



Dominican Sisters Conference
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Executive Director Address
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“Kung tayo ay tumatahimik sa mga ganitong panahon, ang kaluwagan o kaginhawaan at paglaya ng iyong mga mamamayan ay magmumula sa iba, subalit ikaw, aking kapatid, at ang Dominicanong karisma ay maaring hindi kayanin ang buong kaguluhang ito. Maari ba kaya? Marahil, ikaw at ako, tayong lahat ay magiging mga Diminikanong Tagapahayag sa mga panahong katulad nito.” Esther 4:14. (Tagalog)

“If we are silent in times such as these, relief and deliverance for your people will arise from another source, but you, my sister, and the Dominican Charism may not make it through the chaos. Could it be? Perhaps we (you) have become Dominican Preachers for times such as these.” Esther 4:14. (English)

A Dominican contemporary adaptation

Llamadas Unidas para Ser “Predicadoras en Tiempos como Estos”

“Si nos quedamos calladas en tiempos como estos, el auxilio y la liberación para tu pueblo surgirán de otras fuentes, pero tú, mi hermana, y el Carisma Dominicano tal vez no logren sobrevivir al caos. ¿Será posible? Tal vez (tú) nosotras nos hemos convertido en Predicadoras Dominicanas para Tiempos Como Estos.” Ester 4:14

(Spanish)

Adaptación Contemporaria Dominicana

Call together to be “Preachers for Times Such as These”

The last time I stood before most of you, I was only 7 months, 27 days and 7 hours and half, to be exact, since I took the role of Executive Director of the DSC. At that time, I emphasized that it was quite a ride to say the least.

Today, I am before you again, and to continue with the theme of time, it has been 1 year, 7 months and 20 days, which is exactly 598 days since I have had the honor to lead the DSC office. I can still say that this journey continues to be “quite a ride.”

Last year we responded to the invitation to “Ignite Our Future – Ahora (Now!)” with an urgency that has taken us to reflect on the different emerging movements within our conference.

The responses to these invitations have brought us to this gathering where we are being asked to reflect on the call: how we can be “Preachers in Times Such as These.”

The reading we have chosen for our gathering holds a warning and an encouragement. The prophet’s call to Queen Esther moves her to respond to the anxious despair of her people and to bring a new hope.

Through this adapted reading, we, too, are being called to leave our comfort zones, and to experience an inner transformation. To leave behind the traditional role and image of women in religious life and to emerge as valiant and strong preachers, who listen and respond to the crisis of our own times, like Esther did.

One of our biggest fears is the uncertain future and to do nothing holds the danger of death.

What are the risks we are being called to take – and what are the lines we need to cross? What is the urgency?

We have before us a Historical opportunity that could be lost if we choose to be silent or do nothing... *then “relief and deliverance for your people will arise from another source, but you, my sister, and the Dominican Charism may not make it through the chaos. Could it be? Perhaps we (you) have become Dominican Preachers for Times Such as These.”*

What are we being called to be and to preach “in Times Such as These?”
Why and why now?

What are the signs of our times? What are our realities: in the world, in this country, in our religious Communities?

A few months ago, I was introduced to the term VUCA Times. Some of you might be familiar with this term.

VUCA is an abbreviation for:

V: Volatility

U: Uncertainty

C: Complexity

A: Ambiguity

Do you agree that we are living in VUCA times? That we are living in a time of disruption and many fast changes?

Recently, I read an article that said that our planet is suffering from eco-anxiety as it is facing an ecological crisis with so many natural disasters. The Southeast is still recovering from the devastation of Hurricane Helene, and as we gather here, my local community in Miami is preparing for the imminent landing of Hurricane Milton.

What about all the conflicts around the world?

Yesterday it was a year since the Hamas and Israel war started.

Not to mention all the other wars and conflicts around the world.

As I reflect on this truth, I believe that every part of creation is being affected or better said infected by this eco-anxiety phenomenon, including each one of us present here.

The question again, how can we “Be *Dominican Preachers*” during these VUCA Times of eco-anxiety?

Last year, I invited all of us to make a “Preferential Option for Relationship.”

I am inviting you now, to take an extra step with this invitation and make a “Radical Option for Relationship.”

Author Valarie Kaur calls this Radical Option for Relationship: “Revolutionary Love.” In her book “See No Stranger: a Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love,” she urges us to choose to love in a revolutionary way.

This means “to enter into wonder and labor for *others*, for our *opponents*, and for *ourselves* in order to transform the world around us.” Valarie also says, “It is not a

formal code or prescription but an orientation to life that is personal, and political, and is rooted in love.”

Valarie explains that: Loving only ourselves is escapism; loving only our opponents is self-loathing; loving only others is ineffective.

All these practices together make Love Revolutionary and Revolutionary Love can only be practiced in Community.

But how do we learn, live, and practice this radical option for relationship, this revolutionary love?

Valarie proposes 3 practices:

First, **See no Stranger** by learning how to love others. By wondering about the other without judgement.

Second, **Tend the Wound** and learn how to love our opponents. Find a safe space to rage, to tend our own wounds, and to listen in order to understand the wounds of others. By doing this, “we can gain the information we need to reimagine solutions.”

Third, **Breathe and Push**: “learning how to love ourselves, how to breathe amidst the labor, push ourselves to go deeper, and summon our wisest selves in times of *transition*.”

To me, Valarie’s work is a great example of the meaning of “loving our neighbors as ourselves.”

Doesn’t this sound like Jesus’ practices? Isn’t this like the way Jesus lived, taught, healed, died, and rose from the dead? **Seeing no Stranger, Tending the Wounds, and Breathing and Pushing.**

In his time, Jesus was a preacher for his own time, and he did it in revolutionary way. He encountered and walked among all without making distinction.

He even learned humility as he allowed a Syrophoenician woman to change his heart and to help him to see the stranger in a different way. At his death, Jesus allowed the suffering to transform him.

Who after being denied and abandoned comes back from the tomb after being resurrected, prepared breakfast to the same ones who he loved and failed him? With that act, one of his last *Encuentro* with his disciples, he was a preacher of forgiveness, reconciliation, and restored trust.

That was the way Jesus built the first Beloved Community.

In these times of much struggles - these practices, this labor - inspires us to give birth to the Beloved Community that Jesus left us. As Valarie puts it, “we birth the Beloved Community by Becoming the Beloved Community.”

As former fashion designer, I want to offer you some fashion advice. I want us to take a new habit. A habit that fits all. A habit for our hearts that has the potential to help us be “Dominican Preachers for Times Such as These.”

This habit is an attire that goes like this... By the way, this description comes from the concept Radical Option for Difference. So, here we go...

A - **Active** engagement with and promotion of diversity and welcoming all

T - **Trust**: an ability to cultivate Trust

T - **Transparency** in the encounter creates trust (with healthy boundaries)

I - **Inclusivity** all the voices are invited to the table

R - **Respect** to enter the other’s physical and cultural space with respect

E- **Expectation** bring an expectation that you may be disrupted and transformed by the caring encounter: **Engaging difference with humility and openness can be transformative.**

For me, to be a Religious Sister today is to respond to this radical call. Thomas Merton once said: “Becoming a Saint, is becoming who you are.”

Being a Religious sister today, is becoming our most authentic self. The call within this call is that we/you allow yourself to become authentic and courageous Dominican Preachers to “**See no Stranger, to Tend the Wound, to Breathe and Push**, and to wear this new habit in our hearts and minds.

Ubuntu -Transformational inner life.

All these practices can be summarized by what the people of South Africa call the practice of Ubuntu. Let’s look at this practice...

Video Link– Ubuntu (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjVwsgL2i98&t=7s>)

Ubuntu – to look at the other’s eyes and say: I am because you are – You are because I am.

We are called to be “*Dominican Preachers for Times such as These.*” To fail to act is to miss our historical cues and to fade away from our Dominican family and Charism. At this critical moment in time, we are being invited to gather our strength to become what we are meant to be in God’s plan.

What will help us to move from warning to encouragement, from fear to courage and hope again?

What can we dare to be and to do for the sake of the Mission of Jesus and the Dominican Charism?

As leaders, we are in a place of significant potential for the Church and our Dominican Family history. We are being called to move from a restricted view of possibilities to become women leaders testing the limits of what we can do and be. We are on a journey of deliverance with grit and decisiveness.

What will help us to leave behind our individual and collective fears that are holding us back and to emerge as valiant and strong Dominican Preachers for Times Such as These?

My prayer for all of us during this week is that our horizons can expand by taking the risks this historical opportunity is placing before us. I hope that, through our collective wisdom, and with God’s grace, we will be brought to a sense of what is possible beyond the danger posed by the possibility of dying out/ disappearing or not making it through the chaos.

My hope for us, Dominican Preachers, is to leave as hopeful and joy-full, wise and courageous for Times Such as These!

MUCHAS GRACIAS!



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