



# CHALLENGE

News from the Dominican Laity, Province of St. Albert the Great

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800th Year Jubilee

## Advent Marks the Start of Jubilee Year Celebrations

The Dominican Order continues gearing up for celebrations that will encompass the 800<sup>th</sup> year of Dominic's vision. In a letter to the Order, "Let Us Walk, Faithful to 'the Love We Had at First'" (Rev 2: 4), from Prouilhe this spring, Master of the Order Bro Carlos Azpiroz Costa invited all the branches of the Dominican Family to participate in the many events surrounding the emergence of the Dominican Order.

Beginning with the first Sunday of Advent (Dec. 3, 2006) and continuing through the Epiphany in 2008, "we will celebrate a Jubilee Year, dedicated to the memory of these 800 years of our contemplatives," said Bro Carlos. "We will live a "novena of years" that will take us to another important event: the 8<sup>th</sup> centenary of Pope Honorius III's confirmation of the Order with the bull, *Religiosam Vitam*, Dec. 22, 1216."

The nuns of the Order of Preachers came into being when Dominic gathered women converts to the Catholic faith in the monastery of Blessed Mary of Prouilhe. "These women, free for God alone, he associated to his 'Holy Preaching' by their prayer and penance," said Bro Carlos quoting from the document, *Liber Constitutionum Monialium Ordinis Praedicatorum*.

Bro Carlos also said that Blessed Jordan wrote these words: "The Order of Preachers had not yet been

founded; it was rather a question of its institution, as St Dominic was still dedicating himself fully to the ministry of preaching ... And so, from the death of the Bishop Diego of Osma, until the Lateran Council, approximately 10 years passed, during which Bro Dominic was practically alone in the region."

On the first day of the Jubilee some of the friars of the General Curia will celebrate the Eucharist in monasteries that the Order considers "true sanctuaries," owing to their special connection with the life of St. Dominic: the Monastery of Blessed Mary in Prouilhe (founded 1206 -1207); the Monastery of the Holy Rosary in Rome (founded 1219); the Royal Monastery of St Dominic in Madrid (founded in 1218 -1219); and the Monastery of St Dominic in Caleruega (founded in 1270).

Bro Carlos also expressed his hope that Dominican Family members may make a pilgrimage to the monasteries: "...Let us there drink of the fresh simplicity of the 'love we had at first,' feeling ourselves at the feet of Jesus, that we may be with Him and listen to Him. Let us live this time with intensity and grace, sharing with our contemplative communities the joy of their consecration, the fruitfulness of their silence, the beauty of their liturgy, their special love for the Word."

## From the President

by Ruth Kummer, OP

Many things have been happening in the Dominican Family, and many events are coming up.



The Dominican Laity Inter-Provincial Meeting will be in New Orleans on Oct. 19-22, 2006. Rep-

resentatives from the four USA provinces, a Canadian province, and a vicariate (new province in formation) will attend. Look for an article about the meeting in the next issue of the *Challenge*.

March 17-24, 2007 marks the date for our International Congress, to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The theme: "Lay Dominicans: Companions in Preaching." One representative from each province, vice-province, or vicariate, will attend. The delegates must be properly elected lay presidents of the provinces, vice-provinces, or vi-

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## Survey Shows Differences of Laity Opinion on 'Preaching'

A summarized survey of the Dominican Family on the charism of preaching was released this summer by David Edward Rocks, OP. The survey's purpose was "to stimulate wide discussion among the branches of the family; to gather data on the different experiences of preaching; and to make this known to the Dominican Family." Rocks wrote that a "vast amount of material was received" from nuns, friars, laity, and sisters.

The "Survey on the Dominican Charism of Preaching" begins with a brief background--the survey's initiation at Bologna in 1998 and its path through Providence and Krakow General Chapters. It also includes a synopsis of key issues which were part of a prior commissioned report, "The Dominican Charism of Preaching: An Inquiry," which accompanies the survey.

Among the Dominican Laity there is a clear difference of opinion, Rocks said. "Many do not perceive pulpit preaching as part of their particular calling, while others are of the opinion that this area must be developed. Many feel that a failure to do this results in the under use of many talented preachers."

"Some of the laity who participated in the survey identified certain barriers in regard to their preaching. In particular the responses showed personal, external, and education-based barriers. These things caused difficulties with the Laity living out their Dominican vocation."

"Of the Dominican Laity who participated in the survey, there was an incredibly small number who had experienced collaboration with a Dominican of another branch ... Those in leadership had experienced some degree of collaboration through their specific ministries, but in the mainstream it appears that collaboration with the laity for preaching is virtually nonexistent."

The Dominican Laity experience other forms of preaching, he said, such as good actions, verbal witness, living the Rule, prayer life, study, facilitating Bible study groups, offering advice on the Internet, and supporting the preaching of others.

The laity made comments in the survey regarding the accompanying 2001 report from the theological commission, such as, "Why weren't laity included on the commission?" There was also a feeling "that the document placed too much emphasis on liturgical preaching and did not adequately address the extra-liturgical preaching that is in the spirit of St Dominic himself," according to Rocks.

The laity also added other clarifying questions: 1) "In addition to preaching within a liturgical setting, what are the most effective non-liturgical settings for Dominican preaching by the Laity and women?" 2) "How can we find ways, under canon law, to take advantage of the special talents of all members of the Dominican Family in a liturgical setting?" 3) Should canon law be changed? 4) How can we best utilize the talents of all members of the Order to be more effective in the overall Dominican mission to evangelize and save souls? 5) How can Dominicans utilize their unique charism to respond more effectively to the challenge of preaching to the world in this period of history? and, 6) How can the laity be best prepared to assist in the preaching mission of the Order?

Rocks reported that the vast majority of the responses from the Dominican Laity came from the USA. A final report on all the results—from nuns, friars, sisters, and laity—will be presented at the General Chapter of Bogota in 2007.

## 800th Year Jubilee

## Excerpts From Bro Carlos' Opening Mass Homily at Prouilhe

by Bro Carlos Alfonso Azpiroz Costa, OP  
Master General of the Order

"We are gathered here, sons and daughters of St Dominic, who sit on the International Commissions of the Order: The members of the International Commission of Nuns, the friars who sit on the DSI Commission, and the sisters who sit on the DSI Commission. There are the members of the International Commission for the Lay Dominicans, and members of the International Dominican Youth Movement. There are members of the International Justice and Peace OP Commission and those of the DVI. The nuns that form the community of the Monastery of St Mary of Prouilhe are also taking part in this Eucharist. ...

"We are gathered here as Dominic and Catherine's Family, as the Order of Preachers. When we try to understand the words 'Order' and 'Family,' we can refer to Pope John Paul II's words in his exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*, written after the Synod of Africa. There he said: 'You (Africans) must try to build the Church as family.' We are trying to build the Order as a Family. We are using the same analogy. ...

"My first question is: Why are we trying to build the Order as a Family? ... John Paul II told the Church in Africa, and indeed the whole Church, that this word "Family" brings with it the idea of attention to the other members. Of solidarity, hospitality, a sense of welcoming, openness, trust, dialogue, and I add, docility, which is a very important element,

that helps build a life of prudence. It does not mean that I have to agree with you always, but that at least I am ready to listen to you. It grants others the possibility to say something to us, to offer a word of correction, or to affirm something. ...

**Dialogue Is Important**

"Which are the main characteristics of true dialogue, the one the Church of God needs today? ... We know that the most important instrument for dialogue we possess is the Chapter. We do not have any other means but dialogue, since no one sister or brother in Dominic's times was considered to be directly illuminated by God. God, of course, deals with us through the Community. What kind of dialogue did Dominic want for and from his sons and daughters? ...

"I think that the most beautiful description of dialogue, besides the contemplation of Jesus in dialogue with the Father, and Dominic's dialogue with God about man, and with the brothers and sisters about God, and Catherine's dialogue, is found in the words of Pope Paul VI in his first encyclical delineating the program for his pontificate: *Ecclesiam Suam*. We can find this definition in the four words he uses to give us a description of what true dialogue is. They are very important for our chapters of friars, nuns, sisters, and lay persons.

"Paul VI mentions 'clarity,' because dialogue demands that what is said should be intelligible; 'affability,' so as to be like Jesus who is meek and humble of heart; and 'confidence' in the value of our words, which is something we sometimes lose sight of. If we are aware how valuable our words are, we would use more words to encourage our brothers and sisters, and

fewer words to destroy them. And lastly, he mentions 'prudence,' which he calls 'the prudence of a teacher,' because it takes into account the person to whom one is speaking, his moral and psychological circumstances, his age, and the state one is in.

**Unanimity: Difficult!**

"I think that dialogue leads us to the true law of Dominican government, which is unanimity. It is very easy in a chapter to reach a majority of votes. I can build my majority outside the meeting, the chapter: I speak with one and with another until I have my majority prepared, and when the chapter meets, my majority is there! However, according to the Gospel and as we were reminded by our Bro

Vincent de Couesnongle, the law of Dominican living is that of unanimity. Surely, he does not speak of a mathematical majority. Unanimity means to have one soul, one heart, ... and one should build unanimity only inside our community, in the chapter. This is not easy. Indeed, it is difficult! It is quite easy to bring about a majority of votes outside the place in which our discussion is taking place and use this prepared majority in order to win a vote. It is more difficult to build and bring

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## A Message to the Members of the Dominican Family from Fanjeaux, May 2006

We, members of the International Commissions of the Dominican Order, meeting with the Master of the Order in Fanjeaux to celebrate the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St Dominic's founding of Prouilhe, wish to share with the worldwide Dominican Family our reflections, ideas, and commitments to enrich the holy preaching at this momentous time in the Order's history:

- We commit ourselves to renewing Dominic's vision of a family together in mission.
- We commit ourselves to knowing all branches of the Family better and to working together in harmony, mutual respect, and truth.
- We commit ourselves to finding spaces to preach together as Dominic's Family.
- We commit ourselves to finding new, innovative ways of preaching that will especially touch the poor, the young, and the aged.
- We commit ourselves to finding ways to link and nourish our prayer and mission.
- We commit ourselves to be more welcoming to all the other branches of the Order.
- We commit ourselves to a more attentive listening to the world as a fundamental Dominican value.
- We commit ourselves to working for justice together as a family.
- We commit ourselves to being in solidarity with those at the margins of society.

From these general commitments, kindled by the fire of Dominic's vision being present in these holy places, we urge all branches of the Dominican Family in this period of jubilee to:

- Be involved in mission by adopting local projects developed and implemented by all branches of the Order together.
- Deepen our prayer life by praying the jubilee prayer prepared for us by the nuns of the Order and joining their liturgies in their monasteries wherever possible.
- Work for justice by joining the rest of the Church in realizing the Millennium Development Goals, signed by all governments in 2000, to relieve our world of dehumanizing poverty and to promote integral human development.

These are some of the fruits of our contemplation over these days in Fanjeaux where Dominic first had his vision of establishing what became the first foundation of the Order and where he dreamed of how to set the world on evangelical fire by praising, blessing, and preaching. We encourage you all to take up these challenges, to give them flesh and to implement them, following in the footsteps of Dominic, as ways of witnessing to the Gospel in our time. (For more information on the meeting of the International Commissions at Fanjeaux, see: <http://www.800.op.org>.)

800th Year Jubilee

# Eight Hundred Years Later—Together at the Family Table

by Bro Brian J. Pierce, OP

We were all born into a family. Early on we learned that we did not choose our families; we inherited them. They are part of the “package called life.” This inheritance usually seems like a pretty marvelous thing to us, but if we are really honest, we would have to confess that at some time or other, we have wondered if there might be some way to return this “package” for a model more to our liking, more stylish. That, of course, is impossible. Our family is just that, ours. Trade-ins are not accepted.

The Church is also a family—inherited, not chosen. One day—at least for most of us—when we were just a few days or months old, some adults took us to a church, dressed us in white, sang a few songs, and poured cold water over our heads. “Welcome to the Church,” proclaimed the priest. People applauded, smiled, took photographs, and in some cases there was a little party. Of course, no one asked us if we wanted to be part of this family.

Something similar happened when we said “yes” to Dominican life, as well. Though in this case we had the freedom to choose to belong to this new family (composed of lay men and women, nuns and friars, sisters and members of the International Dominican Young Adult Movement), we did not have the privilege of being able to choose our copilgrims for this new journey. From one day to the next we found ourselves in the midst of a sea of people who were saying, “Hello, brother! How are you doing, Sister?” And that’s just the way it was—all part of the “Dominican package.”

At first this thing called Dominican Family was easy, even romantic! To be part of something so ancient and so sacred fascinated us. Learning to say, “*Contemplata aliis tradere*” in Latin—Wow! Cool! Awesome! At first one feels really strong, excited, on fire for preaching the Word of God. We wear our Dominican cross with pride—ready to be martyrs and to be fed to the lions for the sake of the Reign of God.

Unfortunately, that romanticism runs pretty thin after awhile, and we begin to look around at the people who are part of our Dominican community, and we hear ourselves murmuring under our breath: “Who invited her to be a Dominican? So now the Order receives just about anyone who comes and knocks on the door?” We begin to think that we’ve made a mistake, and at times we go out looking for a new family—more to our liking, more committed, more saintly—because this group lives neither the gospel nor the spirit of St Dominic. We decide to trade in the package. And the reason? “They tricked me.”

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciple. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his

disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when he heard this, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous, but sinners” (Mt 9:9-13).

This thing we call “following Christ” is a mystery. Even though we are called to a life of holiness, a life committed to the values of the Reign of God, we who are called are just a flock of lost and scattered sheep. We find ourselves seated one day at a table full of sinners and we are shocked. And rightly so!

What was Jesus thinking? Was he crazy? How do we proclaim the Good News of God to the whole world if we are a group that is so mediocre, so sinful, and rather worthless? What does it mean to be part of a Church and a Dominican Family so full of sinners?

This year, 2006, we celebrate the Eighth Centenary of the foundation of the community of Prouilhe and the beginnings of the Dominican Family—an event worthy to be commemorated festively. It is a year of pilgrimage and thanksgiving, and in the words of Bro Carlos Azpiroz, OP, Master of the Order, it is a year to drink “the simple freshness of our ‘first love,’ seated at the feet of Jesus, to be with him and to listen to Him.”

If those of us who are seated at the Dominican table for this Jubilee Year, drinking of the wine of the Good News and listening to Jesus, look closely enough, we will discover that we are not so different from the group of friends gathered with Jesus in Matthew’s house two thousand years ago. We are just a group of mediocre, poor, and sinful disciples—the very ones that Jesus “came to call.”

In the year 1206 Dominic welcomed into the inner sanctuary of his compassion a group of poor women—several of whom came from families who had fallen into the dualistic Albigensian heresy. It was because Dominic drew near to them that he was able to welcome them into his heart. This drawing near in solidarity was the fruit of his mendicant, contemplative poverty. It is important to remember that the mendicant poverty of Dominic was not something romantic. It flowed from his apostolic zeal. He wanted to be close to the poor and to those who suffer as a brother, as bearer of a word of hope. In Montpellier in 1206, when Dominic and Bishop Diego met with the Cistercian monks who were attempting to preach the Truth in the midst of the Albigensian heresy, they realized immediately that it was not possible to preach “from a distance,” that is, on horseback, preaching from a position of ecclesiastical power and wealth. The option for a life of mendicant poverty was an apostolic option—a decision to journey in close proximity and solidarity with the poor and those who seemed to be “like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9:36).

The goal of mendicant poverty, a part of our Dominican charism, is to be near the poor, attentive to their cry for life and justice. St Dominic

cried out in his night vigils, “Lord, what will become of the poor and of sinners?” precisely because his closeness to “the least of my brothers and sisters” (Mt 25:40) did not permit him to be indifferent. He opened himself to be wounded by the friends that he met along the way. His preaching was for them.

According to historical documents, with Dominic and the sisters at Prouilhe were some preaching companions, as well (not yet friars). And as contemplative nun and historian, Sr Barbara Beaumont, OP, points out in her marvelous article, “The Coming of the Preachers” (<http://www.800.op.org>), there were also—several months later—some lay families who united themselves to the “Holy Preaching.” The whole group was not exactly what one would call a “salvation army.” It was simply the beginning of something new, something poor and fragile, something that was apparently the will of God. At the Family table in 1206, seated next to Bro Dominic, the preacher of grace, were our great-grandmothers and grandfathers—simple people who had a deep longing to drink at the fountain of wisdom and to announce to the world the gratuity of salvation.

The fragile poverty of our preaching family—both in the year 1206 and in 2006—is not an obstacle for the working of God’s grace. In the words of St Paul, intimate companion and friend of St Dominic, “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10). Our own poverty makes us sensitive to the poor, to their cry. Dominic’s preaching becomes our preaching each time we contemplate the face of those who are excluded and invisible in our world today and raise our preaching voice on their behalf.

Today it is our turn to gather once again at our Family table to give thanks for this grace of preaching which we have inherited from Bro Dominic. Our family is not perfect, but it is ours. It is not a family without its problems and sins, without a few wrinkles here and there, but the gift which we have received is marvelously beyond compare. Among us today are brother and sister theologians, poets, professors, Biblical scholars, and artists. Some of us are wise, and others less wise; we represent all the colors and continents of the globe. We are the ancient fount of the Word-made-flesh and drink—with Dominic and the early disciples—“the simple freshness of our first love.” But not just that, for once we have sated our thirst at the wellspring of grace, we are then ready for the most important task of all: to go and preach—in season and out—that the Reign of God is at hand.

Bro Brian J. Pierce, OP, is the Promoter of the Dominican Family in Latin America and the Caribbean. He is also the author of *We Walk the Path Together: Learning from Thich Nhat Hanh and Meister Eckhart*.

## From Around the Province . . .

The newly formed Informal Group in Grand Blanc, MI (still unnamed) has already celebrated three receptions and one final reception (a person who transferred from Denver) since first meeting in late 2005. . . . Also relatively new is the **St. Martin de Porres Inquirers'** Group in the Kansas City area; the group has been studying the encyclical by Pope Benedict, *God Is Love*. . . . **Our Lady of the Sacred Heart** Chapter in Springfield, IL is also studying Benedict's encyclical.

This past May in West Lafayette, IN, the **Mary Magdalene Informal** Group hosted a workshop by Fr Jim Motl, "Telling the Story: A Preaching Workshop for Lay Dominicans," and 25 attended, including members from Michigan, Missouri, and Illinois. (A copy of the workshop is on DVD and available from Ruth Kummer.)

The **Holy Rosary Chapter** of Grand Rapids, MI is conducting a formation program at the Muskegon Correctional Facility. . . . The **Queen of the Rosary** Chapter in Milwaukee is studying *Praying with Thomas Aquinas* by Mary Mercy Houle, OP, Michael Monshau, OP, and Patrick F. Norris, OP. . . . The Denver Chapter of **St. Dominic** agreed to study *Praying with St Dominic* for the month of October. At **Queen of Vietnamese Martyrs** Chapter in Denver recently one member made final profession and four made temporary profession.

The **Blessed Sacrament** Chapter at Farmington Hills, MI is studying the *Book of Ecclesiastes*. . . . The **Holy Rosary** Chapter in Minneapolis has been reading *Catholics' Understanding of Church* by Richard McBrien; the group is also working for the canonization of Fr Paschal Kelly.

At **St. Rose Lima** Chapter in Dubuque, IA, Spiritual Director Sr Marilyn Schlosser and Cindy Tassart gave a report on their trip, "Tracing the Journey of Fr Mazzuchelli," who built many churches in Wisconsin. . . . Guy Murphy, moderator of the **St Vincent Ferrer** Chapter in River Forest, IL, visited Europe and Africa this past summer and he shares his experiences in an article on page 5.

## Which Direction Is God Pointing?

by Ruth Kummer.OP

With the changing of the seasons now visible, we see the rhythm of life also changing—birds gathering for their annual flights south and land being tilled under in preparation for next spring. Our faith life over time should also change and mature in order to flower. We see in recent writings on the stages of faith development, that there can be a kind of seasonal development to our spiritual life— with a beginning, middle, and end.

In baptism we are initiated into the community of believers and we receive information from family, religion classes, and church, for example. Mid-point may be comparable to an adolescent mindset, in which we constantly question our belief system in light of our encounters with school, other faith traditions, and organizations. If we are fortunate, by the time we reach old age (hopefully earlier), we synthesize our earlier stages of faith into the wisdom of a mature believer filled with hope and joy.

For those of us still searching for guidelines in these confusing times, the 10 commandments are always helpful guidelines for "behavior," and the beatitudes are especially helpful in their attitudes of "being" or living. Michael Crosby in *Matthew's Vision for the Church in an Unjust World* adapts from the traditional writing of the beatitudes, which seems especially apt for Dominicans in their charism of preaching:

- Being poor in spirit, for they turn their lives over to God's will for

self, other, and community;

- Being non-violent, for they will inherit the earth;
- Being with those who mourn, for they have a need for hope in the midst of despair;
- Being aware of those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they are concerned with God's justice and demand moral righteousness and equality;
- Being merciful, for if justice is practiced, mercy is put into motion;
- Being pure of heart, for they live the vision of God in attitudinal being;
- Being a peacemaker, for they are empowered to go to various situations;
- Being persecuted for justice sake, for they are persecuted as the prophets who were before you.

In closing, Fr Timothy Radcliffe, former Master General, has a new book out: *What Is the Point of Being a Christian?* He argues "the point of Christianity is simply to point us to God who is himself the point of everything." We are not Christians because it helps us live a stable life or reduce stress or make us wealthy. Rather, we are Christians because we have confidence that this point is God, who is beyond all human conception!

## War-Torn Dominican Laity Receive Funds

The Dominican Laity in Iraq this summer received the last installment of the \$3,000 raised through the Family Helping Family Fund, coordinated by Cynthia Ricard of St. Louis and Barry McQuillan of the Western Province. Iraq's provincial president reported that the money has been distributed evenly among the eight chapters there, and it has also been used to purchase software and a printer for the provincial office.

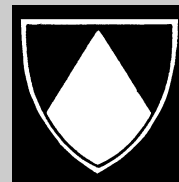
In addition, "a \$3,000 grant from the Dominican Social Justice Fund has been awarded to the Family Helping Family Fund, and will be sent to Iraq soon, thanks to Fr Gerald Stookey, OP, Promotor General for the Laity," said Ricard, secretary of the Queen of the Holy Rosary Chapter in St. Louis.

Ricard and McQuillan started the Family Helping Family Fund before the war, specifically for laity here to help the Dominican Laity in Iraq. After two years of figuring out a safe way to transfer the money to Iraq (where transactions are in cash), they found a secret "camel." It usually gets to its destination in about two to three months.

It is difficult to tell how many of the Dominican Laity remain in Iraq, because many Christians have been trying to escape, said Ricard. Communication is difficult and it occurs via intermittent e-mails in English and a translator from St. Raymond's Maronite Cathedral. "Half of the Christians have fled Iraq as a result of the war. Churches and Christians are targeted by radical Islamists, and bishops and priests have been kidnapped

for ransom," she added.

The fundraising continues. If you'd like to donate, make your check payable to the St. Dominic Mission Society and mail it to: Dominican Laity Iraq Project, St. Dominic Priory, 3601 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108. There is also a printed flyer on the subject available from the same address or an electronic version available via e-mail attachment from Ricard at [ricardc@slu.edu](mailto:ricardc@slu.edu).



### Dominican Shield Pins Are Now Available

One-half inch Dominican Shield pins are now available from Corresponding Secretary Karen Sabourin, OP. They cost \$3 each. You may send orders to her at 4319 E. Dean Rd., Howell, MI 48855-9230. Or you may e-mail her at [kfsabourin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kfsabourin@sbcglobal.net).

## Dominican Charism of Preaching Has Profound Effect on Laity

by Norm Laurendeau, OP  
Mary Magdalene Informal Group

Preaching has long been the charism of the Dominican Order – a charism practiced world-wide for nearly 800 years by Dominican friars. Since Vatican II, however, the momentum of this charism has passed to the entire Dominican Family. All Dominicans have been encouraged to preach, particularly on cultural issues related to distributive justice, secularity, and ecumenism. Priorities related to preaching have been established, including evangelization, catechesis, and communication. Nevertheless, while lay preaching may have been advocated by St Dominic, friars remain honored as the primary preachers within the Dominican tradition.

Recently, a preaching survey conducted for the Province of St Albert the Great found that most lay Dominicans equate preaching with good example, verbal witness, and spirituality. Many who responded to the survey, on the other hand, expressed a desire to witness publicly to their faith through pulpit preaching. Indeed, many members of the Dominican Laity have either studied or formally experienced homiletics. Others claim preparation through life experiences, prayer, and contemplation. Surprisingly, half of the respondents to the survey expressed interest in developing their capacities for pulpit preaching. As part of this nascent movement, we share here our recent experiences with preaching in the hope that other lay Dominicans will learn from our journey.

The evolution of our preaching mission began in

the spring of 2002, when I initiated discussion on starting a new chapter of the Dominican Laity at St Thomas Aquinas, the Catholic Center at Purdue (West Lafayette, Indiana). As I pursued this goal with Fr Dan Davis, our pastor, his overriding concern was that the Dominican Laity had not historically been sufficiently active in preaching. For this reason, he asked if I had given any thought on how we might incorporate this fundamental charism into the Dominican Laity. After some discernment, we eventually decided to mandate preaching for all members within the Liturgy of the Hours at our monthly meetings, followed in each case by 30 minutes of response and discussion. Moreover, in line with Dominican tradition, we required that the monthly preaching be based on one of the primary liturgical readings scheduled during the weekend of our monthly meeting. We have since maintained that monthly procedure, thus giving our members the opportunity to develop their preaching skills and to discover through feedback what listeners expect from good preaching.

After observing our preaching activities for about six months, Fr Dan insisted that we be trained to lead Eucharistic services so that this liturgical celebration could be offered to our parishioners in the absence of the friars. A Eucharistic service, of course, includes preaching of the Word, and thus we were confronted with our first experience in public preaching. We began to lead communion services in the summer of

2003, and we have been asked regularly since that time to provide about 15 Eucharistic services per year to the St Thomas Aquinas community.

As our membership grew from four to 12 people, it eventually dawned on us that our newer members were not getting as many preaching opportunities as had our established members, owing to the fact that one meeting per month automatically limited the current members to one preaching opportunity per year. Moreover, by this time, many of our members had developed substantial preaching skills and they wanted to offer those skills more regularly to the parish community. Hence, in December of 2004, we requested from the friars the opportunity to preach weekly at a designated 11:30 a.m. daily mass. The obvious conditions were that such preaching should be genuinely helpful to the friars, that our reflections should occur after the prayers of the faithful to avoid confusion with the homily, which is nominally reserved by canon law to ordained clergy, and that permission for this procedure should be obtained from our local bishop.

Surprisingly, the friars responded enthusiastically to our suggestion, and thus nine volunteers began taking turns preaching at Wednesday masses starting in February of 2005. Periodically, the friars announce to those in attendance that the charism of

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## Lessons in the Spiritual Life May Be Learned From Nature

by Guy Murphy, OP  
St. Vincent Ferrer Chapter

“Awesome” is the only word that would describe the 25-year anniversary celebrations of the apparitions of Jesus’ Mother in Medjugorje. For over 25 years Our Lady has been calling out, “God exists and He loves you. God alone is the fullness of life. If you want to enjoy that fullness and obtain peace, you must convert to God.” Over 100,000 people came to the little village to participate in the celebration. During the June 25<sup>th</sup> evening Mass, there were five bishops and 322 priests concelebrating.

We were fortunate to have Bishop Kaffer of Joliet join us on the pilgrimage. He was very impressed upon seeing the confession lines everywhere, people singing at Mass with their whole heart, people praying the Rosary so devoutly, and tens of thousands of people at Eucharistic adoration.

Bishop Kaffer was the main celebrant at the English Mass on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. During his homily he said, “Today Jesus tells us in the Gospel, ‘Be not afraid.’ Our Lady of Medjugorje says, ‘Be not afraid,’ and Pope John Paul II used to say, ‘Be not afraid.’ I am here also to tell you to ‘Be not afraid,’ especially of confession. While teaching at the seminary, I used to hold up my gold watch and say I would give this to anybody who tells me a sin that I haven’t heard before. Needless to say, I never lost a gold watch. Be not afraid and move forward in your conversion towards Jesus.”

It was inspiring to hear Fr. Jozo give his motivat-

ing talk about our Lady’s message. After the talk, he blessed the priests and people. It was humbling to see him kneel down and first receive Bishop Kaffer’s blessing before he prayed over Bishop Kaffer.

It was also a privilege to stay at the visionary Mirjana’s house. When she describes the way Our Lady looks as the message from heaven is delivered, with black hair, blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and a white veil, the experience becomes more alive. She graciously let us ask many questions about the 25 years with Our Lady. Mirjana has a special mission to pray for those who have not experienced the love of God yet.

Several youths went on the trip. Many of them saw the “miracle of the sun” where a large “Holy Communion host” seems to be in front of the sun. Some also see the sun dance and spin with colors. I was impressed with the youth’s motivation to climb up the mountain, some even climbed barefoot. The rule and guidelines of the Lay Dominicans include service in light of the “signs of the times.” I can testify that the great sign from Heaven (Rev 12) in the last 25 years is Our Lady of Medjugorje.

I hope Our Lady stays for another 25 years. Our world has benefited tremendously from Our Lady of Medjugorje. Her presence gives us hope that more conversions will continue to take place.

After the pilgrimage to Medjugorje, I went on a job in Kenya, Africa. This was a crystal-

lizer job that purified sodium carbonate salt. They took salt from the dried up Magadi Lake and removed the fluoride from it so they can sell it for the glass-making industry.

Lake Magadi is in a remote desert wilderness area. Although we worked long hours, I was glad to find missionary priests out there who celebrated Mass every day. (Thanks Blessed Mother). Also the Kenyan people were very good and friendly. They have significant Christian roots and values in their society that makes them stable as a nation and it also seems to help the surrounding countries. (Praise the Lord).

I believe God sends Our Lady to deliver His message from Heaven to us today. One of the most powerful aspects of listening to this message is that it helps us to hear God speaking to us all the time. The visionaries from Medjugorje say that even though we may not think so, Jesus and Mary (and your angel) are always close to us, and when we open up our hearts, we begin to realize how much they love us. This is also known as contemplation. The Dominican motto for evangelization is, “share the fruits of contemplation.”

Our Lady’s July 25<sup>th</sup> message included, “In silence, let the Holy Spirit speak to you so He can change and convert you.”

One Sunday afternoon I decided to pray the  
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## Charism

*Continued from Page 5*

preaching is as important to the Dominican Laity as to the friars. Parishioners who normally attend daily mass have come to realize that the Dominican Laity are responsible for preaching every Wednesday. The response from parishioners has thus far been almost unanimously positive and many have commented on the overall quality of our preaching activities. More importantly, as St Thomas Aquinas is the Newman Center at Purdue, we often host up to 30 undergraduate and graduate students at Wednesday mass. These students obviously take their faith seriously, and thus they are especially impressed by lay preaching owing to our biblical emphasis, lay perspective, and public witness of faith.

During the past year, our membership has developed an ardent appreciation for this new preaching ministry. We now consider preaching to be one of our main missions at the St Thomas Aquinas Center. Our enthusiasm, expertise, and self-confidence have grown as we imbibe in this incredible opportunity. In retrospect, we have been helped considerably in our preaching mission by three features which have always characterized our monthly meetings. First, as indicated previously, the monthly preaching and discussion defines expectations, provides experience, offers feedback, and engenders confidence in prepara-

tion for "going public." Second, our strong 4.5-year study program provides the theological, historical, and exegetical skills necessary for effective preaching. From a practical perspective, we have been particularly helped by Kenneth Untener's *Preaching Better: Practical Suggestions for Homilists* (Paulist Press, New York, 2000). Third, our strong focus on prayer, both at meetings and in many assigned readings, has made all of us who preach aware that reflections are not so much our work as that of the Holy Spirit.

One of the more rewarding aspects of lay preaching has been the number of appreciative comments on our reflections from those who attend Wednesday mass, especially the Purdue students. More surprising, however, has been the gift that preaching has become in our personal spiritual lives. With that remarkable gift in mind, we offer for your journey the following testimonials from nine of us who have thus far participated in this new preaching program.

**Barbara:** "Preaching is a spiritual exercise that immerses my body in the Word. I begin by slowly sipping and drinking in each phrase, so that I become open to an abundant feast of possibilities, like a smorgasbord of messages and wonderings. Choosing just one course is often a challenge, as so many possibilities are offered on the menu. I must first get in touch with the hunger that is present in this moment. Only then do I know what course to select. I write and

become lost in time and space as the Word is broken open and aromas of meaning and longing are placed upon the table. I gaze at the creation before me, the living Word made real once more, and I am in awe. I then ingest the Word, bringing it into my body, so that it may be proclaimed from my deepest center. Standing before the Body of Christ, I offer the meal that has been prepared for this day and pray that Christ will become known once again in the breaking of the Word."

**Beatriz:** "Preaching is one of the four pillars of Dominican spirituality. Am I really called to preach? I knew for sure I was called to community, prayer, and study, but preaching? How did I immerse myself in this new voyage? My first preaching experience was to my fellow Dominicans, and I approached it as a Toastmaster event. That opened my preaching experience, and I eventually realized that preaching requires (1) much prayer and discernment, (2) all available resources, and (3) just doing it! I now see how preaching differs from public speaking or from teaching a class. It is part of my spiritual self. The fruits of this experience include appreciating the work that dedicated priests do week after week, but more importantly, participating fully in the Body of Christ as I share my personal faith with fellow Christians."

*To be continued in the next issue*

## Spirituality From Nature

*Continued from Page 5*

Rosary and walk outside the little village in the quiet desert and let the Holy Spirit speak to me.

It was a little stone road. The landscape was parched. The ground was a mixture of sand, stones and dirt with only a few patches of dead hay. Little bushes of thorns and sticks with a few small green leaves were spread out all over. I could hear flies buzzing around and some birds chirping in the distance. The white clouds helped reduce the heat from the late afternoon sun. I was going to sit down on a rock right after the fork in the road, but I decided to keep walking until I finished the third glorious mystery, "The decent of the Holy Spirit."

In the quietness of the desert I prayed, "Come Holy Spirit speak to me. Change and convert me." About 75 yards away I saw some baboons walking by. I was still calling on the Holy Spirit, then I saw more baboons and I started to count them. "Excuse me Holy Spirit, I want to watch these baboons." There were over 100 of them. The first thought came to my mind was "There is nothing out here. How do they survive?" I was so in awe, I kept watching them. They must have been traveling from a nearby water hole to a wooded area located by the river ten miles away.

They did not pass by in a random movement but they were walking in almost a single/double file line. It looked like monkeys on the march. There were larger ones acting like guards on the outside of the main line. They were looking to the right and to the left watching for predators. They would communicate with each other by a look or gesture and adjust their spacing accordingly. The mothers were staying close to their baby baboons and some of them would carry

them underneath. The young ones would play and wrestle around and then run back to their spot in the line.

In the past, I saw army movies where troops would march out through the jungle in a line. My Dad told me that that was done for protection. If the enemy ambushed them and they were all in one group, they would get wiped out. A line of troops could spread out, take cover, and protect each other from getting surrounded. "How functional!" I thought.

It made me smile to see a young baboon riding on the back of a larger baboon as one would ride a horse. He looked like he was having the thrill of his life. His eyes and mouth were wide open in concentration. His arms were straight as an arrow as he was holding on to the back of the larger monkey. The others were looking at him and smiling also. Even the guards were watching him. You could tell by the look on their faces and by the way they walked that not only were they surviving, but they were even having fun. "How could this be?" I thought. "How could these baboons be so joyful?"

They had nothing. This was an example of *complete detachment* yet they had each other. They had *humility* that led them to respect each other's role. The guards could not play, but they seemed to enjoy being guards so the others could play and be safe. The mothers seemed to enjoy being mothers. Little ones seemed to respect the safety they received from the mothers and the guards and were happy to be children. This humility led to respect, respect led to unity and unity made them functional which then led to an authentic fellowship, complete with peace and harmony. This authentic fellowship and commu-

nity made them joyful. Their joy was so powerfully present that I wanted to watch and follow them.

As I returned back to the village, I again called on the Holy Spirit and I seemed to get the message, "Convert! *Detachment and humility* will eventually lead to many good things, including *joy*." "OK, I get it now." I replied.

Thank you Blessed Mother for 25 years of calling all of your children home to Jesus. Thank you Holy Spirit for using the baboons to teach me a good lesson in the spiritual life. Glory be ...

## Parable's New Offerings

by Sharon Huizenga, OP  
Queen of the Rosary Chapter

The Parable Conference Board convened in early September in River Forest, IL. No longer an advisory board but a working board, we met to discuss on-going committee work and plans for the future.

Long a sponsor of the Lands of Dominic (LOD) tours to Spain, France, and Italy, Parable has added a new form of this tour entitled "At Home with Dominic," which brings the LOD experience to those who cannot travel. The next edition of the periodical *The Parable* is being prepared for release in time for Advent. And Parable has put out a beautiful 2007 wall calendar with the best photos from past LOD tours.

Check out our new website, [parableconference.org](http://parableconference.org), for information on upcoming programs, to order *The Parable*, or to obtain a calendar. My e-mail is [sharon.huizenga@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sharon.huizenga@sbcglobal.net) for more information.

## Promoter's Corner

by Fr Jim Motl, OP



On Aug. 30, members of the Executive Board of the Dominican Laity Council for the Province of St Albert the Great met with Fr Dominique Renuard, OP, Vicar of the Master General, and Bro Marcio, another member of the Master's council. These two friars were conducting a visitation of the Province for Bro Carlos Aspiroz Costa, OP, who was engaged with problems in other parts of the world. It was an historic meeting because it was, as far as I know, the first time in an official visitation of our Province, that Dominican Laity have been invited to be part of the process.

Each member of the Board gave a brief presentation of the aspect of Dominican Laity life that he or she has taken special responsibility for. I talked about new groups and inquiries Ruth and I have received about starting new groups. The new groups include the Vietnamese chapter in Denver; the informal group in West Lafayette, Indiana; a beginning prison group in Musekgon, Michigan; and new groups in Chicago and Grand Blanc, Michigan. Ruth Kummer, our President, reported on her work, especially progress on pursuing the Development Committee's proposal for having leadership meetings for the officers of our chapters and informal groups. Harvey Newcomb, our Vice-President, talked about his work in contacting all the bishops in our geographical area asking for a contact person in each diocese through whom we might work to achieve greater visibility, especially in areas where there are no Dominican friars, sisters, or laity. Jill O'Brien, our Provincial Secretary, reported on the work of the last Dominican Laity Provincial Council and on the results of the preaching survey she conducted. Mary Lee Odders, Provincial Treasurer, gave an overview of the financial situation of the Domini-

can Laity of the Province, including the arrangement for use of the Irvine Trust. Norm Laurendeau, the representative to the Dominican Laity Inter-provincial Council, spoke about the preaching workshop sponsored by the West Lafayette group. Tom Ryba, our Formation Director, reported on progress in publishing a new formation program.

After the meeting Fr Dominique told me that he was highly impressed with the reports. During the meeting he said that it was time for Dominican Laity to raise their voices and be heard, even within the Order. He spoke of the need for priests and religious to hear the voice of the laity. In the case of the Order of Preachers that is especially important because preachers need to know what the laity are thinking and what their concerns are. He urged collaborative projects among the various branches of the Dominican Family: friars, sisters, and laity. What I draw from this is that Dominican Laity must give more attention to the "pillar" of mission discerning what they can do to cooperate with other Dominicans in accomplishing the central task of the Order, preaching the Good News.

I thank Marlene Laurendeau for taking over the editorship of *Challenge*. I urge all the chapters to help her by sending in monthly reports of your meetings and activities. It was the lack of such regular reporting that made the work of publishing this newsletter too difficult for the previous editor, Joe Komadina. I thank him for the fine issues that he did publish.

I am temporarily chaplain for our Dominican nuns at Blessed Sacrament Monastery in Farmington Hills, Michigan. I will be here until Jan. 16, 2007, after which I will return to St. Louis. While I am here my contact information is below. Ruth, Norm, and I will be attending the Inter-provincial Council meeting of Dominican Laity in the New Orleans area October 19-22. If you have any concerns about inter-provincial cooperation, please let one of us know before then. Sincerely in St Dominic.

Phone until Jan. 16 at: (248) 932-9174; e-mail: motljr@slu.edu (unchanged)

## President Ruth

*Continued from Page 1*

carlates. An alternate delegate can be elected to replace the president for a legitimate reason. All delegates and alternates must be fully professed (lifetime). Each province needs to begin fundraising in order to send its delegate to the International Congress. (Please send funds to Mary Lee Odders and note on your check that it is for the International Congress.)

The next Provincial Council Meeting has a tentative date of April 19-22 or 26-29, 2007 at St. John's Family and Youth Center, Plymouth, MI, near the Detroit Metro Airport. Please send your delegate's name, address, phone number, and email address to the president. All chapters, pro-chapters, and informal groups are asked to send such information. Review the responsibility and term of office information. (See "A Handbook for Dominican Laity Leadership," 1999 revision. I am not certain whether every group has a copy, since I just received my copy. If you do not have one, please be in touch.)

To help leaders of chapters, pro-chapters, and informal groups, the Rule (proposals for changes were requested earlier for the International Congress), including guidelines, ceremonies, provincial by-laws, and leadership manual are being digitized. We need three or four volunteers to meet on a weekend to review the documents for consistency and prepare proposals for changes before the next Provincial Council Meeting. Computer skills and a laptop with Microsoft XP Professional will avoid technical stress. A place and a time will be determined soon. The last Provincial Council Meeting covered strategic planning. The topic most requested by the chapters was a formation program, and many members have already worked on its content. A tentative date for a Leadership Conference to discuss the long awaited formation materials is September or October of 2007; all moderators, spiritual assistants, and formation directors are expected to attend a special Dominican event at that time. More information later.

Congratulations to Marlene Laurendeau for accepting the position of *Challenge* Editor. She brings to her task experience in publishing and many other talents. You will notice that the return address on this newsletter is Maine, but she will be traveling between Maine, Indiana, and California (her e-mail address will remain the same). Dr. Norm Laurendeau had his article on preaching done a long time ago, but since the

*Challenge* has not been available, I suggested that it be part of this issue.

A special thank you to Joe Komadina for his time as editor. He has experienced numerous challenges—from a storm-damaged home, computer crash and loss of data, to a broken arm. Joe, may your future be brighter for you, and thanks!

And before leaving the topic, please e-mail information about your chapter to the *Challenge*. Your Dominican Family awaits your words!

## Bro Carlos Excerpts

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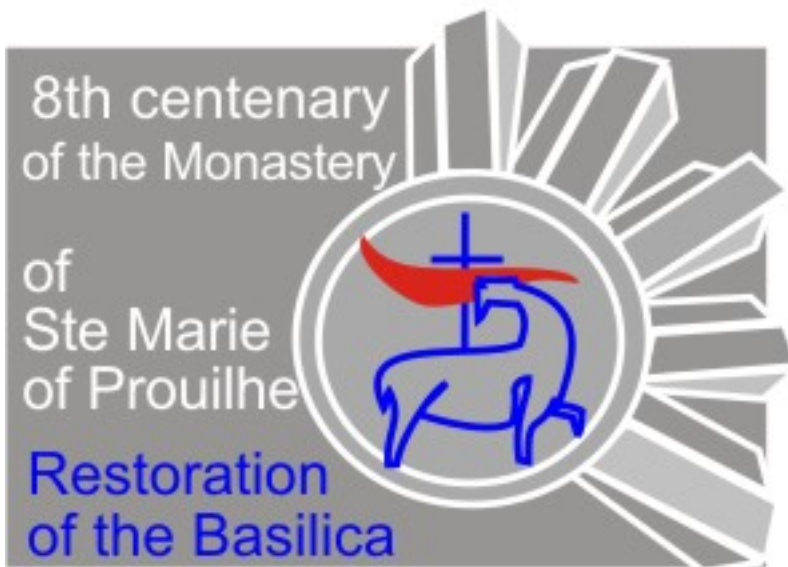
about unanimity during a discussion with the community gathered together. On many occasions, we have stopped our chapter because we had not reached unanimity, and the Lord helps us. By mathematical majority I refer to the possibility of the dictatorship of the ballot. It is easy to get it. Look at so many of our modern democracies. Unanimity! This is what Jesus asked his Father in his 'priestly' prayer: 'That they may be one as we are one' (John 17:11).

### Preaching, Do We Live It?

"We are here remembering our history. In this place, Dominic and Diego chose to associate some women to their 'Holy Preaching.' I cannot now expand on the theme that gives name to our Order.

"By the way, I love the words written by another of Dominic's successors, one to whom I have a great devotion, our Bro Damian Byrne. He wrote a letter, one of the most beautiful ever written to the Order, and it is about preaching. In it he borrows the text from *Evangelii Nuntiandi* which, according to Damian, is like the Magna Carta of the preacher, of the Dominicans. In fact, on the date of the ordination of a deacon, the bishop hands the book of the gospels and says: 'Believe what you read, teach what you believe, live what you teach.' Taking this idea from Pope Paul VI, Damian Byrne questions and challenges the Order: 'Do we really believe what we preach? Do we live what we believe? Do we live what we preach? Here we have it all: prayer, study, preaching, witnessing in common life.'

*Based on notes taken by Bro Constantine Mamo, OP*



*This new logo was designed to facilitate fund-raising efforts for the restoration of the basilica at Prouilhe. If you'd like to help, make your check out to*  
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## From the Editor

by **Marlene Carlos Laurendeau, OP**

As the new editor of the *Challenge*, I can say that this issue was quite a challenge to produce! Thank you to all who helped me. As you can see, it is your contributions that make Dominican dialogue possible, so without Family members helping out, this form of communication is not possible. In the future we might even institute a formal "Dominican Dialogue" corner, if you'd like.



Norm and I were fully professed this past May, and wouldn't you know it, in June we became itinerant! We will be living in Maine, California, and Indiana in 2007. However, my e-mail address will remain the same year-round, [marnelauren@aol.com](mailto:marnelauren@aol.com). (Send regular mail to the address below year-round.) **Next issue deadline is Dec. 5.**

Send articles and items of interest, remembering that your contributions are an encouragement to your brothers and sisters all around the Province of St. Albert the Great, and beyond!

## Officers

**Provincial Promoter:** Fr. Jim Motl, OP  
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## Our Mission

Called to a deeper relationship of love and service to God, we are members of the Dominican Order, who commit to live the Dominican charism as lay people. In collaboration with the Dominican Family, we work to promote social justice and peace in society. Supported by prayer, study, community, and ministry, we fulfill our vocation to proclaim the Gospel wherever we, as individuals, live and work.

Marlene Laurendeau, *Challenge* Editor

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