



**DOMINICAN FRIARS
PROVINCE OF ST. JOSEPH**

*Religious Brothers Day
May 1, 2019*

Join us in celebrating the gifts and vocation of Religious Brothers on May 1, the 3rd Annual Religious Brothers Day in the United States. During this special day:

. . . Let us pray for an abundance of vocations so that Dominican Brothers and all Brothers of the Church in other Congregations and Mixed Institutes can continue to bring peace to our world in need of healing and hope.

. . . Let us pray for all Religious Brothers who live and minister among us so that they can continue to be prophetic witnesses of the love God has for every person who has ever been born most especially the lost, the last, least, the unwanted and the unloved among us.

. . . Let us pray for the Brothers of the Church who have gone before us in faith, treasured icons of the Church, and now rest in the Hands of Our Loving Father.

. . . Let us also pray for the whole Church who continues to nurture vocations among men as religious brothers. Amen.

In celebration of Religious Brothers Day, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) has launched a new website for and about Brothers: www.ReligiousBrothers.org, where we can post events, news, and profiles that tell the story of Religious Brothers in the United States.

MINISTRI MISERICORDIAE ET COMPASSIONIS

MINISTERS OF MERCY AND COMPASSION: THE IDENTITY AND MISSION OF DOMINICAN BROTHERS FOR THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

“Preaching is the substance of my life and my being.”

Yves Congar

THE BROTHER’S CALL

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

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

The vocation of the Brother is part of the answer that God gives to the absence of brotherhood which is wounding the world today. At the root of a Brother’s vocation lies a profound experience of solidarity that essentially matches that of Moses before the burning bush: he discovers himself as the eyes, ears and heart of God, the God who sees the oppression of his people, who hears their cry, feels their anguish and comes down to liberate them. In this intimate experience, the Brother hears the call: “Come, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people out of Egypt.”¹

The Dominican Brother is an extraordinary treasure of the Church and absolutely essential in assuring the authentic fulfillment of our Order’s world-wide mission of evangelization as envisioned by our Holy Father, St. Dominic. The biographies of Dominican Friars are filled with rich and storied experiences of how they have taken God’s Word to millions of persons (including those with whom they live in community), some wounded, addicted and stigmatized, others unloved,

¹ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (2015). *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*: Rome: The Congregation, p. 5.

unwanted and alienated or far from the faith, many living in desperate conditions, along the lines of brokenness and in places both far and near, and to those who death was imminent. It is not the work that defines the Dominican Brother; rather it is the prophetic and evangelical witness, the unfolding of the mystery of their call to Dominican life that transforms lives, societies and cultures. The Acts of the General Chapter of Bologna of 2016 emphasize this prophetic witness when it stated:

*The ministry of the Word is, in fact, an act of charity, mercy, and generosity that drives us to share our greatest treasure, the Word made flesh. Truly, the greatest work of charity is evangelization.*²

BEARERS OF FRATERNAL LIFE

Dominican Brothers are consecrated men religious whose vocation is rooted in Baptism and Confirmation. Brothers are men who have freely, without condition or limitation, heard and responded to God's call to come preach with Him. In responding to this call, Brothers believe that the lived expression of the Dominican vocation, through the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity, is centered in, and radically dependent on a fraternal life devoted to prayer and liturgy, study, preaching and other ministries, and especially by caring for one another. As noted in the ACTS of the General Chapter of 1989, “*Our truly enculturated community life is our first preaching; it is a prophetic witness to and an authenticating sign of what we communicate by word of mouth.*”³ As bearers of fraternal life, Brothers are centered at the very core of Dominican life and give witness and viability to the Holy Preaching, the ineradicable foundation for the Holy Preaching that will evangelize the world.

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

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

² ACTS of the General Chapter of Bologna (2016). Rome: Curia Generalita, at S. Sabina, Chapter II, No. 58

³ ACTS of the General Chapter of Oakland (1989). Rome: Curia Generalita at S. Sabina, Chapter II, No. 3

the charism of our Order, expressed in our contemporary world. All are brothers of our brother St. Dominic but called to different ministries.

PREACHERS OF MERCY AND COMPASSION

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

Since it is the whole community which preaches, the Order's mission and community life is weakened in the absence of our Brothers. Proclaiming the good news to people and in places that others cannot reach is the special charism of the Dominican Brother.⁴

The ministry of Dominican Brothers, conjoined with that of their priest-brothers, is the dynamic expression of St. Dominic's vision. It empowers Brothers to enter into the lives of people and travel to places wherever the Holy Preaching is desperately needed, especially where their priest-brothers have not yet entered. Their ministry is exciting, challenging and life-giving because it is imbued and driven by the power of God's Word. The Brothers' life-long commitment through the vows and regular observance, together with their various ministries cooperate with this Word to transform their own hearts and minds, as well as those of their brothers in community and all those to whom they are sent. Preaching from many pulpits, Brothers respond – not merely with words - but with the Word of God that lives in their hearts.

Brothers can be found in ministry in many areas, for example, evangelization, education, research, fund-raising and development, management of Dominican facilities and community services, nursing and health care, health care ethics, retreat and social work, parish and pastoral ministries, caring for the poor and marginalized in our cities and in foreign lands.

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

Brothers of the Order share fully without limitations, the privilege and responsibility to announce the Kingdom of God to all those yearning for and needing

⁴ *ACTS of the General Chapter of Bologna* (1988). Rome: Curia Generalita at S. Sabina, Chapter IV, No., 135, 2.

His message of salvation in their lives. As Dominicans, with every breath, every action, every suffering, every joy, Brothers preach God's message of salvation, a message of hope, a message of enduring love for all persons.

DOMINICAN BROTHERS: A UNIQUE CALL FOR A PROPHETIC MISSION

In His love for the Church, in every age, Christ calls persons to take care of His people. Before time began Dominican Brothers are called to participate in the New Evangelization for this time, for this age, and for the world. Dominican Brothers respond to the radical call that evangelization evokes: to believe and then to proclaim that every person born into the world is worthy of respect and of unlimited love regardless of the reasons for their circumstances or their station in life. Dominican Brothers accept the radical call to open their hearts to those who seek healing and hope, to welcome the sick, the broken the abandoned, and the unloved in their darkest hour wherever they may be and wherever they call home. Responding to the call of Pope Francis, Dominican Brothers open their hearts and welcome those living on the outmost fringes of society, fringes which society has itself created; to welcome those into the human family whose voice has been drowned out by the humiliating indifference of others, and to heal these wounds through reaffirming their human dignity, freedom and promoting human flourishing.⁵

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

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

⁵ Pope Francis (2015). *Misericordiae Vultus: Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁶ John Paul II. (1996). *Vita Consecrata*. Washington: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. No. 46.

⁷ Tenth General Ordinary Synod of Bishops. (2012). *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*. Rome: The Vatican.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brother Ignatius Perkins, OP, Province of St. Joseph, U.S.A.

1 May 2019

⁸ Ibid, *Vita Consecrata*, No. 110