



# CHALLENGE

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

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## From the President

## Dominican Church in Mosul Bombed

*MOSUL, Iraq.* A bomb exploded in the entrance of the Dominican Clock Church on All Saints' Day in Mosul, according to a story by AsiaNews. A source near the church at the time said that the explosion at 7 p.m. shattered the exterior iron doors of the church compound and flattened two sets of wooden doors. The discharge ripped through the windows of the monastery chapel where Dominican priests were holding evening prayer, but no one was harmed in the blast. AsiaNews' sources spoke on condition of anonymity because of the "very dangerous situation in which Christians live in Mosul."

The Dominicans believe the attack was not a random one. "You don't set off a blast that big unless you are planning something more," he said. So far no one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Mosul's Clock Church was built in 1872, but the Dominican Order has been established in Iraq for more

than 250 years. Priests said they no longer wear their clerical robes on the street and rarely go out in public to reduce the chances of being kidnapped or even murdered, which are daily occurrences.

People are still shaken by the abduction of a Syro-Orthodox priest, Fr Paulos Eskandar, whose decapitated body was found Oct. 11, 2006, in the east of Mosul two days after he was kidnapped. In 2004 other attacks against Christian targets were also carried out to coincide with Christian religious holidays such as the Feast of the Assumption and Christmas.

Most Mosul Dominicans have moved to a village just outside Arbil, in the more peaceful Kurdistan, but there are still some who are able to find "in prayer the necessary hope to continue a difficult apostolic ministry in this tormented city." (See related story on Page 3.)

by Ruth Kummer, OP

As we end another blessed year, a new schedule of gatherings begins to form! The Interprovincial Council met successfully this past October (details on Page 2), and we are now making plans to attend the International Congress.



### Dates to Remember

A reminder to all that March 17-24, 2007 is the International Congress in Buenos Aires, and your financial help is much needed. In the last *Challenge* we asked you to support the sending of delegates, but we failed to include an address for that purpose. Please send contributions to Mary Lee Odders, OP, Dominican Laity, PO Box 85451, Racine, WI 53408-5451. When members of a family contribute even a small amount, the whole family benefits!

The next Provincial Council Meeting has been set for April 26-29, 2007. April 29 is the Feast of St Catherine of Siena; is there a chapter that would consent to plan the celebration? Perhaps Saturday evening would be the best time, since the Council ends at noon on Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup>. It will be a Family gathering—with sisters, friars, nuns, and laity at St John's Center in Plymouth, MI. Another meeting space is open for suggestion; however, a decision must be made in the next few weeks for scheduling and the evaluation of cost.

As for the Formation Workshop that will take place Nov. 1-4, 2007, the moderator, formation director, and spiritual assistant from each chapter are *requested to attend*. To date, only one chapter has offered details on whom it is sending, specifically name, address, phone num-

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## Open Letter to the Dominican Family

## ICLDF Convoles International Congress

*The International Council of Lay Dominican Fraternities (ICLDF) is convening an International Congress of official representatives of all Lay Dominican Fraternities throughout the world. This Congress will be the first such International meeting held since the Congress in Montreal in 1985.*

"Warmest greetings from the ICLDF! By means of this letter we are convoking an International Congress of official representatives of all Lay Dominican Fraternities (Rule of Montreal) ... The theme is 'Lay Dominicans: Companions in Preaching,' March 17-24, 2007. It will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina (El Cenáculo Retreat House at Pilar).

Representatives must be properly elected lay presidents who are fully professed, one from each province, vice-province, and vicariate. An alternative delegate must be elected well in advance of 2007 in case it is necessary to replace the president for a legitimate reason such as illness. ...

This International Congress requires the collaboration of everyone. First of all, let us pray in every Lay Dominican Fraternity/Chapter for the success of our Congress. As companions in preaching, let us remember that this Congress is convoked primarily so that we can continue to be effective Lay Dominican preachers of the Word of God. Please pray that this venture may be very blessed, happy, and fruitful. ...

And finally, we need your help in raising funds to pay for this International Congress. We would like to assist those delegates from less affluent regions who may not otherwise be able to attend. We would like to raise enough money at the international level to keep our collective expenses very low. Hopefully, no province, vice-province, or vicariate will have excessive expenses. An International Laity Congress Fund has been opened at Santa Sabina in Rome. All donations to it must be clearly designated for that purpose and sent to: Dominican Laity Office, Convento Santa Sabina (Aventino), Piazza Pietro d'Iliria 1, 00153 Roma, Italia. ... We count on your enthusiastic involvement and support to make this exciting venture a success. May God bless you all. In St Dominic and St Catherine of Siena,

For Africa: Marcus Kejungki, OP; Asia Pacific: Belen Tangco, OP; Europe: Patricia Robinson, OP; Latin America: Pedro Torres, OP; North America: Laurie Biszko, OP; and Promoter General: Fr Gerald Stookey, OP."

## DLIPC Meeting in New Orleans Productive and ‘Sobering’

by President Ruth Kummer, OP, and  
Interprovincial Council Delegate Norm Laurendeau, OP

The Dominican Laity Interprovincial Council met in New Orleans Oct. 19-21, 2006. The Canadian Province, Central Province, Eastern Province, Southern Province, Western Province, and Vietnamese Vicariate of St Vincent Liem were represented. Provincial promoters also attended, including our own Fr Jim Motl. Fr Jerry Stookey, OP, Promoter General of the Laity, also from the Central Province, attended the meeting as well. He came from Rome and will soon be replaced by Fr David Kammler, OP, from Germany. Both reside in Rome while serving their terms as members of the Master’s Council.

Our brothers celebrated the Mass, and Christian Prayer was prayed each day. Our southern brothers and sisters led the music, sacred and jazz, in prayer and entertainment. We also did work! A short list of the Lay Chapter General Issues were: 1) formation, profession, and dispensations; 2) upper-age limits, apostolate, non-lay members; 3) peace and justice, lay preaching; and 4) Dominican Laity websites.

We updated our proposals for the International Congress and that list included: 1) preaching and prayer; 2) study and formation; 3) Canon Law, rule, and statutes (guidelines); and 4) factors affecting mobility.

Under Canon Law, rule, and statutes, we discussed: a) sanctions, b) requirements for canonically ordained ministers, and c) structure and organization. Under factors affecting mobility, we discussed a) model directories, b) geography and jurisdiction c) translations, d) economics, e) Dominican relationship to family, and f) church function.

Saturday afternoon’s tour of the Katrina devastation was a most sobering and marvelous experience. The durability of the human spirit does not have words! A memento of a small family Bible weathered the storm without damage though the house where it was kept was filled with water and mud. There were also humorous incidents, such as a skeleton (artificial) sitting on a porch holding a sign saying “Waiting for FEMA!” Saturday evening, our Central Province delegate (Norm Laurendeau) provided a talk and workshop entitled “The Dominican Charism of Lay Preaching: Evolution and Fruits.”

An important resolution that resulted from the meeting regarded membership in other lay fraternities besides the Dominican: *Because of the unique charism, spirit, and vocation of the Dominican Laity, we recommend that life-professed members of associations of the Christian faithful who share the spirit and are under the direction of another religious institute or similar organization (whether called third order, secular, laity, or some other such name) not be permitted also to be members of the Dominican Laity.*

## Dominican Promoters Hear Rohr on Preaching

by Jill O’Brien, OP

On September 15-20, 2006, the Catholic Conference on Preaching and the Dominican Promoters of Preaching (CCOP) gathered in Ft Lauderdale, Florida. Richard Rohr, OFM, was the featured speaker. Sr Mary Jean Traeger, OP, gave a workshop on preaching preparation.

Rohr stressed the importance of preaching that moves the heart as well as the mind and that translates into participation in divine communion for both the preacher and the audience. Preaching is a “mediative” practice that must grow from prayer and study and return us to union with the Lord, he said. He particularly stressed developmental stages in the spiritual life—a journey that moves from doctrine and rigid categories to a profound personal crisis and then to a new integration, which produces compassion, inclusion, and profound surrender. Relationships with God and others are deeply changed and the “transformative spirituality” that results makes it possible to serve others without narrowness or judgments. Deep awareness of God’s love and embrace transcends divisions; self-righteousness is replaced by profound awareness of personal limitations and human dependence on the grace of God.

Rohr’s book (co-authored with John Feister), *Hope Against Darkness: The Transforming Vision of St. Francis in an Age of Anxiety*, explores these themes and might interest Dominican Laity chapters. There is only one

chapter on St Francis *per se*; the majority of the work examines the spiritual life of adults in a world of division, stress, and conflict. It suggests an understanding of the adult spiritual journey that is useful to the preacher—both as an individual and within service to others.

The Dominican Promoters of Preaching has been holding its annual gathering in conjunction with CCOP for the past six years in order to support this national organization. CCOP usually meets every 18-24 months. Promoters decided, however, that more frequent meetings at more modest cost might be advantageous for the development of preaching within the Dominican Family. As a result, on an experimental basis, the next meeting will occur within 12 months, and regional as well as national promoters of preaching will be encouraged to participate. The meeting will probably occur at a Midwestern Dominican motherhouse.

Dominican Laity from the West, South, and Midwest were represented via designated promoters at these meetings. DL representatives were active and welcomed by the other Dominican Family preaching promoters. The preaching workshop, organized by the Mary Magdalene Informal Group in West Lafayette, IN early this summer, and presented by Fr Jim Motl (see Promoter’s Corner on Page 7), was acknowledged as a fine example of laity training and development as well as a useful collaborative venture. The many chapter members from the Midwest who contributed to the event also were mentioned as central to its success.

Reports from other promoters revealed two recent preaching initiatives begun for young people—one for high school enrollees and the other for college undergraduates. “Preaching camps” for students interested in learning preaching fundamentals for peer campus ministry outreaches exist. Last summer the high school camp occurred in Adrian, MI, and the college camp was hosted at Barry University in Miami. While students were drawn primarily from Dominican-sponsored institutions initially, now the college-level camp is expanding to include other Catholic higher-education institutions as well. (If a Dominican high school wants inclusion in the 2007 preaching camp, contact Sr Pat Brady at [pbrady8779@aol.com](mailto:pbrady8779@aol.com). Interested colleges can write Sr Gina Fleming at [domsis@aol.com](mailto:domsis@aol.com) for further information.)

All branches of the Family affirmed that “preaching” is a term that includes many ministry forms besides oral preaching within a paraliturgical or liturgical context. The support of brothers and sisters for each other, however, whether called to proclamation of the Word through Scriptural reflections, faith witnessing, and pulpit speaking or not, was seen as important to community and to being responsive to the Spirit within the Church.

*Jill O’Brien, OP, the our Dominican Laity Preaching Promoter who attended this conference, will make the outline of the presentation available to chapter representatives at the next Provincial Council meeting in April.*

## Iraqi Sister: 'We Came Out of Hell and Fell Into Another One'

*St Raphael Hospital, which belongs to the Dominican Sisters of the Presentation, is situated in the "red zone" of Baghdad, where attacks often occur and where no one is safe. The superior of these religious sisters is Sister Thérèse Hélène, an Iraqi sister. Below are parts of an interview with her earlier this year, as published in International Dominican Information, November 2006. The interviewer was Javier Valiente of Spain.*

**Q: How many sisters from your congregation are now working in Iraq?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** We are 32 sisters and we work in eight houses, six in Iraq and two in Lebanon. The work we do is mainly in the field of education, health, and social work.

**Q: Are your schools only for Christian pupils?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** No, they are open to all. All those who want to can come both to our schools and to our hospital. In 1974 Saddam Hussein's party nationalized all the schools and orphanages, but the government let the sisters who were working in the schools continue their work. Some who were teaching the Catholic religion continued doing it. But we lost ownership of the schools. The only establishment that remained in our hands was the St Raphael Hospital in Baghdad. When the regime came to an end, the Church made agreements for the devolution of its establishments to the Church itself and to the Congregations. We thus recovered the ownership of our establishments. Now, the new government has declared that all the properties of the Church should be returned to their former owners.

**Q: St Raphael Hospital is sadly known in Spain, because the Spanish reporter José Couso died there.**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** Yes, we did our best to save his life, but when he arrived at the hospital his condition was very serious and we could do nothing more. In Baghdad everybody goes to our hospital, which receives everybody. Indeed, notwithstanding the curfew, it is always open to receive all those who need us.

**Q: Do you have any type of security at the hospital?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** Only the security offered by the health ministry, and then by the people themselves. They protect us.

**Q: Do the schools and your other houses welcome all the children and youth?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** Yes, the school and hospital are open to all those who need them. In Basora, in the south of the country, we have a kindergarten with 230 children, and a residence for young students, and both Christians and Muslims go there. There are no problems between Christians and Muslims.

**Q: So you work in Basora, in Baghdad ... and in the north, in Mossul?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** There we have a residence for girls. These are young peasant girls who go to the university, young Christian girls who have no future if they do not study. But their families do not allow them to go to other residences. So we offer them the possibility of going to the university while residing in our house. They are a small group. They are Christians, Catholic, Orthodox, and Americans.

**Q: Do you feel welcomed, loved by the people?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** Our neighbors, the people who live in the barrios know the sisters and respect them, and we have no problem with them. The same thing is true with the hospital in Baghdad, there is no problem, because everybody knows that we are religious sisters and they respect us very much. It is true that there were attacks against churches. However, the people, the common people are not behind these things. Groups from outside, fanatical people are behind all this. ...

**Q: In the complicated situation which Iraq is facing now, is there a greater confrontation between Christians and Muslims?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** There is no confrontation between Christians and Muslims. Certainly Christians are a minority, and can think that they face a bigger danger. They think that in an Arab country they will not have a future, and they move to other countries. But the situation of the Christians is normal. And I want to insist that the war is against Iraq, not against Christians. Everybody, Muslims and Christians, suffer the consequences.

**Q: After three years the situation seems to get worse and we hear people talking about a civil war in your country. Do you have the same view, or do you believe that the situation can get better?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** I believe that we are being pushed towards a civil war. The Iraqi people do not want the war, but there are foreign agents that are pushing towards a war. ...

**Q: What is your feeling: Do people have hope? How do they see this situation, do they see any way out?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** Unfortunately, I believe that for now there is no hope. People only think of saving themselves, of surviving.

**Q: In the middle of such a hopeless situation what can a community of sisters offer?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** In such a situation we have to do our best and offer a Christian hope to people. How can we give them hope? Well, during these years of conflict we have opened a kindergarten in Baghdad. We have offered more classes and a house of welcome for orphan girls. People can see that the sisters are working, and that they go ahead. People go to the hospital and

we take care of them, we encourage them. I think that only by seeing the sisters undertaking new activities ... this is also a way to give hope, for if we sisters show fear, if we do nothing, people will be more afraid.

**Q: And you were not, are not afraid?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** Yes of course we are! Look here, when the bombing started the sisters at the orphanage were very scared and used to stay in a corner and pray the Rosary. As the sisters have to take care of the orphan girls now, when they hear explosions or attacks, they run to see if anything has happened to the girls. They overcome fear because they have to take care of these little children. Besides, during the war, all the hospital personnel, doctors, nurses, workers, everybody stayed inside. Nobody dared to go out. And the sisters took care of them also. ...

**Q: Is it possible for the Christians, who are a minority, to live in a Muslim country?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** I believe they can. In fact they have always lived together, and this not only in Iraq, for there are Christians in Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan ...

**Q: Behind the Iraq War there are also other interests, other countries ...**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** This is a war for oil. Iraq is a very rich country, and it has become the poorest country in the world. Our wealth has been our misfortune, as somebody said.

**Q: Did this wealth reach the people during Saddam Hussein's regime?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** No, but we came out of hell, and fell into another one.

**Q: In the media there are different versions of the same situation. The official version, aired by the North Americans, in which they say that everything will be better, and that of the media themselves who say that the situation is worsening. What is your opinion?**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** The truth is that everybody is suffering, and that the situation goes from bad to worse. ...

**Q: You've said that peace is your dream, but for the moment it is only a dream ...**

**Sister Thérèse Hélène:** Yes. The future is very sombre for the moment. Also, the politicians themselves do not know what will happen. I believe that the problem is bigger than all of Iraq; we are the ones who are paying for it. Something like this happened in Lebanon. Twenty years of war ... nobody knew the reason why and what for, who was benefitting ... Nobody knows when all this will come to an end.

—IDI (International Dominican Information)

## From Around the Province . . .

Members of the **St Rose of Lima Chapter** in Dubuque had their Day of Renewal on Oct. 7 with the Blessed Mother as their theme. . . . Also on Oct. 7, The **Blessed Fra Angelico Informal Group** in the Chicago area celebrated the Temporary Profession of Laura Dejmek; the reflection she composed for her ceremony is below. . . . Also in October, three members of the **Nuestra Senora de las Montanas Informal Group** in Albuquerque made Final Profession: Eleanor Orris, Loretta Serna, and Gloria Sotello.

In November, the **Mary Magdalene Informal Group** in Indiana had a retreat on the four pillars of Dominican spirituality. Kathy Wagner made Final Profession; Mary Margaret O'Maley and Marilyn Rogers were received; and Dr Thomas Ryba recently became Formation Director for Lay Dominicans of the Central Province. . . . Also in November, The **Blessed Sacrament Chapter** at Farmington Hills, MI, was joined by the **Grand Blanc Informal Group** for a Day of Recollection with Fr Jim Motl. The comment from the Blessed Sacrament spokesperson was, "He . . . gave a talk about our Dominican spirituality that really nourished our souls!"

On Nov. 19 at the **Queen of the Rosary Chapter** in Milwaukee, Rosalie Durante made her Final Profession; Roberta Russell celebrated her Temporary Profession; and Mary Alice Loomis was received. At **Queen of the Rosary** in St Louis, they have completed reading *Dignitatis Humanae* (Religious Liberty).

## Taking Gabriel at His Word in Our Own Lives

by Laura Dejmek, OP

**Blessed Fra Angelico Informal Group**

*This article is based on the reflection that Laura Dejmek gave at the ceremony of her own temporary profession on Oct. 7, 2006, on the Feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, at the Priory Chapel in River Forest, IL. A church and school musician by trade, she also will be concluding her studies in May at the Catholic Theological Union, where she is the first CTU student to pursue an MDiv with a double concentration in liturgy and biblical studies.*

The prayer, "Hail Mary," begins with the words based upon those of the angel Gabriel that we heard in today's gospel: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you."

What wonderful words! But then after all, angels are professional preachers! It is their whole being—all that they are—to *proclaim* the good news of God. That's what angels do! The words of Gabriel are the perfect homily—it is even short!

Gabriel is an example of the essence of all preaching—to *proclaim*. "Hail Thomas, the Lord is with you! Hail Patricia! Hail Virgil! Hail Viviana! Hail favored son and favored daughter, the Lord is with you." This also is the essence of the Order of Preachers—indeed all Christians—to *proclaim* to others and help all people realize—that the Lord is with them!

Now, every preacher also knows that the first person they preach to is themselves, so I must also say, proclaim, and believe: "Hail, Laura, the Lord is with you." We're called to then ask ourselves, "How will this statement—this humbling, awesome, wonderful understanding of the Lord's presence change our lives?"

The Annunciation story we heard is a scene set at home. And this is appropriate, because the Word of God makes its home within all of us. But

Gabriel's message to Mary doesn't just leave her at home, but turns her whole world upside down—topsy turvy—and takes her on a journey she could never have expected.

The statement and understanding of the Lord's presence takes each of us on a journey. It turns our own world upside down, and we are called to turn others' worlds upside down with the joyful, wonderful good news that "The Lord is with you."

Today marks a joyful step in my lifelong journey—a lifelong dream come true. And I'm so thrilled that you are here to accompany me on this special occasion. At first I thought of today as a milestone, and indeed it is, in one way. But it's not the ultimate destination. Today I am standing at the threshold of something new—to begin a journey as a professed member of the Dominican Family. Like Mary, I too, will begin a journey that I have no idea where it will go. Like Mary, I will need to remember that the Lord is with me—every step of the way, and know that I have many "Gabriels" here—in my friends and family—to remind me of this, especially in times of difficulty.

Today the Catholic Church celebrates the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary—the rosary, a great, grand prayer where many "Hail Mary's" are strung together to produce a prayer of praise and contemplation. We too, are *hailed, blessed, and proclaimed* to have found favor with the Lord. And each of our lives—strung together—will also produce a profound prayer of praise and contemplation that will resonate throughout the cosmos.

When we come together at the Eucharistic table today, we will also experience in a very profound manner, that the Lord is with us. We will gain grace and strength so that like Gabriel, we too, can proclaim to all we encounter: "Hail . . . the Lord is with you."

## Project OPUS Now at Dominican University

This summer the Dominican University joined with the Dominican Leadership Conference (DLC) in the establishment of the McGreal Center for Dominican Historical Studies. It is named in honor of Sr Mary Nona McGreal, OP (Sinsinawa), former President of Edgewood College and Director of Project OPUS since 1989.

Project OPUS is a DLC sponsored initiative which, under Sr Nona's leadership, compiled and organized more than 5,000 documents chronicling the history of Dominican life and mission in the United States. In 2001 OPUS published the first of three volumes about the Dominican Family—*Dominicans at Home in a Young Nation: 1786-1865*.

Assisted by a company of researchers and writers, OPUS also provides

documentation for the histories of individual congregations, monasteries, provinces, and laity chapters, and has encouraged an exchange of information about US history within the Family, the Church, and the nation.

Sr Nona says that now is the time for her to leave this work. Sr Janet Welsh, OP (Sinsinawa), has been appointed as the new Interim Director at the Center and they will work together preparing materials and documents that will be housed at Dominican University as well as continuing the work on Volume II: 1865-1910.

Dominicans are being asked to help establish an endowment to continue the work of the Center at 7200 W Division St, River Forest, IL 60305.

## Dominican Charism of Preaching Has Profound Effect on Laity, Part II

by Norm Laurendeau, OP  
Mary Magdalene Informal Group

*The first part of this article appeared in the last issue of the Challenge. It described the evolution of the preaching mission for the Dominican Laity of the Mary Magdalene Informal Group at St Thomas Aquinas, the Catholic Center at Purdue (West Lafayette, IN). It also included testimonials of two of its members on the subject of preaching. The second part below includes the remaining testimonials and the author's observations regarding their common themes.*

**Beth Ann:** "I am very grateful to the Dominican Laity for making it possible for me to preach at weekday masses and communion services. While I have completed two homiletics classes as part of a Master of Divinity degree, this new preaching program is the only opportunity I have to preach to Catholics because of my gender. If it weren't for this program, my only opportunity to preach would be to Protestants. While I also cherish being able to preach to my separated sisters and brothers, it is specifically for the Catholic community that I spent six years preparing in ministry formation. Therefore, it is a great privilege for me to help feed my fellow Christians spiritually by breaking open the Word of the Lord through preaching."

**David:** "After preaching several times, I can affirm that I have experienced most of the difficulties that must plague almost all preachers. These include an initial sense of desperation that I will not have anything meaningful to say, a deeper understanding of Scriptural texts because of my detailed study of them, nervousness in front of the crowd, and an enhanced appreciation for the time and effort that many priests must have put into their best homilies. The one surprising reaction that I have had every time, however, is that after study, rehearsal and prayer, I always have the profound feeling that I actually have something important to say, something that may, through His grace, influence someone's heart or mind in a positive way. It is this sense of genuine significance, which I trust comes from the Spirit and not my own ego, that convinces me that this is the right thing to do, that it is His will that I and all fellow Dominicans preach the good news."

**Kathy:** "I know that my faith has been greatly enhanced by the opportunity to preach at a communion service or mass. Preparing for a reflection has deepened my understanding of assigned Scriptural passages. I find that I pray a lot before I get up to preach and I know that the Holy Spirit is with me. Often the outline that I have written is begun but never completed, for I find that my preaching moves in a totally different path than I had planned. The Holy Spirit is clearly working; she moves where she will. I find it a very humbling experience – especially as it often surprises me what messages others gain from my preaching. I feel this experience has strengthened both my faith and my love of the Scriptures."

**Marlene:** "Preparing a reflection for mass or communion service is a labor of love, because it takes all of me to help birth it into being. It uses my faith in the action of the Holy Spirit, and it takes my

creativity, wisdom, and knowledge of Scripture up to and through the period of preparation. And then this process returns to me many blessings: increased faith in the Holy Spirit, a deeper understanding of Scripture, and pride in having used my mind and heart in service of the Lord and of my brothers and sisters. Although I normally avoid public speaking, I have become increasingly confident of speaking about my faith to others in this way."

**Mattie:** "Researching and praying over these "reflections" helps us to learn and to grow in Christ. By preaching in public, we experience a whole new set of perimeters that do not exist in other preaching venues. These perimeters expand our experience with the "spoken word." Moreover, by preaching, I personally become part of Christ's Church because I am acting more like Christ. While, at first, I was completely out of my comfort zone, my heart knows that we must all step out to grow; otherwise we stagnate. Growth for each of us involves risk and stirs feelings of discomfort, but this worry is soon replaced by the calming peace of the Holy Spirit, the same spirit that resides in the hearts of all the faithful."

**Norm:** "When I first began preaching, I was mostly worried about insufficient knowledge, thematic organization and terrible mistakes. I quickly gained tremendous appreciation for the effort required to put together a good reflection. After further experience, I developed a very emotional response to the privilege of preaching – a strong feeling that by publicly witnessing to my faith, I was for the first time really doing God's work. And then, for me, an amazing thing happened! Confidence in my Catholic faith grew precisely because of that public witness. What a remarkable turn of events. I began by simply serving, but I eventually received a totally unexpected gift – the grace of deeper faith and a fuller commitment to Christ, and all that despite my sinfulness and my lingering doubts."

**Tom:** "Preaching, for me, always begins with meditative practice, an existential relating to the scriptural text so as to bring it to personal significance. However, it eventually shifts from the personal by offering relevance to the family of believers. The preacher must empathetically project himself into the place of the congregation while preserving the uniqueness of his life history. In this sense, preaching is not a charism given to the individual, but to all Dominicans as a gift to the community. For the preacher, meditating on Scripture is formative of his coming into fuller truth, faith and hope, but the preacher's meditation achieves fruition only when the congregation receives the gracious gift of a new perspective on Scripture. Without this expression, meditation does not reach a wider circle. Indeed, from this perspective, preaching is *kenotic* – it is a pouring out for the other, a sacrificial work of love."

Despite the personal nature of these testimoni-

als, we can easily discern some common threads emanating from our experience of lay preaching: a new appreciation of the effort required to preach well, a greater knowledge of Scripture, a fuller participation in the sacrificial work of Christ, an enhanced acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit, confidence derived from sharing personal faith, the joy of lovingly helping others in their faith journey, and the resulting growth in one's own spiritual journey. Having been privileged to hear each member preach several times, I believe that the above testimonials portray honestly the seriousness and dedication with which all of us approach our preaching mission. Furthermore, I contend that these testimonials emerge from six common characteristics of our reflections that I have consistently observed from our members during the past year. These characteristics represent key features of our Dominican approach to preaching and can be summarized by the mnemonic:

[P] - To praise

[R] - To remind

[E] - To encourage

[A] - To attest

[C] - To catechize

[H] - To humble.

Because Catholics are often quite staid about their faith, it is important for them to hear the laity offer generous *praise* to the Lord. For this reason, many of us extol God's awesomeness, bountiful love or compassion during our reflections. Similarly, an important aspect of preaching is simply *reminding* the congregation of God's amazing love and forgiveness, especially through personal stories. Reminders of the transcendent reality of Christ are especially necessary to combat the secularization that often percolates through family and work. In a similar vein, busy people in an overly competitive world need constant *encouragement* as they confront suffering and moral laxity. Encouraging words or stories are particularly comforting when dispensed by laypersons, as folks in the pews recognize that they are not alone – that others just like them have similar problems. Just as Barnabas was the great encourager for St. Paul, we too can become Barnabas for our fellow Christians.

To *attest* is to witness to our Catholic faith. Most people, including students, expect priests to witness, but this expectation rarely extends to laypersons. Hence, attesting to the joys of Christianity can be very powerful; indeed, it merits special attention when it comes unexpectedly from lay Dominicans. To *catechize* is to teach; from a preaching perspective, every reflection is thus an opportunity to inform others about

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# Global Warming a Top Priority of NADJPCC

Global warming was placed first on a list of items in the "Call for Action 2006-2008" by the North American Dominicans for Justice, Peace, and the Care of Creation (NADJPCC) this summer. The group also recognized and celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dominican presence at the United Nations and 25 years of justice and peace promotion by the International Dominican Commission for Justice and Peace.

On the subject of global warming, the action document formulated by the NADJPCC says: "We believe the Earth is in crisis. We are called to live simply and to practice sustainability."

The group made the pledge to:

- Educate about global warming and international agreements concerning global warming;
- Network with Dominican ecological centers and collaborate with environmental groups;
- Lobby legislators to sponsor bills limiting pollution and greenhouse gases;
- Foster investments in environmentally sound companies and consider refusing to patronize the worse offenders;
- Encourage congregations/provinces to conduct an energy audit and implement the recommendations;
- Encourage local alternative sources of

energy, i.e., solar panels, windmills, and geothermal;

- Examine transportation alternatives, e.g., hybrid cars, public transportation, and car pooling; utilize conference calls and other technologies, when appropriate; and
- Re-emphasize its commitment to "reduce, reuse, recycle."

Besides global warming, the other top action topics were: 1) death penalty, 2) disarmament, 3) Iraq, 4) Israel/Palestine, 5) Africa, 6) Colombia, 7) migration/immigration, 8) human trafficking, and 9) the United Nations. (A draft of the "Call to Action" can be found at [http://www.opsouth.org/call\\_to\\_justice.htm](http://www.opsouth.org/call_to_justice.htm).)

## Charism

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their faith. More importantly, when churchgoers meet laypersons who are knowledgeable in their faith, they too understand that study of the Catholic tradition is not limited to the priesthood. Finally, all preaching requires that we *humble* ourselves so that the Holy Spirit can act on those receptive to her work. Parishioners easily discern when someone preaches for glory rather than in service to fellow travelers on the journey. Humble servants, therefore, are always more effective in calling others to Christ; by their fruits, we shall surely know them!

At the Bologna General Chapter in 1998, the following admonition was offered to the entire Dominican Family: "We encourage Dominicans from all branches of the Order to claim their identity as preachers. Furthermore, we ask all members to prepare themselves for this preaching and to take advantage of every opportunity." We, as one group of lay Dominicans, have responded enthusiastically to this admonition. We encourage others to follow our path. The path is surely challenging, but the spiritual rewards are greater than one can ever imagine. As lay Dominicans, we inherently offer a unique vision of preaching and we certainly need to claim our identity as preachers. While faith-sharing, writ-

ing for publication, and collaborative preaching are all important, there is something quite remarkable about voicing personal faith via the pulpit. As a preacher, one's spiritual journey automatically becomes more significant, a significance bolstered by the growing faith that surely accompanies any public witness of that faith.

The purpose of our preaching activity is perhaps best summed up by Isaiah: "The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them" (Isaiah 50:4). That is indeed our job as preachers – to rouse others to Christ, to encourage appreciation of God's love and forgiveness, and to manifest the joy that comes with abiding fully in the Lord. Our perspective is that lay preaching can play an enormous role in the Church, especially as we deal with the shortage of priests across the United States. Many members of the Dominican Laity have the qualifications, enthusiasm and desire to preach from the pulpit. In collaboration with the Dominican friars, we can make an enormous difference in our world. We can participate fully in the vision of Dominic – indeed, we *can* rouse the weary because, in so many ways, we *are* the weary.

### Acknowledgements

I thank Frs Dan Davis, Jim Barnett, and Steve Kuhlmann for supporting the Dominican Laity at St Thomas Aquinas, the Catholic Center at Purdue, and for giving its established members the special opportunity to begin this preaching mission. I appreciate support and feedback from our membership and especially thank the following lay Dominicans for allowing me to include their personal testimonials: Beatriz Cisneros, Barbara Kerkhoff, Marlene Laurendeau, Mattie Mattox, Thomas Ryba, Kathleen Wagner, Beth Ann Winebrenner, and David Wirth.

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2. C. McVey, O.P, "Preaching Among Dominican Women and Men," [http://www.dominicans.us/articles/index.cfm?article\\_id=31](http://www.dominicans.us/articles/index.cfm?article_id=31) (June 2, 2005).
3. J. Motl, OP, "Provincial Representative's Message on Preaching Survey," *Chal-lenge* 46(4), (April, 2005).

## Dominican Liturgical Calendar—First Quarter, 2007

### January

- 1-Mary, Mother of God (S)
- 3- Bl. Stephana Quinzani, religious
- 4- Bl. Zedislava Berkiana, lay Dominican
- 7- St. Raymond of Penyafort, priest (M)
- 10- Bl. Gonsalvo of Amarante, priest
  - Bl. Ann of the Angels Monteagudo, religious
- 11- Bl. Bernard Scammacca, priest
- 18- St. Margaret of Hungary, religious (M)
- 19- Bl. Andrew of Peschiera, priest
- 22- Bl. Anthony Della Chiesa, priest
- 23- Bl. Henry Suso, priest
- 27- Bl. Marcolino of Forli, priest

- 28- St. Thomas Aquinas, doctor of the Church (F)
- 29- Bl. Villana de' Botti, lay Dominican

### February

- 3- Bl. Peter of Ruffia, priest
  - Bl. Anthony of Pavonio, priest
  - Bl. Bartholomew of Cerverio, priest
- 4- St. Catherine de' Ricci, virgin (M)
- 7- Anniversary of Deceased Parents\*
- 12- Bl. Reginald of Orleans, priest (OM)
- 13- Bl. Jordan of Saxony (M)
- 16- Bl. Nicholas of Paglia, priest

- 18- Bl. John of Fiesole (Fra Angelico), priest (OM)
- 19- Bl. Alvarez of Cordoba, priest
- 20- Bl. Christopher of Milan, priest
- 24- Bl. Constantius of Fabriano, priest

### March

- 19- St. Joseph (S)
- 25-The Annunciation of the Lord (S)

(S) Solemnity (F) Feast  
(M) Memorial (OM) Optional Memorial  
\* Office for the Dead is prayed

## Promoter's Corner

by Fr Jim Motl, OP



You will be receiving within the next several months a CD of a workshop on lay preaching that I gave on May 20 this year in West Lafayette, Indiana, at the invitation of the St Mary Magdalene Dominican Laity group there. The event was the first funded by the Irvine Trust inherited by the Dominican Laity of St Albert's Province several years ago. The event was recorded through the generous services of the son of one of the group members, and a CD of it is being distributed to each chapter and group of the Dominican Laity in our Province. I hope that it will be of assistance to you in discussing what the Dominican mission of preaching should mean in your chapter or group.

President Ruth Kummer, OP, Norm Laurendeau, OP (Interprovincial Delegate), and I represented St Albert's Province at the October meeting of the Interprovincial Dominican Laity Council in Louisiana. Besides the four regional provinces of the United States, both the French and English speaking contingents of the Canadian Province were represented, and so was the Vietnamese Vicariate of Canada. We discussed formation issues, which are a source of concern in several provinces. The Council turned down a proposal to set an upper age limit on receiving new members. There was also a discussion about the status of priests and deacons in Dominican Laity chapters and groups. There was general agreement that priests and deacons who are presently members of Dominican Laity chapters should remain as such. For the future the ideal would be to establish confraternities for priests and deacons according to the guidelines already established. In places where this is not possible, diocesan priests and deacons who wish to be Dominican need not be denied membership in our local chapters. Leadership, however, should remain among the laity.

The Interprovincial Council meeting also included presentations on lay preaching by Norm Laurendeau and on peace and justice by Fr Jeff Ott, OP, of the Southern Province. We had an opportunity to visit areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina including visits to several homes belonging to Lay Dominicans and to St Dominic's Church, which is open, but signs of the destruction are still apparent. Sr Connie Schoen, OP, the present Executive Director of Parable, explained the mission of that or-

ganization, which is to promote collaboration among all branches of the Dominican Family. She offered to take the initial step to reconvene a committee representing all the branches in establishing a Dominican Secretariat for the United States. The offer was accepted by the Council.

I am writing my *Challenge* article this month from Farmington Hills, Michigan, where I have been serving as temporary chaplain to our contemplative nuns at Blessed Sacrament Monastery (until mid-January, when I return to St Louis). They have been very good to me and I am delighting in the opportunity to join in their ministry of prayer and adoration. I have the opportunity to offer Mass and preach to them and the many laity who join in their worship. They are very aware of the Dominican Laity, and our Farmington Hills Chapter of the Laity meets here regularly. At Christmas I will be praying with them for you.

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

## What's a Secretariat?

The Master General has been urging Dominicans in each country or region to establish a secretariat. A Dominican Secretariat is a clearinghouse for information among all Dominican organizations in an area, including friars, nuns, sisters, laity, associates, youth groups, etc. The United States is about the only area not to have done this so far. The size of the country is one reason. Another is the diversity of outlooks and interests among the various groups calling themselves Dominicans in this country.

In 2002 presidents from each province were asked to begin planning for the proposed US Dominican Secretariat. In 2005 the Dominican Laity Interprovincial Council resolved that the Secretariat remain separate from any other existing Dominican entity.

## President Ruth

*Continued from Page 1*

ber, and e-mail of your moderator, formation director, and spiritual director. Send them to me: Ruth Kummer, OP, President, 3904 Golfside Road, Ypsilanti, MI 48197-8616; or e-mail: [r.kummer@worldnet.att.net](mailto:r.kummer@worldnet.att.net); or phone: 734-434-0195. The Formation Committee will meet soon to plan out the program and to develop materials for use during this gathering.

The next Interprovincial Council Meeting comes to the Central Province in April 2008, at St. John's Youth and Family Center, which is conveniently located near Detroit Metro Airport.

### Fall Accomplishments

On Oct. 25-27, 2006, Thomas Ryba from West Lafayette, IN (our new Formation Director for the Central Province); Fr Jim Motl from Farmington Hills, MI; Karen Sabourin from Howell, MI; and the cook and I met at my home to review digitized materials for formation. Laptops made our work easier, but it was tedious cross-checking from one manual to another which consumed much of our time. Drafts are currently being typed and proposals for the April Council Meeting may be ready for review and acceptance.

A conference call occurred on Nov. 16 among Fr John Meany, Sr Honora Werner, Sr Margaret Diener, Sr Mary John, Connie Schoen, and me (a member from each of the branches of the Family), and lasted for an hour and a half. This interim committee of the US Dominican Secretariat considered the following topics: 1) exploration of next steps; 2) expressions of practical concern; 3) progress toward knowing and understanding each other; and much more! Connie Schoen from the Parable Conference facilitated the call and will convey the results to Fr Chrys McVey, Promoter of the Family at Santa Sabina in Rome. Connie will keep him informed of the various efforts being made regarding the Dominican Family in the United States.

And finally, but not least, a recent letter received from the Provincial Superior Fr Michael Mascari expressed how impressed and pleased the canonical visitors were with the members of the Dominican Laity of our Province, whom they met in Chicago at the end of August. Each member represented all Dominican Laity of the Province. He also complimented the laity for our most recent issue of the *Challenge* newsletter (autumn 2006), which he found to be "professional" and a "wonderful promotion piece." Now the challenge of our *Challenge* readers is to send information on a regular basis to Editor Marlene Laurendeau ([marlenelauren@aol.com](mailto:marlenelauren@aol.com)).

## Upcoming Jubilee Events

**April 13 - 27, 2007**, Tour of the Lands of St Vincent Ferrer (1350 -1419). The Webfriar of the Central Province, Fr Albert Judy, has announced this special tour to celebrate the Jubilee. More details can be found at <http://www.svfparish.org/tour/>, or you can also contact: Fr Albert Judy, OP, 1530 Jackson Ave., River Forest, IL 60305; or phone: 708-366-7090.

**May 13 - May 16, 2007**, Dominican Family Symposium in Adrian, Michigan, celebrating 800 years of faith, heritage, and ministry of the Order of Preachers. It is sponsored by Siena Heights University and the Adrian Dominican Sisters. More information can be found at <http://www.adriandominicans.org>. Or call 1-800-979-0731.

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**Vice President:** Harvey Newcomb II, OP

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### Jubilee Prayer

(1206 -2006)

God of Mercy, in your eternal Wisdom, you called your servant Dominic to set off on a journey of faith as itinerant pilgrim and preacher of grace. With your Word of gentle Truth in his heart and on his lips, Dominic invited the first sisters and brothers to join him in a life of contemplative obedience in the service of the holy preaching.

As we commemorate this Jubilee, we ask you to breathe the Spirit of the risen Christ once again into our hearts and minds. Re-create us, so that we might faithfully and joyfully proclaim the gospel of peace, through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

### 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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