Dominican Youth Movement - IDYM ; Dominican Volunteers International - DVI) inspire us in the charism of Dominic. This charism is one and indivisible: the grace of preaching. It is a shared preaching with our brothers and sisters of the Order who through their baptism live the same common priesthood and who are consecrated through the same religious profession and through their promise to the same mission. Our global identity is better manifested through our collaboration with one another. This collaboration includes: praying together, planning, making decisions and completing projects from a mutual complementarity that respects equality. These projects include very diverse themes such as ministries of prayer, teaching, preaching, pastoral animation, justice and peace, the mass media, investigations and publications, as well as promotion of vocations and formation.*



International Gathering of Dominican Friars in Cairo

Master **Bruno Cadore** in his February 2013 letter “Mary: Contemplation and Preaching of the Word” stressed how essential contemplation is in preaching and evangelization when he wrote: “*Contemplare et contemplata aliis trader*”... *This motto of the Order, as we know, does not describe two sequential steps in the ministry of evangelization. We do not behave in contemplation as we would when we go to the market to acquire what we can later distribute. Certainly, this motto well indicates that there can be no preaching without contemplation. However, in*

doing so, it indicates that evangelization proceeds from contemplation while, at the same time, the latter is somehow the most precious invitation (the gift) that evangelization can offer to humanity, thereby opening with it and through it a path for the desire for Truth. This desire is the echo of that same desire of the One who comes to love us with friendship, to propose to humanity an alliance of friendship; this alliance that is “played” in each of us through the commitment of His Word to ours, or, rather, the giving of our word to listen to His: “May it be done to me according to your word”! This simple expression shows how everybody’s life can be rooted in the absolute trust in God’s Word who promises and achieves the alliance of friendship, and in the tireless watch that searches, at the heart of this alliance, the mystery of friendship in God who is the ultimate Truth.



In Jerusalem, Rome and Cairo the Order’s mission continues to thrive and the Dominican Family shares in these labors. The Board of the International Dominican Foundation is aware of the unique nature of the Dominican Family and many of our friends and supporters are part of the Dominican Family. Chapters of Dominican laity throughout the US have written in support for the works being done. There are many ways we Dominicans make real the charism of St Dominic but it is most real in the hearts and souls of so many people who profoundly ponder God’s truth, who have a sense of the prophetic vision, who dream dreams and who see what has as yet been unseen. As we look at 800 years of service to the Church the work of the International Dominican Foundation continues to dream dreams, to work to see that the vision of those whose love of Scriptures is kept alive today in Jerusalem, whose dedication to

pondering the Faith for each new generation is diligently carried on in Rome, and whose sense of prophetic promise engages other ways of Faith in dialogue and mutual trust that is made real in Cairo. In genuine gratitude to the Dominican laity and those countless men and women who share in the Dominican dream we look forward to 2014 and the new possibilities that lie ahead.



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