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## Section Seven: Articles & Resources

## THE FUTURE IN BLACK AND WHITE

Father Peter Murnane OP

After the previous National Promoter's report on the past and present of the Dominican Laity in Australasia, it is obvious that whichever way you look at it, the Dominican Laity is as healthy as a horse, and a pretty reliable steed. However, looking at its diversity here and there, we have to admit that it is a piebald one! As a kind of second thought, based on the old Latin pun about the *Domini canes*, (which, as you know, means both Dominicans and hounds of the Lord), might we not say that the Dominican Laity in Australasia is a Dalmatian dog? A thoroughbred, no doubt, and all in black and white. I play with this idea because if we are to look into the future and study the prospects of the Dominican Laity, don't we need to look closely at the material we are dealing with, the material which in fact is ourselves? Let us learn all we can about this, no matter how surprising the insights that may follow.

The first thing that one notices about Dominicans is that they are enormously different and variegated, but basically black and white. The Lay section of the Order certainly shares this characteristic. Black and white; there need be no prejudice here, racial or otherwise. Both of these tones are good. Moreover, both are absolutely necessary in our Order, our family.

The black and white of the original habit of the Friars - which we still wear, I am proud to say, on more formal occasions - set me thinking about what it might be a symbol of. By pondering the dualism of the black and white, we might learn a lot more about ourselves; how to interact better amongst ourselves, and how to grow stronger together into the future.

Our life contains many pairs of opposites, since we are created of matter and not merely spirit. Let us look at just seven of these pairs of opposites, starting with the black and white habit which may be a symbol of them all. They will help us to understand ourselves and our task for the future.

### 1. BLACK AND WHITE

These are very much part of our world. The day is white light; the night is dark, black. How important this is. How necessary to live appropriately in each: to work in one, and to rest in the other. But how disastrous when a person thinks that only one of these is worth having. That white or day is superior to black or night. Then you have a person of half-vision: a racist, maybe, or an insomniac. At best, a half-person.

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### 2. CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION

This pair of opposites is found in our ancient motto. We know it well. Have we thought deeply enough how the two depend on each other? How Mary, while she is the opposite of Martha in the task she has chosen, is still her sister. They are of one family. In each of us - for all pairs of opposites are to be found in our hearts - both contemplation and action are necessary if we are to be truly human, let alone Dominican.

### 3. COMMUNITY AND MISSION

These two are threaded through the Basic Constitution of the Friars like warp and woof - there's that dog again! Perhaps a better, more homely, translation of them would be family and job. How easy it is for any of us to neglect one of them for a time, to the sore hurt of the other.

### 4. RIGHT AND LEFT

It is only fairly recent times that physiologists have made some remarkable discoveries about how the two halves of the brain have very different functions. The right side of the brain which controls the movements of the left side of the body, seems to deal with synthesizing, with whole patterns, with stillness, meaning and the perceiving of beauty. The left half of our brain, 'on the other hand', notice the awareness shown by that old expression, deals with analysing, taking apart, a linear, step-by-step view of life. It deals with progress, abstractions and with function and usefulness.

### 5. FEMININE AND MASCULINE

The groups of opposite qualities called feminine and masculine are both present in every man and every woman, but by nature women have more of the first and men more of the second. The feminine, which seem to be more closely linked to the right half of the brain, are qualities of nurturing, receiving, welcoming. The masculine, more linked to the left half of the brain, are qualities of exploring, asserting, judging, acting and building. In the search for God both bring a different approach. The feminine dimension of our personalities looks for God within. It contemplates and ponders in stillness, whereas the masculine goes off on pilgrimage, asking, searching for the distant God, perhaps in the form of some symbol like the Holy Grail. Here, again, if we are to be whole as persons or as cell-groups in the Dominican Family, must we not pay close attention to these opposite and complementary qualities at work within us?

**6. COMPASSION AND DETERMINATION**

Each of us needs to develop a heart with which to feel what another is suffering. Yet we each need, also, something of the strength of mind to formulate our plan and to move forward and carry it out, despite the pain that every plan must bring to someone. The more we get to know our Founder, St. Dominic, the more we find that he had both qualities, to a profound degree.

**7. PRIVATE LIFE AND PUBLIC LIFE**

This pair of qualities can be seen in the way that private prayer is different from liturgy, or that stillness is different from speaking, or contemplation is different from preaching. Each of the seven pairs of opposites that I have mentioned is linked with every other pair. We will become whole persons to the extent that we find and recognize the opposites within us, and strive to reconcile them. Let us now look at some of the ways in which we can learn how to do this in the context of the Dominican Family. I believe that this will help us to build our future with more insight than otherwise.

The key word for this task, a profoundly 'Gospel' word, is RECONCILE. In each of the above seven pairs of opposite qualities, both of the opposites call out to be reconciled with each other. When the opposites are reconciled and harmoniously wedded, there is life. This is true whether we are talking about a person, or about a Chapter of Laity, or the whole Church. When one side will not accept its opposite, or even, God forbid, opposes it or attacks it, there is death. Let's look back over some of the ones I have given you, and consider the possibilities. I am afraid we will not have to try very hard to imagine them. They are, on occasion, only too real.

Have you seen, for instance, the 'contemplative' members of a Chapter at odds with the 'active' members? Or have you too been hurt and confused when those good people who have more of a feel for community speak out strongly about the need for a more welcoming spirit in the Chapter, only to find that they are at odds with those who favour mission and apostolate? What about 'rights' versus 'left'? This is not, of course, a dispute about which hand to hold a pen with, but about theology, or even politics, whether they be secular or religious. As for that age-old tendency for disputes to arise between the feminine and the masculine, well, let it not even be named amongst us! As you can see, if we look back even briefly over our last few months together in a Dominican Laity Chapter, we soon see many occasions when we needed, and still need, to be more deeply reconciled. Reconciled not only with each other, as members of the same family, but in a more subtle and more difficult way, within our very selves.

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However, let us be realistic, the task of reconciling the opposites within us and within our Chapters will never be wholly achieved. Although reconciliation is a very important commandment in the Gospel on which we build our lives, (*cf. Mt. 5:23-24*) all we can hope to do is to keep moving towards it. We must be always on the watch so that we will become more aware of the opposites within us individually and in our Chapters. If we deny them, or gloss over them, then we delay the process of reconciliation. To quote Father de Couesnongle, the previous Master of the Order, learning to pray is not so much a question of learning a method. It is more a question of bringing all one's hidden feelings and ideas to light, especially the contradictory ones, exposing them to the light of self-knowledge, and to the light of God. (*Confidence For the Future, p.132*)

There will always be a tension between any two opposites in our real world. When we work hard to look for the good in each, and to accept that good, we can be sure that we are at least beginning to do the work that the Gospel calls us to do. When we begin to accept the goodness of what we might have been previously repelled by in Right or Left, in Contemplation or Action, in Compassion or Determination, in Feminine or Masculine, then we will automatically be less afraid of that opposite quality. Then too, we will be able to move towards a fuller integration or wholeness, which has a lot to do with holiness.

If, however, we find that we are attacking some quality opposite to the one we would prefer, then we are not doing the Gospel's work, and we are retarding the future that Jesus wants us to bring to birth.

I hope you can see that I am talking of a deep process of personal change, which can and should happen in each of us. The wholeness will make each of us more confident of the future, and therefore more adventurous. How can it not happen, then, that each Chapter group will also dare more, to try things that are new and different.

To conclude these comments on our future, may I make a few practical suggestions? They are based on my observations of the Dominican Laity in Australasia and overseas during my 27 years as a Dominican, my 8 years as a local Chaplain, and my very brief 8 months as National Promoter. As you might have guessed, I have just re-read Father de Couesnongle's book *Confidence For the Future*. I could not recommend it highly enough, for study by individuals and by Chapters. Father Vincent considers that the essential characteristics of confidence in our future are:

- Hope in God
- Vision
- Openness to change

Can we now be brave enough to look at some of the things that God might be calling us to change?

**A. THE PRAYER OF OUR CHAPTERS**

When did we last ask real questions about this? How much time do we give, in quality rather than quantity, each month, to praying together as a group? Are we too formal? Do we share ourselves in our prayer with our brothers and sisters? Do we realize that there are many people 'out there', beyond the Order and even beyond the Church, who are longing for just such a prayer life. Do we dare to meet apart from the Chapter meeting, just so that we may pray together? Why not?

**B. WHO ARE OUR MODELS?**

Everyone, at every age of life, to some extent, models her or his behaviour on what others do or have done. We like to think that we are copying something of the spirit of St. Dominic, or of St. Catherine. Have we really come to know them personally, through a study of their life? Then there is the problem that they lived in times very different from our own. Social conditions are so different now. Have we worked to extract the 'essence' from their lives, which we can realistically copy?

What of other great Christians nearer to our time? I was recently very much struck by reading a life of that great Australian Catholic Lay woman, Caroline Chisholm. What a splendid example for any Laywoman to learn from, even though she too is now some time past. Are we alert for other models nearer to our time?

**C. ENTRUSTING OURSELVES TO OTHERS**

Following on the last point, do we allow others in our Chapters to learn from the experiences of our own life? It can be a great help for all of us, when in difficulty, to realize that others have been through, survived and even grown from experiences just like ours. Do we get close enough in friendship to those in our Chapters, to be able to share our thoughts and feelings with each other? If we do not, are we wasting or letting lie idle some splendid opportunities offered to us by the providence that brought these people into our life? I invite you to ponder with me how often the New Testament writers evangelized their world, by trusting their hearers with the story of their own lives, including their weaknesses as well as their strengths.

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### D. ACTIVITIES OF OUR CHAPTER

When did we last question these? Would we find that we meet merely that we can say that we have had a well-run meeting, a presentable set of Minutes? How does our Chapter reach out to those in our city who are deprived of the Gospel? In what way are we preachers? Have we spoken out as a group, or as individuals, against any of the multitude of social injustices that are perpetrated continually in our lands? What if we could speak, on some occasions, with the voice of hundreds of Dominican Laity, from Brisbane to Perth or beyond?

### E. YOUNG PEOPLE

At the Bologna assembly of the Dominican Laity (1983), Father de Couesnongle noted that many of our Chapters are made up of older people. Without any disrespect to the older members, he issued a clear challenge: *'This is not as it should be'*. We must reach out and offer the Dominican Laity vocation to many more young in our parts of the world. It is very gratifying to be able to say that in some parts of Australasia there are a number of young Lay Dominicans. We have made a beginning. A beginning is not an end, and it is not even enough.

### F. THE SIZE OF OUR CHAPTERS

Lastly, we perhaps need to ask a fundamental question that might free us to achieve some of the above more easily. If we are to pray together, and to share more of our lives together in friendship, perhaps in each other's homes, do we need to look carefully at what might be the ideal size of a Dominican Laity Chapter? Do we need to learn from the kind of group that Jesus chose around him? Or at the enormous amount of experience gained by the Basic Christian Communities around the world? What is the optimum size? Should it be less than 21 members? When the optimum number, whatever it is found to be by careful and honest investigation, is reached, should the Chapter then rejoice that they are able to give life to a new Chapter in the same district, which would always be kin to it? Is this not better than huddling together, fearful lest we lose the members that we have had for so long? St. Dominic, in his time, looked to the unknown future with a courage that spread what he had, so that more life could be born. His courage gave to every part of the world this Order in which we are privileged to share.

*Peter Murnane OP  
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**DOMINICAN FAMILY  
CALL AND RESPONSE**

Liam Walsh, O.P.

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**The story of an Evangelical Community of Preachers**

When a family gets together it is a time for telling stories, stories about what each one has been doing since they were last together, about great moments in the past, and about future hopes and dreams. It is in remembering and telling such stories that we reinforce our identity and gain the confidence that, as we write a new chapter in the story, it will be a true response to our particular call.

In most of our best Dominican stories the word "evangelical" or its equivalent keeps coming up. St. Dominic is described in one of the songs for his feast as being "made an evangelical man (vir factus evangelicus)". He discovered when he left his orderly life as a Canon Regular at Osma - you know the story well-that the Church was not coping well with all the new forces at work in the world - political, social, educational, and spiritual movements that seemed to identify the Church with the structures of the old world so that it was unsure how to evangelize the new without destroying itself. Dominic took to the roads. He became a poor man, and a talkative man, with something to say - questions as well as answers - to everyone he met along the way: he became a preacher.

His followers' stories continue the dialogue. They even include Dominicans challenging their own family when they found it had somehow grown tired of travelling and had settled down to safe, respectable mediocrity when they saw it had nothing much to say to the new, when it looked backward too much. Today stories of such Dominicans would include the three Dominican priests in Valencia I visited. They live in a small apartment in a poor barrio, working as taxi drivers or in an auto assembly plant, and in the evenings they talk and share the Eucharist at their kitchen table with those in their neighbourhood whom they gather together. And a community of Dominican Sisters in Bombay, India, in an even smaller apartment working to aid their

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neighbours and to give the believers among them a sense of belonging to a Church that cares for them. And a Dominican lay chapter of young married couples in Australia who especially want to follow the Gospel by praying the Gospel and teaching it effectively to others.

I must wait till later to know how you react to these stories. But sometimes when I tell these stories, feelings of unease and uncertainty -- even of hostility -- arise, and a question like this might surface: Do these stories represent a response to the particular call which God addresses to the Dominican Family? The same sort of stories, the question goes on, could be told about many Christian individuals and groups today and even about many people who are not Christian at all. Some Dominicans who participate in newer movements and apostolates of today, the question continues, feel a tension between loyalty to these new evangelical groupings and their own Dominican community. If this is so, is the Dominican charism really evangelical? Can it provide a special and different way of living the evangelical life today as it did for Dominic and his first followers?

To give you my answer to these questions, I have to take you on a rather theoretical excursion about the meaning of the word "evangelical". "Evangelical" means what is of the Gospel, and "Gospel" - "good news" - is two things: it is an event and it is the story of the event. The event is the coming of the Kingdom of God in Jesus and in the Spirit. It is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, all He taught and all He did and all He accomplished. And it is God sending His Spirit on those who followed Jesus and who believe in Him. The Spirit makes those He touches and indwells new creatures, free from all the divisive, death-dealing forces Jesus had conquered. He makes them a power in the world for reconciliation and community-making so that a new world might evolve, a world in which God will be all in all. That is, in inadequate phrases, the Gospel event.

The Gospel story, on the other hand, is the telling of that event and the effect that it had on their lives by the men and women who experienced it. The first group who knew Jesus and received the first outpouring of the Spirit were obviously in a unique position to tell this story. They told not just the story of Jesus, but also they told of the kind of community they formed, they told of their relationships with those outside the community and of how they carried out their mission to announce God' s kingdom. The New Testament is the stories told by the first evangelizers.

And so, when we say something is evangelical, we have to specify whether it is of the Gospel event or of the Gospel story. It must always be of the event: it must somehow reproduce the coming of God' s kingdom through Christ and the Spirit. There is no single model of community that can be called evangelical because the story has variations and developments. The primitive church in Jerusalem offers one model, the Pauline community in

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Corinth another, the churches of the pastoral epistles another. And while certain features of the story recur so regularly that they must be considered a permanent feature of evangelical community, there is no suggestion in the New Testament that the story ends there and that there cannot be further evangelical models in the future.

As the early Church began to cope with the idea that there might be a significant time interval before Christ would come again, they began to accept other leaders besides the first apostles, they began to send out other deacons, other preachers. And the call and the sending was recognized as being a charism of God. The Church began early in its history to come to terms with waiting, with remaining in the world. And as the world began to become Christian, the Church, almost inevitably, began to become worldly. It accepted a public role in the structuring and support of civil authority, in education, economy, in projects of human welfare.

It was in this situation that a new form of evangelical life began - the first monastic religious families and orders. They were inspired by the original Church of the apostles, but they were not simply a romantic imitation of them. They saw their charism as a service to the actual Church (people of God) of their own day, With all its structures, ministries and relationship to the contemporary world. For example, the first monks were a pro test against all that was not of the Gospel in the

Church and world of their times. They accepted the ordained ministry and the hierarchical structure of the Church, but they worked to re-evangelize the spirituality of popes, bishops, clergy, and to educate them. They accepted the cloistered communities of women, but they worked to make their lives more evangelical within the structure of cloistered life. By their simple work and labor, they witnessed to the laity the possibilities of secular tasks.

Communities such as these monastic religious families survive today because and to the extent that they can give the Church today the service they were called to give to the Church of their origins. If that service is addressed to permanent features of the Church, there will always be a place for that religious family. But only if it continues to provide that service. Inevitably it will have to renew itself regularly, and its renewal will have to be evangelical - not a romantic recreation, not general evangelical standards common to all Christians, not a pirating of the evangelical charism of another group or movement even when they seem more effective or needed. For better or worse, each religious family has to be its own evangelical self, and stand or fall on its own merits, on its own charism.

With that bit of theorizing in mind, let us return to our Dominican stories. In them we should be able to find the images that mark the call from God which is our particular charism. Dominic himself made friends easily, people

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gathered around him, he was a community-maker. The first brethren promised him "obedience and community". Nuns formed communities in Prouille, in Rome, and in Madrid under his direction. Lay people who followed him grouped into communities and become known as the Third Order of Penance.

From the beginning, each of these three communities had its own structure, government and law. At first this in itself might seem un-evangelical. No such divisions appear in the first Christian community. That community was one: slave and free, male and female, rich and poor. But Dominic was called to be evangelical to his Church, his world. There and then such separations were accepted. There were evangelical movements at the time which tried to eliminate these divisions, but Dominic tackled the problem of restoring evangelical values in a different way. What did he do to overcome the un-evangelical features that existed in the Church because of these divisions? Obviously he set for his followers demanding standards of evangelical poverty, prayer, penance, and identification with the poor and oppressed, but this was not the distinctive note of his charism. That note is to be found, I believe, in the oddest place: in the stories of the working out of our legislation and system of government.

That might seem strange since the Gospel is quite guarded about law and government. But on second glance, already the Council of Jerusalem is making rules for the Christian community, and Paul, in spite of himself, lays down the law from time to time. In a Gospel sense, the willingness to accept laws is an act of loving respect for others, a guarantee of their rights, an agreement to live and act together, to forego capriciousness and the dominance of the strong, to be sure one can count on and be counted on. Rules and law can express belief in the ultimate equality of those who come under it and are in themselves a support and guarantee of that indispensable evangelical value Jesus came to establish: the brotherhood and sisterhood of all God' s children.

But the Gospel is not just Word, it is also Spirit. If the word of law is to be evangelical, it must be tested by and be open to the Spirit. And the Spirit resides in the Christian community. In Dominic' s creation, it is the community which makes the law, which changes the law when it considers it necessary, and which applies the law. He and his followers devised a system of community government in which all individual authority is temporary and checked by regular community advice and consent. Dominic and his followers were remedying in an evangelical way the authoritarian Church structures, and, in so doing they created a community in which all were equal and together bearers of the Spirit. Such a community, he seemed to believe, would never let law enslave anybody (or even cramp their individual flair because he allowed for liberal dispensation), yet it would be a structured, regular community in which people could be secure, free

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It would take many stories to tell how each group of the family made use of the evangelical community Dominic designed for them. But more important for us is the way "evangelical community" has worked out between the different branches of the family. Dominic laid the foundations for the autonomy of each group, and to that extent he gave them a kind of independence from each other, the kind of independence that can lead to respect for each other's roles, and for genuine Christian community. It must be admitted that the early chapters of the Dominican community of men and women, religious and secular, priests and lay-people, are full of ambiguities. It took a long time for women religious to shake off ecclesiastical and social conventions and approach real independence. The story is certainly not ended yet. But recent developments in the Dominican family is a story of growing respect for the independence of each group, expressed in practical cooperation as well as in structure and legislation. That is truly a working out of Dominic's charism.

I have been claiming that the structured character of Dominican community life - within each group and between the groups - far from obstructing evangelical values is the very thing that ensures them for us Dominicans. Some of our efforts at renewal have taken their form from outside our own tradition - from Vatican II surely, but also from new religious families and movements and from secular prophets. These movements have new charisma and a new way of being evangelical, but they are not always our way, and would not work with our structures. Sometimes the Order seems stolid and conservative because of its structures, but the tenacity with which we have maintained our fundamental structures isn't just obstructionist or conservation - it is a matter of fidelity to our own way of being evangelical, which still has, we believe, a ministry to offer the Church. It is a way that has to be constantly renewed, to be sure, and that is why we need radicals - radicals who ask questions until they get at the root of things, and then can stop asking questions and begin accepting answers, and start building back up again.

A Dominican radical is one who trusts Dominic's way of the Gospel, who is prepared to stop his questions where Dominic stopped them, to start his answers from there and to put those answers into practice. This will, no doubt, limit his options. But the radical Dominican believes that the charism Dominic ministered to the Church and the world is still needed today, that the Dominican family is structured to provide that ministry, and that Dominicans can fulfil their vocation now by using that structure, and not another one.

The Order's community structure itself provides for this kind of radical renewal. Any individual can raise questions; community discussion and decision-making should be able to verify the answers proposed. And, apart

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from the testing that goes on within each group of the family, there is the testing that goes on between the different branches. The interaction between the different branches of the family is becoming more and more common in our day, and there is a new respect for the independent and special evangelical sensitivity of each group. This is Dominican community at its best, and is one of the surest guarantees of fidelity to our charism.

You are probably wondering how I can have gone on for so long talking about Dominican without mentioning the word "preaching". The reason is that ours is a story of an "evangelical community of preachers". We preach as an evangelical community. I thought we had to understand what evangelical community means for us before trying to understand the kind of preaching we are called to do.

Some of the charisms of religious families give a witness of ultimate holiness to the members of the Church so that they can be more evangelical in the exercise of their own apostolic charism. The monastic and contemplative orders have this role. Other religious families seem to have been called to a more direct but still internal role of bringing an evangelical quality to the pastoral ministry of the Church. Such were the orders of canons regular. The originality of Dominic was to bring the evangelical spirit to the evangelizing ministry itself -to call those who speak the Gospel to the world into a community that would by very definition be a community of evangelizers - the Order of Preachers.

Dominic himself was a man who went out - to those in the Church but not really hearing the Gospel, to those cut off from the Church as heretics, and he wanted to go beyond the boundaries of the Church, to those who had not yet heard the Gospel. The recent General Chapter set a new stage in the continuing story of Dominican evangelizing when it set the priorities of Dominican preaching as catechesis of the dechristianized, preaching to people from non-Christian cultures, addressing the problems of the poor and oppressed, and finding a way to speak to those whose eyes and ears are open only to what the mass media is saying.

But if we say only this about our priorities, we are not telling the whole story. These we recognize to be common tasks to all Christians, and they are, in fact, being carried out by many Christian and evangelical groups besides our own. Looking again at the illustrated stories of Dominican preaching, we see preaching that is thoughtful and studied, that calls for conversion indeed, but for an educated kind of conversion, that has a concern for the truth of things.

Dominic sent his men to school and made them teachers. He made theological study a distinctive element of Dominican community life. He gave his followers a concern for doctrine and orthodoxy of teaching. Each of

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these themes occurs again and again. They are exciting and problematical for many of our brothers and sisters today who are inspired by contemporary movements of evangelical renewal: study can seem an academic escape from involvement with people, caring for truth and addressing the intelligence of our hearers can seem elitist and snobbish. Once again, the challenge is to accept our charism, to accept the marks of the "waiting Church" that we carry (a Church that is in the world until the Lord comes again), and to see if and how we can live that charism evangelically today, to see if and how our Order, dedicated to what our tradition has called "doctrinal preaching", can fulfil its mission in an evangelical way.

The Gospel event of the coming of the Son and the Spirit is meant to unite people, to form them into a community of love which is the Church so that they can be the center of a wider communion of love which is the human family. But people have to understand one another and share some basic vision about human goals and values if they are to live together in love. And because people grow up through so many different experiences and because distances of time and place isolate us one from another, one group from another, differences of ideas and ideologies arise. If these differences are not properly handled, they become divisive. A large part of the story of the Church is of its constant struggle to maintain its unity of faith as it drew to itself peoples from different cultures and times. It is the story of creeds and councils, heresies and schisms; it is the story of theological enterprise; it is a love story, fraught with the effort of keeping people understanding one another, comfortable in talking with one another so that the community would continue and grow.

Dominic appeared in the Church at a moment of crisis. You know the story of the Albigensian heresy, the new social classes emerging in the cities of Europe, of the new scientific and philosophical ideas coming from the Arabic world. A tired theology and a dogma of laws rather than love had little to say. What the Church needed was a more thorough and positive understanding of how these new ideas and experiences could be reconciled with the Gospel and with one another in the Gospel. It needed good theology and theological preaching. St. Dominic was called to offer that service as his particular contribution to building up the evangelical community of love. He planned his community so that it would be able to provide that kind of preaching. His communities valued study, schools, books, teaching, research. From Thomas and Albert, from Catherine of Siena to our contemporary Biblical School in Jerusalem and other efforts we see that we have tried to follow that charism.

To be sure, we can also find much that is unevangelical. We have had our Inquisitors, our theologians who stifle truth in the name of Thomistic philosophy, but we have resources to protect us against those distortions. Our community life is designed to generate the kind of evangelical

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radicalism I spoke of earlier. Through the doctrinal dimension of our studies and lifestyle, we ought to be able to face down and work our questions that arise about the meaning of the Gospel; we ought to be able to save one another from aligning ourselves uncritically with any movement whether it be conservative or progressive, Thomistic or existentialist, Marxist or Freudian.

In our international community we can be saved from identifying the Gospel with any culture or civilization; in fact, this is one dimension that we have not yet I think, exploited sufficiently. What a vast range of experience of reality is available to us through our brothers and sisters around the world! What contact with all that is happening! What a spectrum of sensibilities and insights! If every member and group of this family of ours were using his eyes and ears, his heart and mind to observe and understand what is going on in the world he or she is experiencing, we could be a community that listens not only to the Word of God but also to the world of men. And if, in our community fellowship, we could talk together about these experiences and ideas we could surely develop a vision of the Gospel that would incarnate in contemporary flesh and blood the Word of God and let His Spirit bind people together in understanding and love.

Together we might find an understanding of the Gospel that would make men and women with technological, scientific, and artistic backgrounds feel at home in the communion of faith. We might be able to liberate the Word of God and His Spirit from any one culture or system of ideas, and show it to be the ground of unity and comprehension between all human cultures and systems. If we could interact in this way, within our Dominican family then we would be the kind of evangelical community of preachers we are designed to be.

As I have been telling it, our Dominican story is too good to be true. But this is what we have to try to achieve because it is our charism and it is what God expects of us. The basic Dominican structures to which we are committed to make it possible - they certainly do not obstruct it. The cautious recognition that there are many ministries in the Church beside those of the ordained, the movement for the liberation of women, the facilities that are being developed for world-wide and local communication, the general movement of evangelical renewal - all these and others give us opportunities that Dominic would have thanked heaven for, because they make it easier to do what he wanted to do. The Dominican family in its official chapters and meetings and in its experiments and researches is moving towards a better handling of these opportunities.

Our gathering here today, for example, is a step forward. You have kindly let me dream my dream. Now we have to wake up. And though reality may sometimes be discouraging, it also contains new opportunities. One thing I

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believe you can be certain of. What you do will write at least a little paragraph in the story of that evangelical community of preachers that is the Dominican family. And, because God is good, He will be with you.

*<http://www.op.org/oplaity/laydominican.htm>*

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## THE PURPOSE OF THE DOMINICAN LAITY

Charles R. Malatesta, O.P.

### Introduction

Before speaking of the Purpose of the Dominican Laity it is necessary to face and lay to rest certain ideas that seem prevalent concerning the Dominican lay vocation. In particular three such ideas must be mentioned.

First, the Dominican Laity has been described as a "devotional prayer society in particular for older people." Father Schilebeeckx described it thus in *The Dominican Third Order "Old and New Style."* This idea denies the apostolic purpose of the Order.

Second, there is an idea that the Dominican Laity is a group whose nature has been determined once and for all at some point in the past, and which, consequently, can point infallibly to some document, presumably the Rule of the Dominican Laity, as a never-changing model for all things pertaining to the Dominican Laity. Yet the General Chapter of the Dominican Order, as long ago as 1958, petitioned the Master General of the Order "to establish a special commission which must make a penetrating study of the *nature* of the Third Order." Obviously this indicates a less than complete understanding of the nature of the Dominican Laity as a part of the Order.

Last, there has been confusion about the place of the Dominican Laity and of all "Third Order" groups in the structure of the Church. Some would make of these people mini-religious, people who are no longer laypersons in the usual meaning of that term. This is untrue. Members of the Dominican Laity are indeed laypersons.

The fact that these ideas have been expressed and unfortunately lived, indicates the necessity of some change in the understanding of the Dominican vocation. In this paper we will examine some of these necessary changes.

### The Dominican Family

Before we can understand the Dominican lay vocation, however, we must establish the purpose of the laity in the Dominican family. If we are searching for the fundamental realities relating to things Dominican, the first place we must look is the Constitutions of the Order of Friars Preachers.

These Constitutions, insofar as they are *laws*, bind only the priests and brothers of the Order. Yet the Constitutions as we have them today

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have descended directly from the original Constitutions written by St. Dominic and the first brethren - written, that is, by those men whom the Spirit first led to conceive of, and to live, Dominican life. What they set down was their attempt to put into words a description of the life they had experienced. Accordingly, the fundamental concepts of what it means to be a Dominican will be found in this source - as well as in the writings of their descendants in the Order.

In a return to an earlier, and more intelligible, presentation of basic Dominican ideas, those who rewrote the Constitution after Vatican II began with a section titled "The Basic Constitution." The ninth and last article in that section, in the translation produced by our Australian Province, reads:

*The Dominican family comprises clerical and cooperator brothers, nuns, sisters, members of secular institutes, and fraternities of priests and lay folk.*

It is obvious from the reference to "fraternities of priests and lay folk" that members of the Dominican Laity are authentic members of the family Dominican. This is the first fact to be considered in determining their purpose.

### **Lay Members of the Family**

It is also important to emphasize, however, that these people are LAY members of the family. The Constitutions of the Order of Friars Preachers explicitly asserts that "lay fraternities of the Order are associations of *lay* people (149, I). They are lay members of the people of God - laymen and laywomen - to whom the Spirit has given those qualities, or that particular combination of qualities that equal Dominican. Since the [most recent] General Chapter of the Order (1974) deleted the terms "first" "second," and "third" as designating various divisions of the Dominican family, lay members have been called, in the United States at least, Dominican Laity.

Father Weber argues that the term ought to be "Lay Dominicans." He argues so on the theological grounds. I agree with him on theological grounds. In recent history, however, the laity have been considered, and unfortunately have often considered themselves, second-class citizens in the Church. This was occasioned, presumably, by an inadequate view of the Church. According to this view, THE Church was composed of bishops, priests and religious. They were the first-class citizens among the People of God who are the Church. Lay people were, at best, second-class citizens. Like children, they were to be seen and not heard. They were, as more than one ecclesiastic implied, to keep their mouths shut and their pocket-books open. Their duty was to listen and obey.

To undermine this less-than-adequate view of the Church, and of the laity in it, I prefer, at this moment in time, the term "Dominican Laity." Perhaps I shall live long enough to see the next step, the triumph of the theological view. People will then accept without hesitation the fact that all of the baptized make up the People of God. There is only one class of citizenship - first-class. There will, of course, be a variety of tasks to be performed by the different citizens, each doing what he or she has been called by God to do.

Similarly, all Dominicans will recognize one membership in the Dominican family, though each member will perform a different function according to his or her call by God. When this longed for day arrives, we can easily adopt the term "Lay Dominican."

With this thought in mind - namely, that the Dominican Laity are truly members of the Dominican family, and specifically LAY members - it is possible to discover the purpose of the Dominican Laity as family members. In fact we can recognize three purposes, and shall call them Individual Purpose, Purpose Within the Family, and Purpose Beyond the Family - that is, purpose in the world.

### **Individual Purpose**

The first purpose of the Dominican Laity, the Individual Purpose, is simply to *be* -- to be Dominicans.

To quote again from the Constitutions:

*"All the groups composing the Dominican family share in its common vocation,, (141). [Dominican laypersons,] organized by a special gift of God in the apostolic spirit of St. Dominic, aim to achieve the salvation of themselves and of others, by the profession of the evangelical life according to the way of life adapted by the Order to their state of life in the world" ( 149 ) .*

The Rule of the Dominican Laity spells out the meaning of "evangelical life": it means living in the spirit of the beatitudes (see Rule, I, 3, b). The Constitution cited acknowledges that there are laymen and laywomen who have been led by the Spirit into a Dominican vocation. These people will achieve God' s gift of salvation by living "in the apostolic spirit of St. Dominic . . . professing [that is, carrying into practice] the evangelical life" adapted to their lay state.

The elements that coalesce to make Dominican Life are discussed in Father Kiesling' s article on Dominican Spirituality. Their general adaptation to lay life in our era must be the task of the Dominican Laity, who are the best judges of what lay life means. Each lay Dominican must further adapt these elements to the life situation in

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which God has placed him or her. From this point of view, the purpose of the Dominican Laity is fundamentally the same as that of the priests, brothers, and sisters.

### **Purpose Within the Family**

The second purpose of the Dominican Laity, the Purpose Within the Family, flows from the first; the Dominican Laity are truly members of the Dominican family. All members of any family have a contribution to make to all the other members of the family; indeed, one who makes no contribution to the rest of the family is a member in name only. I would focus on two contributions the Dominican Laity could make. Both might be called forms of teaching.

I would call the first contribution *sharing*. Let me cite examples where I see this as applicable. We are all concerned, for instance, about the question of community. What is it? how does one live it? what can community do for us? what are its limitations? People were living community before anyone thought of religious life as we know it. The natural family was meant to be a community. I am sure that the average married Dominican layperson knows far more about what living community means than some religious will ever know. Living community is now so second-nature to the married laity that they have all but forgotten how they put it together. Their memories can be jogged, however. In honest dialogue with them, the rest of the Dominican family may learn more about community than from reading dozens of books on the subject.

Or, take the business of prayer. The priests and religious members of the family have no monopoly on prayer. The Spirit seems to be leading more and more laypeople into deep prayer. Conceivably they can teach priests and sisters of the Order to pray better, more personally, especially us of the older generation whose prayer has often been formal and sometimes mechanical.

There is a second teaching function that members of the Dominican Laity can fulfill within the family, and this I consider even more important. They can help the rest of the family to be "honest."

There are problems in our world and among the people who make up our world. All those problems have answers in God's plan. We do not yet know the whole of God's plan; however, some of those problems do have answers that can be identified now. But how can priests or sisters, who are not lay people living in the world, know that they are addressing the real problems of the world? As I keep protesting to the laity I know, I have not been a layman for nearly forty years. No matter how much I think I know about this world and people's problems, no matter how concerned I may be about helping

them solve those problems, the only way I can really know is to have people tell me what it is all about "out there."

The Master General, in his 1975 Christmas letter to the Order, said much the same thing. After commenting on the spirit of dialogue he saw developing among the priests, brothers, and sisters in the family, he continued:

*Until now I have rarely encountered a deep cooperation of the brothers and sisters with the members of the lay confraternities of St. Dominic, who ought to be, faced with the world as it is, an irreplaceable help and inspiration. Without them are we able to give to the world of today the new spirit which it needs and which can be found only in the Gospel of Christ? (I.D.I. No. 14 -- 22/XII/75)*

It is the Master of the Order himself who says that the members of the Dominican Laity are an irreplaceable help, that they are the people "faced with the world as it is."

If their help is irreplaceable, then somehow or other we of the Order are being less than honest if we are not utilizing that help. We are in danger of giving answers to questions that people are not asking, and then concluding that the problem is theirs because they ignore us. Unless we are in constant dialogue with those who are in contact with the world as it is we are in danger of offering solutions to non-problems and missing the real problems.

Examples that come to mind (for which we blame others, not ourselves, naturally) are the concerns expressed by some people priests among them - over communion in the hand, or sisters' attire. Jesus said nothing about either. Christians who are concerned about what Jesus taught could not care less about those presumed problems. But these Christians are very much concerned about applying Christ's principles of justice and charity to the poverty-stricken of the world, to the black and Chicano family newly arrived in the neighborhood. Priests and religious cannot be "honest" - that is, they cannot fulfill the mission God gave the Order in the world - without contact with people who are grappling with the problems posed by the Gospel as it must be lived in the world. The lay members of the Dominican family through their deep love for the family, will be the first to help us identify these problems.

I would mention yet another way in which the Dominican Laity's love for the family can help to keep the rest of the family honest. They can critique the family's endeavours - not only those of the priests of the Order but, *mutatis mutandis* (as we used to say), those of the brothers and sisters as well. How do I know, for example, that my preaching really reaches people? Am I actually saying it so that the people I

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address can understand? Do my words give them a reason for the faith in them? Do they give a valid course of action? Do I move people to action? Or, am I only a "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal?" There are other difficulties besides those of recognizing problems or giving Scriptural answers.

Techniques have been available and used successfully for some time to give helpful feed-back to preachers. Either as a chapter or smaller group project, the Dominican Laity could use these techniques to supply valuable suggestions to their brothers in the Order. Those in teaching, parish, hospital, or any other ministry could benefit equally from similar criticism. We will all be more effective ministers through the help of criticism given us within the ambit of a loving family.

### **Purpose Beyond the Family**

The third purpose I recognize for the Dominican Laity, the Purpose Beyond the Family or purpose in the world follows also from the fact that the Dominican Laity are truly family members. To return to the Basic Constitution of the Dominican Order, the very first article quotes from the letter of Pope Honorius III to St. Dominic and his first brethren:

*"You have given yourselves to the proclamation of the Word of God, preaching the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world."*

In another place the Constitutions state:

*"Lay Fraternities of the Order . . . aim to achieve the salvation of themselves and of others by the profession of the evangelical life according to the way of life adapted by the Order for their state of life in the world" (#149, 1).*

Since, for a Dominican, the salvation of others means the "proclamation of the Word of God . . . throughout the world" it follows that the Dominican Laity must share this purpose by reason of membership in the Dominican family.

At various times in history the laity have fulfilled different functions among God' s people. But in one way or another the Dominican Laity must be engaged in the proclamation of God' s Word, at the very least by *living* it. I believe - and I am not alone in this - that *verbal proclamation* also belongs to the Dominican Laity. As Father Kiesling suggests, members of the Dominican Laity can share their insights about their faith with others, teach CCD courses, participate in such apostolic activities as Marriage Encounter. All these involve verbal proclamation, as does participation in dialogue homilies.

The unique element in Dominican life and spirituality which St.

Dominic enjoined upon his Order is study. Members of the Dominican Laity should know and be able to explain to others at least the fundamentals of Christianity, "to give a reason for the hope that is in them," as St. Peter put it (1 Pet. 3:15). St. Catherine of Siena did this in her time. Men among the Dominican Laity are doing it in our time by entering the diaconate programs in many dioceses. Women are offering themselves for the various ministries at last opening to them within the Church, such as leaders of religious education programs, leaders and members of liturgy teams, parish visitors. Dominican laywomen ought to be among the first to acquire competencies that can be developed into full ministries among God' s people. Many of them have already acquired such competencies.

There is no area of life or activity in which members of the Dominican Laity should not be engaged. They should bring the principles of Christ to bear upon the unchristian and even inhuman conditions that exist in many of the social, industrial, and political institutions of the world. What might be accomplished, for instance, by dedicated, *competent* members of the Dominican Laity in the political life of a city, state, or nation? It is the work of the laity to think through and determine how best they can influence political life.

As all these activities develop according to the specific talents of those people to whom God gives Dominican vocations, the apostolic goal of the Order will be achieved more fully than it can be if only priests, brothers, and sisters are thought to have Dominican vocations and to be the apostolic members of the Order. It is important to note, too, that the Dominican Laity carry out these activities as apostolic Christian lay persons. In these activities they are not simply helpers of the other members of the Order but have been called by God at baptism to these tasks.

However, lay members of the Dominican family can and should be enlisted by the other parts of the Dominican family to assist them in their apostolates. As Father Schillebeeckx pointed out several years ago:

*The fact is that priests in many cases are carrying on an apostolate which, the longer it is maintained, the more proper priestly work is relegated to the background. These forms of the apostolate could be better entrusted to the laity... Thus the fathers would have a complement of their own priestly apostolate in the world, made more fruitful by the Third Order itself. Hence Third Order life is a special case of apostolic cooperation of laymen and priests. What is special in this case is that there is operative an apostolic cooperation of laymen with the priestly apostolate of a distinct religious Order. (The Dominican Third Order "Old and New Style")*

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The cooperation of which Father Schillebeeckx speaks is also possible between members of the Dominican Laity and sisters' communities. But whether this cooperation be between priests and laypeople, or sisters and laypeople, its modes must be thought out and worked out by each Province and Community, and even each local community.

### Conclusion

In this article I have attempted to penetrate the purpose of the Dominican Laity. I have relied for basic premises on the principles enumerated in the Constitutions of the Order of Friars Preachers. The Dominican Laity must not only understand its purpose in the Order but also continually adapt that purpose to the present era. The whole Order is engaged in this work of exploration, realizing that each generation must do it anew for the era in which it lives. Such a task is never easy. It is made more difficult by the various ways in which the lay members of the Dominican family have been looked upon, and have looked upon themselves, during the history of the Order.

Yet in God's plan there is a purpose for the Order's existence. The Dominican Laity, as true members of the Dominican family, share in that purpose. Present and future members of the Dominican Laity are urged to reflect upon the ideas presented here and penetrate ever more deeply into the vocation to which God has called them. Each Dominican, of whatever branch of the family, must do that; another cannot assume such a responsibility for any of us, nor should we expect another to do so.

*<http://www.op.org/oplaity/laypurpose.htm>*

## THE GOSPEL LIFE: ONE FAMILY, MANY GIFTS

John Burchill, O.P.

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In recent years we Dominicans have attempted to foster the awareness of ourselves as a family composed of laity, religious men and women and religious-priests. In the renewal going on in the Church, one of the problems besetting us is the lack of recognition of their identity among the laity and religious in the Church, and in the Dominican family. This is particularly true of the lay person, for, despite the Second Vatican Council' s extensive efforts, we still have not regained the fundamental concept of lay spirituality. The Council' s treatment of religious also seemed to raise the question, for many religious, of their place in the Church. In my paper I will address the theme "*The Gospel Life: One Family, Many Gifts*". I chose this Gospel perspective because all our reflection has to be based on the Gospel, the root and foundation of every Christian' s life.

Before we turn to the Gospel, it will be helpful to gain some historical perspective. This will naturally help us to understand where we have come from. Prior to the Council, catechetical instruction and often instruction given on religious life in any novitiate taught the view - if not in these terms, certainly in attitude - that lay Christians were second class, second rate. Those who really wanted to live the Gospel, to become perfect, became priests and religious. It was said that lay people followed the way of the commandments, and religious, the way of the counsels. (The great theologians such as Aquinas were certainly more nuanced than this and taught that every Christian was called to live the spirit of the counsels, that obedience to the precepts is offered by the Lord to all and obliged all Christians.) But it was said that lay Christians only did what Jesus said you had to do, and that there was a second way - the way of the so-called evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience - which was not merely a way of salvation but a way of perfection. These people do what Jesus said it was better to do.

What was the origin of this development? It is neither in the New

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Testament nor was such a distinction made in the early Church. A handy way to understand how such a distinction emerged is to recall the models of holiness which the community (Church) fostered and recommended in the early years of the Church.

For the first three centuries the ideal of Christian sanctity was certainly the martyr. The martyr, the mighty athlete of God, set the standard of perfection as the perfect imitator of Christ. The mind of the Church can be clearly seen in the privileges granted them, for instance, male martyrs who survived persecution were often ordained priests, their relics were venerated and they were often declared saints. Moreover, the life style of the martyr was the model of Christian perfection presented to the community. For Ignatius of Antioch, martyrdom was the perfect imitation of Christ. The true disciple of Jesus was the person who was ready to sacrifice his life for Him. Ignatius himself had the aspiration of dying for the faith and this prompted him to dissuade communities which might have intervened and prevented him from attaining his cherished goal.

Yet the honour received by martyrs should make us hesitate to simply identify the martyr with dying for the faith. This would make us miss the salient point which allows even this life style to be recommended to all Christians whatever their state in the Church. The real meaning of martyrdom is witnessing. It was not any old kind of witnessing - but witnessing with one's whole life. They confessed to Jesus in their bodily being, sometimes subjected to torture and put to death. The fact of undergoing death or torture was not what made the witness of martyrdom real: otherwise, you would have to die to be a real Christian. Rather it was living with Christian conviction during this time of persecution. Certainly for many individuals the personal renunciation of freedom, life and property was an eventuality. Daily the person was risking and accepting the risk of living for Jesus Christ. These persons remained in their homes and professions (certainly more lay martyrs than clerics, and religious do not yet exist) and lived with the risk of the knock on the door or the confrontation on the street which would mean impoverishment, prison or death. Martyrdom was the early style of sanctity; it was an uncompromising witnessing to the person of Jesus, teaching the values of Jesus, even when this imperiled normal life in the world, their home life and happiness. At its core this life style went to the heart of the Gospel - to life for Christ Jesus alone, to live the Gospel without compromise and to accept and live with the consequences of a radical trust in God. Finally, one can make explicit the fact that the martyrs did not give up the world, did not renounce it, but through their attachment to Jesus, they put the world in perspective, they were able to live the Gospel without counting the cost, or, to put it another way, they let go of the world and its values when confession of Jesus called for it.

Being a Christian in those early years at the time of the persecutions was a risk. But eventually, the persecutions ceased. The emperor Constantine was converted and he granted freedom of worship to all men in the Edict of Milan. With the Emperor on its side, Christianity now began to receive a favoured position from the state. To be a Christian seemed no longer to be a risk; it became the "in thing"; it became part of the Establishment. Great numbers of people now entered the Church to take advantage of the civil situation, but many were insufficiently committed to the Gospel.

An effect of this was the lowering of the moral level of Christian life. Christians began to accept their privileged status and stopped bearing prophetic witness to the society in which they lived. Society now called itself Christian, so to be a Christian meant to be and to behave as the "right kind" of people acted. In reaction to this moral stagnation, a powerful ascetic movement formed. But unlike the virgins of the early centuries and other ascetics who remained in the center of the community, the monks moved to the fringes of the populated world.

The monks tried to preserve the ideal of the Christian life of the early days. This movement of the Spirit was in its origin a protest movement, a prophetic stance within the community and towards the society. If living in the city as a Christian was a watered-down version of living the Gospel, then seek to live the challenge of life in Jesus in the desert. The model of martyrdom was eventually replaced by the model of the monk or the spirituality of monasticism. This latter style of life has dominated spirituality through the ages. Martyrdom was a spirituality of readiness to die with and for Jesus, a spirituality of risk. In his life in the world the martyr risked losing everything he had. Monasticism succeeded martyrdom as a model; it was a spirituality of renunciation (with its most salient feature the separation or withdrawal from the world), an actual renunciation of property marriage, and control of one's own life to follow Jesus. It involved being with and for Jesus in a special way, taking the risk to believe utterly in Jesus, staking one's life on Him.

At their core the two models are the same. Through their faith in Jesus Christ and their commitment to Him the Christian is called to take a stand towards the world, towards everything in their life: the martyr lived in the world and risked losing everything; the monk left the world and effected physical separation by giving up everything he had. In the early days of the Church, monks and lay Christians were not compared in any hierarchical fashion; both were members of the family of God seeking salvation. Soon however the concept arose that the spiritual martyrdom of monasticism had replaced physical

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martyrdom. (Spiritual martyrdom has two requirements: an explicit desire for physical martyrdom and also some effective expression of the desire manifested in some suffering, patiently endured for the love of God and in imitation of Christ and the martyrs. Although all could be spiritual martyrs, the idea was propagated that the call was especially for the monk who sought it in and through his asceticism and renunciations.)

In Church tradition, a lamentable pattern arose of extolling monasticism and denigrating lay life as a lesser way. The spiritual writer Cassian, whose conferences were read by generations of monks (including Dominic), regarded monks as spiritual, the lay person as carnal, i.e. pagan. The lay Christian, to Cassian, was categorized with infidels. The Benedictine reform monastery of Cluny (10-12th centuries) promoted the monastic ideal -- withdrawal, virginity, and strict asceticism -- among the laity. The attitude was communicated that one could not achieve the ideal of full Christian perfection without belonging to the monastery, at least at death. Some nobles would embrace the monastic life in their declining years or on their death bed. The twelfth-century canonist Gratian knew two kinds of Christians: clerics and monks, and the lay people whose life was regarded as a concession. Life in the world is for the weak whom God indulges. The strong pursue perfection in better and more energetic fashion as canons and monks. In effect, the appearance was given that the spirituality of monasticism replaced that of the spirituality of martyrdom. Yet, at the core, as we have seen and will see in looking at the Gospel, they have an identical inspiration: they are not successive spiritualities but different styles of life according to temperament and the gifts of the Spirit of God for living the Gospel.

At this point, it is necessary to return to the Gospel and look at the call given to the one Family of God. Attentive reading of the whole Gospel makes it apparent that prior to Jesus' s condemnation and death, it was entirely possible to join Him in two fashions. Although the ways are quite different, the Gospel refrains from pointing out one as more perfect than the other.

*You turned away from idols  
Come with me*

First, there is what one can call the "habitual" way of welcoming the preaching of the Kingdom and giving oneself wholeheartedly without abandoning one' s ordinary daily life, i.e., home, work, and family. One can recall Lazarus (John II), his sisters Martha and Mary (see also Luke 10: 38-42), Joseph of Aramithea (Matthew 27: 57-61), Nicodemus (John 3; 7: 45-54, 19:58), and Joseph and Mary, His foster father and mother. These persons sought the Kingdom of Heaven in the faithful accomplishment of their daily tasks. Nowhere in the Gospel does

Jesus blame them for their lack of determination or` half-heartedness, nor does, He describe them as second-class citizens in the living expression of their desire to be with Jesus. There is no one who can be so foolish as to question Mary' s most profound love for Jesus, or that her life as wife and mother in Nazareth was not the sanctity of a hidden life. Even the chosen disciples showed that they did not fully grasp who Jesus was prior to the Resurrection. They failed Him when they deserted Him after His arrest and they were not present at His burial. Yet Joseph of Aramithea and Nicodemus still remained faithful to the end and rendered to Him one of the most sacred Jewish acts of homage when they gave Him burial. We might also note that except for the beloved disciple (some scholars question that tradition in John), only women and those converted Jewish leaders were present at the cross.

Secondly, the Gospels refer to a group of those who "follow Jesus" and are with Him in a special way. Jesus selected them to follow Him. Originally, the circle of disciples probably referred to a large group. Then Jesus chose twelve from this large group (Mark 3: 13-19) to form a smaller circle within the larger group. In actual fact, discipleship involved the determination to abandon everything (Matthew 19: 27-29). This included literally the following after Jesus from place to place, the acceptance of His destiny as a wanderer with all its privation. Still the Gospel does not proclaim this group as being more perfect. How could it, when we find among them self-seeking ambition (Mark 9: 33-37), rivalry for precedence (Mark 10: 37-43), and Peter, their leader, denying Jesus (Mark 14- 66-72)?

Both groups attached themselves to Jesus in their particular style of life, knew Him, loved Him, heard Him and abided by His teaching. Of particular relevance to us is the climax of the Sermon on the Mount. These words were not addressed to some select group but to the whole congregation. At the conclusion of sayings about love for one' s enemies (Matthew 5: 43-47), Matthew records the charge to be perfect. Jesus said, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew sees the whole of the Christian life under the imperative of the words of Jesus (see Matthew 7: 24-27). The conduct of the disciples must be other than that of the tax collectors and the Gentiles; the disciples are not only to imitate Jesus but to obey His teaching, they must surpass the tax collectors who only love those who love them by also loving their enemies (Matthew 5: 44-46); they must do more than the Gentiles who greet just their brothers (Matthew 5: 47); their righteousness must greatly exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees who were meticulous observers of the Law (Matthew 5: 20). Being perfect is the mark of the congregation; the perfection of all Christian disciples is their distinctive observance of the love command.

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The model for perfection is God. The Christian disciple is to imitate God. In the Old Testament, Leviticus 19:2 demanded above all a cultic sacral holiness through which Israel became worthy to worship God. Now, however, a man is to copy God's own being and nature. Because He is perfect, He acts perfectly, i.e. He acts in limitless love. (cf. Luke 6: 36, "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.") In the images of making His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sending His rain on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5: 45), Jesus presents the complete, total goodness of God. The conduct of the disciple is to be loving in imitation of the uncreated perfection of God. Each disciple is called to imitate the Father in love and compassion.

This awareness of the unity and diversity of the Family of God in Christ was taught also by the apostle Paul. He used for an image of the Church the image of Christ's Body, with individuals as members of it.

(I Corin. 12.) God bestowed in the Spirit varieties of gifts and services in the community. "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (I Corin. 12:7). Each has something to contribute, whether it is wisdom in speech, knowledge, faith, the gift of being a healer or teacher, etc. Each one has been given grace. "For by the grace given to me, I bid everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him. (Rom 12:3) " Paul regarded the action of the Holy Spirit as operative in different ways in the members of the community, each member having something to contribute to the community and to its mission in the world.

In the time of Jesus, in the early Church, and in our days too, Christians respond to the Good News in various life styles, inspired by the Spirit of God speaking the one Gospel heard by all. If we were to describe the heart of this in the terms of the preaching of Jesus, it is the Kingdom of God. We can see this in the two little parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl (Mt 13:44 - 46). They present the absolute and definitive value of the Kingdom, and are a positive expression of the ideal which says that one ought not to hesitate before even total sacrifice to obtain the desired good. Both parables involve a complete reversal. Under the force of the breaking in, of the coming into our awareness, of the Kingdom of Heaven, one willingly reverses his entire past - projections, plans possessions, or career - to obtain the Treasure of the Pearl. Full appreciation of the behaviour of the merchant and the labourer come from noticing that the motivation of the labourer includes joy. The value of the discovery and the joy of the discovery penetrates his inmost being and subjugates his heart. In

joy he sells his possessions in order that he might buy the field containing the Treasure. The focus is not on the sacrifice, on what this gesture costs the two men, but on the reason or motivation for their action. In both instances it is the realization of the overwhelming attractiveness of their discovery. This is the way the Kingdom of Heaven affects men. This "good news", this joyful message prompts a wholehearted response from the person who responds in faith to it as to the most valuable reality.

This faith-conviction in any believer entails the recognition of the qualitative transcendence of the Kingdom, already given, over the whole world and any created reality, the absolute and radical value of the gift which God has bestowed on us in the Spirit through Jesus Christ. Such an awareness demands, as soon as a person appreciated its excellence, that if there be any conflict, if some reality or value in this world would cause him to jeopardize his attachment to the Kingdom, to the essential, then he or she have the disposition, the readiness, to make the most difficult decisions and undergo the most painful renouncements. This means that we hear the sayings of Jesus which have a radical character in all their seriousness, even while we take into account their literary genre. Thus, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away... if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away...(Mt 5:29 -30), and Christ' s words to the rich young man, and His saying about eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom should be read with this in mind. When the Kingdom of God is at stake, if circumstances require it or if the heart runs the risk of being divided, one must be ready to be despised, ridiculed, persecuted, and put to death, always ready to leave one' s possessions and riches. Because of his love of Jesus, every Christian has to know how to submit his involvement in the world - everything in his life - to Him.

In conclusion, I would like to focus the differences between the religious and lay style of the common vocation of Baptism. The religious lives this common vocation in a special existential style. S/he freely chooses to underline this with his/her life and action. S/he freely chooses to center his/her whole personal existence on what is the essence of the Christian mystery, the high point of the Gospel experience. In Jesus the Risen Lord, God has given us the unique thing necessary. Next to this unique thing necessary, every other good, no matter how attractive or beautiful, finds itself relativised. So the religious center their entire existence on the perception of the absolute value of the Kingdom. This means that they try to love in separation in regard to personal wealth, in regard to love of man and woman, and in regard to the personal planning of acts that rule their destiny according to their own standards - though, in imitation of Jesus, they will be interested in and will work or pray

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that all people procure sufficiency of possessions, health, consolation, etc.

On the other hand, the lay person has a life style of living in the world as part of it. They form relationships with the world and sink roots in it through ownership, marriage, and business. Thus they show that the world, though marred by sin, is not bad or outside the pale of redemption. Rather, God is transforming the world, and us in the world, to redeem the world itself through our own graced efforts and the gift of self. The lay person is involved in and immersed in all the world' s activities, seeking in some way to bring it to Christ, to be an agent of its leavening by Christ. However, the engagement of the lay person in the world it not without risk - the spirituality of martyrdom.

The world, tainted by sin, promotes values of comfort, security, success, unlimited profit for business, etc. Such values simplistically looked at or carried to the extreme are not in harmony with the mind and values of Jesus. If a Christian living in the world set his course by the light of Christ, s/he would necessarily invite trouble and opposition - perhaps not physical martyrdom, but certainly s/he would not be at ease with all of "the right people". Such a view of lay spirituality causes a change of mind - for we think generally of simply living a normal life in the world. It makes a huge difference if we see ourselves as called to bear witness to the world, to be in the world at our risk. When Jesus spoke the beatitudes, He spoke of the happiness of those persecuted for His name. That it not a far-fetched ideal in a post-Christian era. We have to understand, and accept, and rejoice in the promise and possibilities, that we risk paying the price of Christian witness, in every situation in life.

*<http://www.op.org/oplaity/laychristian.htm>*

**THE PROPHET, JUSTICE,  
AND THE MINISTRY OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION**

Ellen O' Shaughnessy, O.P.

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The Good News is preached. Too often, as fast as the waves of sound carry the eloquent words, the very words disappear in obedience to the law of physics. The words go nowhere. If, by chance, the message did delight the hearer as a new concept, inspiring idea, or engaging experience of another, frequently the words still die to the hearer for want of a way to the heart.

I do not believe that the problem is so much the "crisis of the pulpit" as it is the problem of the puzzled Christian who does not know what to do with all the eloquent words being preached. Workshops abound. Preached retreats, encounters of every kind. Read the summer offerings of the National Catholic Reporter. Offerings of Scripture courses, Liturgy courses, retreats, institutes, center-city experiences of working with the poor. There are preachers everywhere, eager to share the Good News. "Water, water, everywhere" but for some, "not a drop to drink."

From my experience in the ministry of spiritual direction, I find that the expertise of the preacher and teacher can be met by individual hearers with firm resistance. A resistance textured and colored by what I would call TIMIDITY. Many say: Who am I? Who is God? What are they all saying out there? What am I being called to do?

If you can in any way relate to these questions, may I suggest to you that they embody the resistance offered by the prophets throughout history. Moses told the Lord that he could not follow the call. Why? Because he stuttered. Jeremiah said (May I paraphrase a bit?), "No way, I am too young. Get someone over thirty who has more credibility." Mary, upon the angel's declaration that she was to be the mother of God (no less), replied, "How can this be done?" She, too, proceeded to give a very good reason for her questioning.

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All three of these persons initially resisted words that came their way. They could have chosen to let the words die with the law of physics. Yet all three worked through their resistance. They allowed the Word of the Lord to break open their fear, their timidity. Moses, Jeremiah, Mary let go of fear and let the Word enter and empower them. Then dynamite followed. And they gave to us their life's story. Now, preachers tell the stories of Moses, Jeremiah and Mary over and over.

### **Our Prophecy**

But when are we going to get the point? It is our turn to tell the story of our lives, our call. We are prophets. That's why we are here. Only in telling do we become convinced that we have a story to tell. When: we are able to overcome our timidity, we come to the conviction that our religious experience is worth a good story.

When we arrive at this conviction that God is active in our personal history, we share in the very life of the Word preached: the companionship of the Risen Lord among us. And how else is the life of the Risen Lord to be lived except through us? -- not so much in the eloquence of the preached words, but rather in our lives lived and proclaimed, It is in this mystery that the virtue of justice flourishes. When we allow oppressive unfreedoms to lift from our lives, we can empower others for freedom. In all of this lies the hidden secret of our own resurrection, a resurrection hinted at by the courage to cut through our timidity be are called to tell our story. A story in which we are the characters and God is the plot.

### **Invitation and Decision**

John Shea in his book *Stories of God* says that the story of invitation and decision is the tale that the parables and some of the sayings of Jesus unfold. In the parables, God is not imagined as the lead character or as a background presence. God is the plot. God is what happens to people in the story or to the people hearing the story. God is what happened to Moses, Jeremiah, Mary. God is what happens to you and to me.

But, we realize, God as plot is invisible. Shea points out that the parable of the fig tree proclaims that He is "the summer God". "Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near." (Mark 13:28). No one has seen summer, yet its presence is announced by the budding tree. No one has seen God, yet His presence is proclaimed by the believing, transformed person. Shea exemplifies this by pointing to a poem in Kazantzakis' s *Report to Greco* which trades on Jesus' s parable of the fig tree:

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I said to the almond tree, "Sister, speak to me of God." And the almond tree blossomed.

I say to you, "Sisters, brothers, speak to me of God!"

It is in the telling that freedom comes. I experience this through individuals in the context of spiritual direction. Justice comes to flourish in the land when persons are freed of timidity, of resistances that hold them back from the conviction that the summer God is near. Justice comes to flourish in the land when they, as prophets, cut through and disarm harmful and oppressive structures and persons in their lives. The man or woman who becomes the contemplative, who allows the Word of God to become the plot of their lives is dynamite. Prayer is dangerous. Contemplation has its consequences. It is hardly a passive experience. The flower blossoms, the Word is enfleshed and a prophet is born. Things start happening. Love, freedom, justice -- formerly just concepts -- become alive. The Word calls forth in these individuals about whom I speak a life of justice: a life given to reach those who ache with desire to be able to laugh again; to those who are poor with a life of material poverty; to those who are poor and bored with a life of affluence; in other words, to those who hunger and thirst for Good News.

Let me share with you the story of individuals that I have been privileged to be with through the ministry of spiritual direction. But first, a word about the ministry itself. I see it as a service of enabling, of facilitating the awareness of God's love in the lives of persons who desire to know God. It is a ministry of "watering the garden", of helping others to freedom in choosing God. It is akin to the ministry of John the Baptist: of pointing toward the Lord. It is a ministry which encourages the other to tell his or her story. It is a ministry which helps cut through personal pietism and encourages the other to share his or her gifts at the service of the whole community. It is a ministry which helps dispel resistance by first recognizing that resistances are present. It is a ministry which proclaims that we are loved sinners and that each of our stories is sacred.

Three peoples' lives demonstrate all that I have said. I gave a directed retreat to a woman religious who for 27 years "said her prayers". She made the retreat because in her words, "God wants something from me and I don't know what it is...I haven't had time to listen." I found out that she had taken a year of absence from her community. She needed the space away from situations that she allowed to define her, namely, an authority position which she held within the community. Time elapsed and she returned to the community after the leave of absence. She slipped right back into the old motions and accepted the same position of authority. The hassle started all over again. She let others control her responses; she let the situation define her. It got the best of her again, We discovered that she had no life that she could call her own, that she could claim as her own history, her own present.

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The day that she prayed the prayer of remembrance in which images of her past emerged through prayer was a day both beautiful and painful. "Who is God to me?" she asked. "How could He ever love Me?" Her image of God began to emerge as a punishing mother. As she began to listen to the new God who was calling her to life, not oppression, she began to experience that she was loved by God. Her images became transformed by passages in the Scriptures which stress a personal, loving God: Psalm 139, "I give you thanks for I am wonderfully made." This woman's prayer became focused, contemplative, imaginative. The effect of her prayer life upon her community had its consequences. Among the images that emerged in prayer were those of the oppressive, unjust structures of her congregation. She can no longer live with them. She believes that one of the gifts of the retreat was the courage to say "no" to all of the injustice without leaving religious life again.

### Prophet?

The second story is about a "professional" prophet. He was always predicting the future. Nine time out of ten he predicted doom. And nine times out of ten, he was right. Poverty, desolation, isolation. And there he was in the midst of it all: poor, desolated and isolated himself. He admitted that he would feel guilty if he felt any other way. He knew all the issues, all the points of injustice, every agency that was corrupt, every lazy suburban parish that was prejudiced or just plain apathetic. But he was burnt out, weary of social ministry, of living with nothing but poverty, desolation, isolation. Yet he resisted everything else. He said he would feel guilty if he were happy. How could he be merry? Justice is what counts. This overdose of guilt prevented him from realizing God's love for him, prevented him from being God's prophet.

The second day of the retreat he wept. Not the way Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He didn't cry over his city. He cried over his life. He despaired and rejected a God who could cause all that suffering, including his own. He stayed at the empty tomb and wept until something within him compelled him to look up. With Magdalene, he saw the risen Lord in the Garden. He kept saying, "If I hadn't looked up...I recognized him. It's a miracle." I, too, experienced a miracle. Thomas the sceptic had nothing on this prophet. His story still unfolds.

### God's Prophet

He is breaking down oppressive structures and confronting oppressors. He is bolder, more dangerous than ever. He is indeed a prophet. God's prophet. He has seen the stars, felt the wind, known the love of God, the love of a friend, chosen companionship in community.

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He has gazed at the Lord in the Garden. He is durable. He is merry. He is contemplative. He is dynamite. How else could he survive in the center of the city?

The third story is about a married woman who after years of marriage despaired at the thought of living the rest of her life with her husband and teenagers. Boredom set in. She knew that there had to be more to life than the routine that she had fallen into. She got angry at me in spiritual direction because I was not giving her solutions. She did not want to take responsibility of her own life. It belonged to everyone else - her husband, her children, her ailing parents.

But gradually she began to take time for herself, for prayer, even if it was in the bathroom with the door locked. She was desperate for sacred space before she could ever see the love of God in her husband and children. Especially when her husband was monosyllabic, and her children teenagers. She began to see that she was loved by her Creator and became more loving herself, more courageous. She moved from boredom as she began to pray. One event followed another. She and her husband are about unravelling a history of injustice. She knows that relationship in marriage is a radical commitment when lived in the name of freedom of the Gospel. She invites her husband to this life of freedom. It is how she recognizes her call to be a prophet.

How to conclude? I issue an invitation: I call you to courage, to admit that your history is sacred, to accept your call as prophet, to break through injustice, to be contemplative. The contemplative life is the most direct way to break open the chains of injustice. The stories of individuals have revealed this to me.

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## CREATIVE PREACHING THROUGH ART: THE DOMINICAN CONTRIBUTION

Eleanor Carlo, T.O.P

*This paper offers a brief summary of a slide-lecture Workshop prepared for Dominican Family Awareness Day. Its thrust is the unique ministry of gifted Dominicans who responded to their vocation by creatively, effectively and compellingly enhancing and supplementing the preaching of the Word of God -- plus a challenge for us today.*

It is a well-known fact that, among its members, the Order of Preachers has contributed some distinguished artists and architects. That it has also been responsible for recognizing and commissioning some of the greatest talents of all time is another fact with which art historians and art lovers are well-acquainted.

*Preaching and religious art are related in that each is concerned with communicating truth and beauty.*

Preaching and religious art are related in that each is concerned with communicating truth and beauty. Since Dominicans are called to preach the truth and beauty of the Catholic faith, not only by word and example, but in every possible way, it follows that if one happens to be an artist in the Dominican Family, he will endeavour to lead others to God through his art. As St. Catherine of Siena relates in her "Dialogues" there are many roads and ways which God uses through His Love to lead people to Him. Art is the way of beauty, a road which leads directly to Him, if we are so blessed as to be led along this road.

Because their inspiration comes from God, the preacher and the artist communicate with a sense of mission. Mission implies the giving of self - and the motive of mission is Love. Artists are ardent preachers who have been inspired by God and have been given gifts for interpreting the Gospel and spiritual reality. Fra Angelico and Fra Bartolomeo are among those who point out things we often fail to see without their help. A more recent artist-preacher who has made visible for us the invisible (invisible that is except to Lucy, Francesco and Jacinta) is the late sculptor, Father Thomas McGlynn, O.P. How grateful we are to him to have his representation of Lucy's description of her vision of Our Lady of Fatima - made visible to us through his Labor of Love!

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*Art is the way of beauty, a road which leads directly to Him*

And what of the well-loved painting of Fra Angelico in which St. Dominic appears meditating on the Passion in "The Buffeting of Christ"? Doesn't that penetrate far more deeply into our hearts and minds than descriptive words, happy as we are to have them? The greatest masterpieces are in reality sermons on canvas or stone. They are created to dispose us to prayer. They have the capacity to arouse us from an attitude of indifference to deepest compunction or to a sense of the sublime. We come away from them ennobled and enriched.

Dominican art is marked by the strong influence of St. Dominic's spirituality, the Order's theological emphasis of preaching truth and fighting heresy, as well as the contributions of such distinguished authorities as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Antoninus, and Savonarola. Through its special devotions to the Body of Christ, to our Lady, St. Catherine of Siena, and other illustrious saints, it has enriched the iconography of the world of art. Reflected in formal beauty and style, purity of expression and jewel-like colour are the following qualities of art for St. Thomas: integrity, proportion, harmony, and splendour. The universally admired Dominican contributions to Christian artistic expression are our legacy, our heritage, - ours for the looking! Ours for the challenge of today's call and response.

Since this workshop is intended to be participatory, you will want to know just how you are expected to participate. Your share is to do something very much in keeping with the Dominican call and its response, i.e., to contemplate the slides which are to be projected on the screen, and to share the fruits of your contemplation with others by contributing your insights and appreciations. You will be shown works created by Dominican artists or commissioned under the auspices of Dominican patronage, influence, and inspiration - Duccio, Albertinelli, Masaccio, Botticelli, Lippi, Raphael, Fra Angelico, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, to name a few. They are works of great beauty in style, in message, in spiritual depth. They have a special quality about them, not only because they were created by experts in their field, but because they were created in many cases by men who had trodden the mystical path themselves. Even though their voices are long still, they continue to preach with an artist's passion, and are able to nourish us today.

*You are asked to relax and to enjoy them. Serenely, because you are called to contemplation,*

In order to make the artist-preacher's art a meaningful experience, it is necessary to develop a contemplative approach. In viewing these slides, you are asked to relax and to enjoy them serenely, because you are called to contemplation. "Contemplation," Evelyn Underhill tells us in her book on

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Practical Mysticism," ...is the necessary activity for all artists. The artist is a contemplative who has learned to express himself, and who tells his love in colour, line, and form. He tries to express something of the revelation he has received through his experience and understanding. He wants to communicate to you a glimpse of what he, himself, has grasped."

Just how do artists contribute to our understanding of spirituality? Is it really possible to depict what eye hath not seen? The religious artist agonizes over his effort to communicate to us his life of faith. How successful he is in large measure in direct proportion to our receptivity to what he has produced, and to the extent that we allow God to speak to us through the medium of His created works.

*After contemplation, through love, we are called to action.*

St. Thomas Aquinas' s belief in the importance of the image, that there is no thinking without the use of images or symbols, should continue to have great significance for the power, prestige, and practice of art within the Dominican Order today. This includes contemporary art forms such as graphics, photography, and film. The incredible possibilities of reaching untold "congregations" of captive television audiences for Christian Communication by preachers and artists working together in the spirit and zeal of St. Dominic but in today' s idiom and imagery holds mind-boggling possibilities of making God' s worldtelevisible. "Images," says St. Thomas, "necessarily accompany our knowledge in this present life, however spiritual the knowledge may be, for even God is known by us through the images of His effects."

<http://www.op.org/oplacity/layartist.htm>

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