



**DSC Encuentro 2025
St. Louis, Missouri
October 7-12, 2025
Reports**





DSC ELECTED LEADERS MEETING 2025

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Agenda DSC Encuentro 2025



Tuesday, October 7th afternoon:

3 pm - Leaders Meeting: Check-in (Grand Ballroom Foyer)
5:00 pm – Dinner (Salons I-III)
6:30 pm – Gathering –**Welcoming Leaders** (Grand Ballroom)

Wednesday, October 8, 2025 (Leaders)

Breakfast (7:30-9:00 am) (Salons I-IV)
9:00 am – Leaders Meeting (Grand Ballroom)
10:30 am Break
12:15 pm – Lunch (Salons I-IV; lunch ends at 1:45)
2:15 pm – Leaders Meeting continues
2:45 pm Break
5:00 pm – Dinner (Salons I-IV)
*5 pm - Alliance meeting (Salon V)

Thursday, October 9 (Leaders)

Breakfast (7:30-9:00 am)
9:00 am – 12:00 – DSC Business Session
12:00 pm Lunch (Salons I-IV; lunch ends at 1:30)
**2 pm – CDN meeting (Salon V)
*** 3:30 – DSIC – meeting (Spirit of St. Louis)
3:30 pm - Coffee/Tea Break

Thursday, October 9 (Leaders/Sisters/Associates/Guests) Welcome!

3:00 pm Encuentro Check-in - Sisters/Associates/Guests (Grand Ballroom Foyer)
5:00 – 6:30 pm - **Grand Opening – Keynote, Ritual and Prayer** (Grand Ballroom)
6:30 pm – Social with heavy hors d'oeuvres (Grand Ballroom Foyer)

Friday, October 10, 2025 (Leaders and Sisters/Associates/Guests)

Breakfast (7:30-9:00 am) (Salons I-V)
9:00 am - 5 pm – **Encuentro** (Grand Ballroom)
10:15 am Break
12:00 Lunch (Salons I-IV; lunch ends at 1:30)
1:30 Encuentro continues
3:00 pm Break
Group Picture (Place TBD)
5:00 pm – Dinner (Salons I-IV)
7:00 pm – DJ & Dancing (Salon V) – Cash bar available on the dance floor

Saturday, October 11, 2025 (Leaders and Sisters/Associates/Guests)

Breakfast (7:30-9:00 am) (Salons I-V)
9:00 am – **Encuentro** (Grand Ballroom)
10:15 am Break
12:00 Lunch (box) (Salons I-IV; boxed lunch for working groups)
3:00 pm Break
4:00 pm Mass (Grand Ballroom)
7 pm – Banquet (Grand Ballroom)

Sunday, October 12, 2025 – Departure (Sisters/Associates/Guests) 9:00 – 11:00 am - Leaders
Meeting (Debriefing and next steps) (Grand Ballroom)
Leaders and DSC Team Departure





May the God of hope journey with us toward our
DSC Encuentro.

May God fill us with eager anticipation of fulfilled promises
and realized potential.

May we never hesitate to dream of the possibilities knowing
nothing is impossible for God.

May our hope be tempered by courage,
sustained by faithfulness and deepened by love.

May God imbue us with HOPE as we become,
“Preachers of HOPE for Times Such as These.”



Covenant for our time together . . .

Speak from the heart and the moment, and from your own experience;

Listen from the community, from the collective;

Listen without thinking about responding;

Listen for information not confirmation;

Begin thinking in terms of I wonder . . . or Where I am on this issue now is ...

Allow for Silence. It may mean people are thinking considering;

Suspend assumptions and consider alternatives ones that might be just as useful;

Assume that the ideas and observations of others come from a desire to contribute;

Expect that ideas build upon each other even if they don't link logically one to the other;

Remember that difference of opinion can be helpful, because it sharpens our understanding;

Move away from conclusions and toward observations; notice what you are noticing, and what meaning you are making of it;

Sometimes in communication, less is better, and slowly is fine.

Be mindful that everyone is in both individual and communal discernment.

Encuentro Keynote Speakers



Sr. Christina Atienza, OP

Sister Christina serves on the Leadership Team of the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael. She has taught the Christian tradition, Catholic theology, and Christology at Santa Clara University and interreligious learning at the Graduate Theological Union and lectured on various topics in religion at Dominican University of California. She earned her Ph.D. in Theology, with an emphasis on comparative Buddhist-Christian theology, from the Graduate Theological Union. She is originally from the Philippines and immigrated to the San Francisco Bay Area in her late teens. Before becoming a Sister, she enjoyed a long career as a civil engineer and transportation planner.



Sr. Margaret Mayce, OP

Sister Margaret is a member of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Amityville, New York, and currently serves as International Coordinator of the Dominican Sisters International Confederation (DSIC). She previously represented the Dominican Leadership Conference at the United Nations, where she chaired both the NGO Committee for Social Development and the NGO Mining Working Group, focusing on poverty eradication, sustainable development, climate change, and the rights of women and girls.

Earlier, she served on her Congregation's Leadership Team and was elected to the National Board of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). Her ministry has included leadership in Hispanic Ministry for the Diocese of Rockville Centre, three years of mission service in the Dominican Republic, and roles in Vocation and Formation ministry.

She holds degrees and certificates in sociology, international political economic development, pastoral Spanish, and preaching.

29 September 2025

*"You shall count seven weeks of years (Sabbath)... This year will be a jubilee for you...
each one will return to his family... you shall not sow or reap the sprouts of the previous harvest,
nor shall you gather the grapes from the vine that is unpruned.
For it is a jubilee, and it shall be holy to you" (Lev 25:8-12)*

Sr. Xiomara Méndez Hernández, OP

Executive Director

Dominican Sisters Conference

Barry University - Extended Learning

11415 NE 2nd Ave

Miami Shores, FL 33161-6629

Dear Sr. **Xiomara** and all Dominican Sisters of the DSC,

Within the Jubilee Year 2025, you celebrate 90 years of collaboration through the Dominican Leadership Conference (DLC) and 15 years of the Dominican Sisters Conference (DSC) with the theme "Preachers of Hope for Times Such as These".

The Book of Leviticus teaches that the Holy Year has two key purposes: a return to one's family and an entrance into the Sabbath. The Jubilee, therefore, is above all an invitation **to return to the Lord**—a call to conversion and renewal. For us Dominicans, it is also a call to return to the **charism** that Saint Dominic received: to renew our commitment to preaching the Gospel as he did.

The second invitation is **to enter into the Sabbath**, to "rest in God." Yet this presents a paradox. Preaching the Gospel is a demanding and unending task—one from which we cannot simply take rest. So what, then, does this "rest" truly mean? Jesus invites us: *Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will be refreshed* (Mt 11:28-29). The Jubilee "rest" is not a retreat from mission or activity, but a deeper **communion with Jesus**, who invites us to share in His mission. This is the rest that Saint Augustine contemplated when he wrote: *"Our hearts are restless until they rest in You."*


Christ is the *Preacher of Hope*, according to our General Chapter in Tultenango, Mexico. (ACG 2022, 57). "He brings good news to the poor" (Isa 61:1; Luke 4:18-19). And with his coming, Christ is the Hope-Incarnate, "whom we hear and see, touch, and bear witness to" (1 John 1-2). We recall that St. Dominic promised us that "wonderful hope"

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- *O Spem Miram* - of his abiding presence, of grace that is given, of help that remains beyond death, darkness, difficulty and despair. This is the Hope we celebrate this Jubilee Year, the Hope we celebrate with gratitude, the Hope we preach, the Hope we cherish in our hearts in this earthly pilgrimage, the Hope that we “proclaim earnestly, in season and out of season, convincing, reprimanding, and encouraging with much patience in our teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2).

In the name of the Order, I pray that the Lord will continue to bless you with fruitfulness in your various apostolates of preaching the Gospel.

Your brother in St. Dominic,


Br. Gerard Francisco Timoner III, O.P.
Master of the Order



Preachers for Times Such as These

DSC Executive Committee
Statement of Intention - 2024 -2025

Our adaptation of the passage from the Book of Esther 4:14:

"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

This DSC Statement of Intentions for 2024 -2025 is born in the energy and enthusiasm we encountered at the October 2023 Annual Meeting, which emphasized the need for a fresh vision and new approaches to invigorate Dominican Life and Mission in the present and future, uniting us in a common purpose. The DSC executive committee is dedicated to fostering along with our membership the advancement of a shared Dominican future.

A Future of Hope is born in this interim time between the now and a shared Dominican future.

The more faithfully you can endure here,
The more refined your heart will become
For your arrival in the new dawn.

From John Donohue's Blessing for the Interim Time

We know there is a continuum of urgency for congregations to reconsider their present governance structure. Their limited capacity to provide leadership for the congregation, hold a General Chapter, and, most importantly, sustain their mission necessitates immediate action in many circumstances.

And we know our younger sisters and others are exploring new ways of being in mission.

Therefore, we have the following (four) goals for 2024 – 2025

1. We will facilitate conversations and the convergences of the emerging movements among us (*Futuring Leadership Team-FLT, Dominicans in Committed Collaboration-OPSCC, Dominican Governance Collaborative-DGC, Dominican Sisters Conference-DSC*) with the intention that these "Movements of the Spirit" may lead to a consensus of emerging possibilities for a US Dominican [entity or configuration] which will sustain Dominican Life and Mission into the future.
2. The process at the October 2024 Elected Leaders meeting is designed to surface a "a good leaning" around "Emerging Possibilities" and "Pathways" to a future full of hope.
3. The DSC Executive Committee with the Visioning and Planning Committee and any planning team from the Oct 2024 leadership meeting, will create a step-by-step process that engages and moves both leaders and members in "conversations in the Spirit"

regarding the “Emerging Possibilities” and various “Pathways.” A step-by-step plan will have elements of cross congregational relationship building; and the spirituality of grieving, lament and prophetic imagination in preparation for the (month) Dominican Mission Encuentro in 2025.

4. Conduct the Dominican Mission Encuentro 2025 for leaders and members which will celebrate the past: 90 years of DLC, the present: 15 years of DSC, 26 years of NGO under DSC, and will coalesce around a pathway for the future.

The DSC Executive Committee and the Visioning and Planning Committee and any planning members from the October Leadership meeting will, according to the time-line, devise a step-by-step plan to move our membership to deep involvement in the road to, and investment in, the Dominican Mission Encuentro 2025.

We hold the following steps lightly and offer them as a possible sequencing of events.

Some possible steps on the road to the Dominican Mission Encuentro 2025:

1. (Oct. - Nov., 2024) Visioning and Planning with Planning Members from Leadership create a plan to inform and energize members for “Emerging Possibilities and Pathways.”
2. (Dec. 2024 thru Feb. 2025) Conversations on “Emerging Possibilities and Pathways” and implications for individuals and congregations. Design real persons feedback loops.
3. (March 2nd Sunday before Ash Wednesday) Rituals to begin the “journey to possibility” without a map or GPS.
4. (Lent – Maybe each week of Lent) National On-line “preached” retreats on spirituality of grieving, lament and prophetic imagination.
5. (Easter Time) Cross-congregational on-line Emmaus walks
6. (Summer) Repeat conversations on Emerging Possibilities, Pathways and implications for individuals and congregations.
7. Dominican Mission Encuentro 2025

PART 2

This section offers an overview of the work and projects of the DSC staff for the coming year:

Additionally, through the DSC Executive Director, Associate Director for Futuring, the NGO Representative at the UN, and the DSC Communicator, we will:

1. Strengthen and enhance our communication through a reconstructed website and social media platforms
2. Update email subscriptions and mailing lists for Domlife.org and work with the NGO at the UN to enhance the reach of that office.
3. Successfully transition the NGO Representative at the UN position to the DSIC by December 2024. We plan to celebrate this milestone, which has been on the far horizon of the DSC for many years.
4. Continue to develop our relationship with NDAD, the National Dominican Associate Directors, as well as other related Dominican entities and partners.

5. Continue to seek out funding for FLT projects and other opportunities for budget relief, including the Encuentro.
6. Market and promote the Dominican Charism Initiative platform
7. Develop a policy or procedures that support the best use of this new funding model.

Respectfully submitted:

Dusty Farnan, OP (Adrian/DLC NGO Representative)

Lisa Kane, OP (Racine/Associate Director for Futuring)

Cheryl Liske, OP (Adrian)

Anne Lythgoe, OP (Peace/President of the Executive Committee)

Xiomara Mendez-Hernandez, OP (Adrian/DSC Executive Director)

Veronica Esparza Ramirez, OP (Mission San Jose)

Terry Rickard, OP (Blauvelt)

Pat Stringer, OP (Caldwell)

Kathleen Tuite, OP (Caldwell)





**Preachers of Hope for Times Such as These
2025 Elected Leaders Meeting
Dominican Sister Conference
Sr. Xiomara Méndez Hernández, OP - Executive Director**

September 29, 2025

Hola Sisters and Friends,

Here are some highlights from our DSC Office. I will share more details with you during my address at the DSC business meeting on October 9th. Looking forward to sharing with you all!

Highlights of our 2025

- **2025 DSC Budget** – the revised version of the 2025 budget was sent and approved in December of 2024.
- **In March** – We had the first Executive Committee in-person meeting hosted by the Sparkill Dominican Sisters in New York. In that meeting we solidified the plan for the October meetings. The DSC Visioning and Planning Committee was able to join us virtually.
- **DSIC Assembly** – This year, I was invited to participate at the DSIC Assembly, in Rome. I joined many of the Dominican Prioress from the USA and from around the world. My role was to co-create and coordinate the prayers and rituals for the entire assembly along with Sr. Katie van Wyk, OP, from South Africa. I also responded to questions about the Dominican Sisters in the USA as needed.
- **Hope 2025** – While in Rome, I also represented the DSC at Hope 2025. The gathering hosted by the Leadership Collaborative gathered sisters under 65, both in person and virtually, from 5 continents. I was invited to serve as one of its co-facilitators.
- **Fundraising Committee:** Considering all the expenses we learned the Encuentro would cost, this year we decided to create a fundraising committee. The committee includes Cheryl, Liske, OP, Lisa Kane, OP, Ann Pratt, OP, and our communicator, Natasha Edwards. We also had several sisters who shared their invaluable wisdom, expertise, and support on fundraising.
- **The Visioning/Planning Committee work** – This task committee along with our facilitator Sue Weber and the Executive Committee have been working tirelessly to make the Leaders and Encuentro gathering a meaningful one. We met monthly by Zoom. Last August, we had an in-person meeting hosted by the Dominican Sisters of Adrian
- **LCWR Presence** – This year again, the LCWR invited us to serve as table facilitators as we participated as an Associate Organization.
- **Production of the DSC Emerging Movements 2.0** - Under the direction of Sr. Anne Lythgoe, the DSC Emerging Movements 2.0 was created. Tom Henry from the Communication of the Dominican Sisters of Peace, did an awesome job with the video produced. We have been receiving very positive feedback and appreciation from sisters regarding this project.

- **Sisters Under 70's Cohort** – We continue to provide unwavering support to the Futuring Office, the FLT, and the working groups. More details in Lisa's report.
- **DSC Communicator** – Since Mrs. Natasha Edwards started in the new position on July 8th, our communication has improved tremendously. We have been finally working on the reconfiguration and redesign of our website. Natasha along with the Website Committee has done a remarkable job in orchestrating the whole project. We hope to have the unveiling during the banquet at the Encuentro.
- **Transition of the DCI** – FACTS is the company that has been hosting the Dominican Charism Initiative. For more than a year the organization has been changing ownership and the service on the platform has been deficient and flawed. After many conversations and not much positive results, we had decided to move all the materials and videos for the modules to our new website. This will allow us to have full control of this great learning experience and will also decrease the annual fee. More to be shared.
- **Office at Barry** – Our relationship with the leadership at Barry has strengthened, especially with their president Dr. Michael Allen. He even became one of our sponsors for this year Encuentro. This year the office building we occupy will become vacant and in November our office will be relocated inside the main campus. To keep our great DSC office space for free, I continue to provide some volunteer service in different capacities, like providing the blessing for the School of Podiatry during their White Coats ceremony.
- **DSC Election** – This year we asked for a vote of affirmation for both Pat Stringer, OP (Caldwell) and Veronica Esparza Ramirez, OP (Mission San Jose) as they had volunteered to continue as members of the Executive Committee. They were confirmed by both sisters and leaders respectively and their term will be renewed starting this October 2025 for the next three years.

See you in St Louis!





Report to DSC Elected Leaders – October 2025
DSC Futuring Leadership Team
Representing the Cohort of DSC Sisters under age 70



How are we “*Preachers of Hope for Times such as These?*” The world is in extraordinary turmoil, fragmented, divided, resistant to truth, spiritually impoverished, unable/unwilling to listen to others, and in the U.S. disconnected from creation. Yet we trust that our contemplative witness, embodying Gospel values and preaching Truth are part of the healing necessary. We reflect on all these signs of the times in light of our charism and recognize this as a bridge time – between what has been and what will be – in our country, our world, and in religious life. As for the future, we must allow it to unfold while recognizing what is ours to do today as we prepare for that future. Holding this tension in hope, not pushing for quick solutions, is where God appears to be continuing to call us.

The cohort of sisters under 70 and the Futuring Leadership Team (FLT), believe that in a divided and polarized world *how* we are with one other and our witness matters. As a cohort, we have developed a variety of opportunities to connect and build relationships, getting to know one another in new ways. We continue to expand the efforts of our working groups – Journeying Toward Interculturality, Bridging Polarities, 21st Century Dominican Spirituality & Theology, OP Vocation Collaboration, and our newest: DSC Sisters <60. In June we held our first collaborative Dominican vocation immersion experience. Currently we have 25 cohort members actively engaged in learning Restorative Dialogue® with the potential of adding Restorative Circles practice groups in the future. We have shared deeply on a Spiral of Transformation, inviting us to consider the pillars of Encounter, Suffering, Contemplation and Preaching as one potential means to reinvigorate how we live the preaching life in this evolutionary time for our Order.

In our quarterly cohort gatherings, we express care for one another, provide mutual support, and invite greater growth and awareness toward true inclusivity. These values speak to those we encounter. As a cohort, we choose to heed divergent voices, to work toward consensus, and to embrace our diverse worldviews – all countercultural acts, particularly in our current global milieu. In the context of our vows, we commit to love all, to share our resources and see all we have as gift, and to discern together the common good. The cohort is doing our part to bring about the reign of God, always grounded in and honoring our Dominican values.

Although the majority of the cohort is in active ministry (many as elected leaders), participation in cohort and working group activities has been consistently strong.

One of our current challenges is finding new members willing to become part of the Futuring Leadership Team. Repeatedly we have heard from sisters that the pressures of ministry as well as congregational commitments limit their availability for this ministry on behalf of the cohort today and our future together. This is an area where we recognize the critical role you as leaders play in shaping

the Futuring Leadership Team. As current leaders, your influence is essential to actively encourage and support those sisters under 70 in your congregation who are capable to step forward and take on leadership responsibilities for the cohort.

We ask that you take time to recognize emerging talent among your sisters under 70, and to engage them in dialogue regarding their current duties and obligations which they feel limit their availability for service on the Futuring Leadership Team. These conversations can build confidence and open doors for growing in the very skills needed to bring forth a vibrant future of Dominican Life and Mission. Your commitment to fostering leadership for the cohort will have a lasting impact. Let's work together to create a culture where cohort leadership is shared and cultivated across all congregations. Thank you for your continued leadership and for investing in the future of our Dominican charism.

The cohort is unafraid of what the future of religious life may be... our desire is to see the Holy Preaching continue long into the future. We have been privileged to share in one another's joys, pains, griefs and hopes for the present and future of Dominican life. We are faithful, confident in those who share the journey with us, and trusting in the love and support of our home congregations. Listening together to the Spirit, we have been journeying together, engaged in deep listening, in full and active participation for the sake of the mission of Jesus.

May Dominic, who was always full of hope and joy, grace us with hope and joy, and may our hope and joy radiate from us, especially as we continue to move into the future with faith and trust. For we have been given a spirit of boldness and not of timidity. Come Holy Spirit!

Futuring Leadership Team

Cathy Buchanan, OP - Peace

Annie Killian, OP – Peace

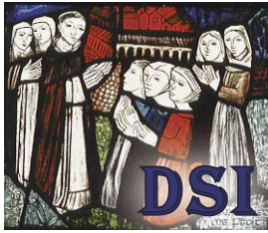
Lystra Long, OP – Sinsinawa

Pat Magee, OP - Hope

Lorraine Reaume, OP – Adrian

Lisa Kane, OP – Racine – DSC Associate Director for Futuring





Dominican Sisters International Confederation
North America Coordinator
1275 E Siena Heights Dr.
Adrian, MI 49221

October 9, 2025

Dear DSC Elected Leaders,

On behalf of Dominican Sisters International Confederation (DSIC) we submit this report highlighting key accomplishments since October 2024.

Highlights for 2024-25:

- **DSIC Triennial Assembly, *Widows and Midwives***, May 12-16, 2025, Rome. DSIC members experience dimensions of both widows and midwives - experiencing both profound loss while also supporting the bringing forth new life. Margaret Mayce provided a moving reflection on the gifts and graces of being both midwives and widows.

Prioresses from 77 Congregations attended, with participation in daily Liturgy, rituals and common prayer. Margaret Mayce, International Coordinator provided a thorough and moving report on the DSIC's numerous accomplishments. The Prioresses engaged in substantive table conversations as they heard from younger sisters about their hopes for the future after their experience at Caleruega and from a sister from each continent about what she learned by participating in the virtual leadership program. The Prioresses also heard moving testimonies from leaders of Congregations coming to conclusion; an update from Pat Magee on the status of Dominican Sisters Association, and reports from each of the continental coordinators. Meals, breaks and table conversations provided time for building relationships and networking. And we couldn't have done it without the interpreters!

- **Justice Commitment** - One of DSIC's primary goals is to foster international promotion of justice and peace. DSIC expressed its profound gratitude to Durstyne Farnan, OP for her comprehensive report - and completion of her term as both the UN Representative **and** International Promoter for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in May.

The Assembly recommended separating these two positions into the future. We are grateful that Ann Pratt, OP, Racine Dominican has accepted the position of our UN representative and Jacintha Gracy Miranda, OP, Dominican Sister of the Presentation, will serve as the International Promoter for Justice. Sister Jacintha lives in Rome so that will facilitate coordination with DSIC.

Other DSIC Priorities: 2025 – 2028

- **Formation** - Continue the successful virtual Leadership Development Program with *Faith & Praxis for Global Leadership* for younger Sisters, as well as others. Over 145 Sisters participated in 2024-25 program, representing 45 Congregations from 44 countries
 - Continue the Caleruega-like immersion experiences and include other significant sites of our Dominican history
 - Utilize Facebook and social media for promoting Formation opportunities, including language study opportunities
- **Communications**
 - Acknowledged impact of Communications Specialist Nawojka Mocek-Galllina
 - Have a designated person for communication in each Congregation.
 - Initiate a database which includes Sisters' involvement in study and ministry; hope for shared ministries to emerge' Look to DSC for guidance.
- **Finances**

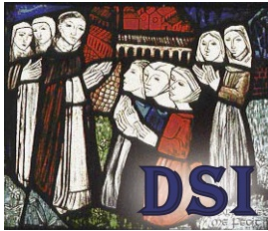
Dues were increased to \$10 USD / €9 per sister; Encourage legacy gifts to DSIC and explore any possible legal implications with a consultant.
- **Succession Planning**

Margaret Mayce, OP was enthusiastically affirmed for an additional 3-year term as International Coordinator. Need to intentionally consider Sisters who will be able to assume areas of responsibility in DSIC for the future.

OTHER:

- The needs of Small Congregations (Congregations with fewer than 50 members) will continue as a priority. Sr. Kelly Connors, PM, a canon lawyer who addressed the Assembly is available to assist congregations if desired.
- An acknowledgement that DSIC is *for all of our Sisters* – even as the role of Prioresses, as the official members, is respected.
- An **online meeting to be held** before the next Assembly in Rome in 2028.

DEMOGRAPHICS 2025 - Who we are today



Dominican Sisters International Confederation
 North America Coordinator
 1275 E Siena Heights Dr.
 Adrian, MI 49221

Professed Sisters: 15,093 (20,634 in 2019)

Present in 109 countries/generalates:

Generalates: 144

Africa: 6

Latin America / Caribbean:	19
Asia Pacific:	22
Europe:	79
North America:	20

Dominican Sisters Conference Annual Meeting October 2025

Report from the North American Dominican Co- Promoter of Justice

Pilgrims of Hope in Times Like These



The ministry of the North American Dominican Promoters of Justice, Peace and Care of Creation (NADJPCC) is *to encourage all members of the Order of Preachers and their associates to embrace a deepening of the Dominican charism to search for and preach TRUTH as it impacts the lives of people and planet.*

NADJPCC include the promoters from sixteen congregations, five provinces of Friars, a justice representative from the Nuns, Dominican Youth, and the Laity, Dominican Alliance Eco Justice Committee, and the DSIC NGO UN Representative.

This past year we mourned the death of Ceil Roeger, the long-time justice promoter for the Houston Dominicans. At our summer meeting, we remembered Ceil in our opening prayer and with a toast.

Other changes in our region included the retirement of two long-standing justice promoters, Brigid Clingman (Grand Rapids) and Kathy Nolan (Adrian), as well as the departure of Dusty Farnan from her role as DSIC NGO UN Representative.

We also welcomed several new justice promoters: Jessica Bowen (Grand Rapids), Susan Nchubiri (Maryknoll), Pat Stringer and Lena Picillo (Caldwell), Pati Bruno (San Rafael), and Cecilia Canales (Mission San Jose). In addition, Anne Pratt joined as the new DSIC NGO UN Representative.

NADJPCC Focus 2025-2026

The NADJPCC members have met four times since October 2024, including an extended in-person gathering at the Weber Center in Adrian, MI, on July 14–17, 2025.

At our July meeting, we heard from members of our International Dominican Family, including Aniedi Okure OP, International Justice Promoter, and Margaret Mayce OP, International Coordinator of the DSIC. Our guest speaker, Ann Garrido, offered a presentation titled, *If Justice and Peace Shall Kiss...Can Truth and Hope Hold Hands?*

Drawing on their insights—as well as our own reflections on how we can be “pilgrims of hope in times like these”—we agreed on the following actions for 2025–2026:

1. Lift Up the Constitution’s 250th Anniversary (2026)

In 2026, the United States will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Constitution. Given ongoing concerns—particularly regarding what many see as the Trump Administration’s disregard for constitutional principles and a shift toward authoritarianism—we will find ways for Dominicans to serve as a voice of Truth throughout the year.

Planned Actions:

- Align our actions and messaging with significant U.S. holidays throughout the year.
- Propose that the U.S. be the designated country for the Month of Peace for 2026.

2. Share Ann Garrido’s Presentation - We will make available a recording of Ann Garrido’s recent presentation for communal study and reflection.

Supporting Materials Will Include:

- An edited recording suitable for use in groups.
- A facilitator guide, including a section-by-section outline for viewing.
- Ann’s handout with discussion questions.
- Key reference materials cited by Ann, including readings from Timothy Radcliffe and the Salamanca Process.

3. Change the Narrative on Immigration – *Stories Without Borders*

Through *Stories Without Borders*, we aim to transform the narrative around immigrants by sharing personal and positive experiences from across our Dominican family.

Each Story Should Include:

- A personal story of interaction with immigrants across congregations/provinces.
- A reflection on how the experience impacted the storyteller.
- Questions for reflection and an action component.
- Distribution through various media platforms (Facebook, listservs, Instagram, TikTok, etc.).

4. Update the Gospel Call to Justice

We will update the **Gospel Call to Justice** with a renewed focus on Truth and Hope, aligning it with our broader vision for justice and prophetic witness in these times.

Each action will be organized by a working group, with reports shared at NADJPCC meetings every other month.



Month of Peace

The Month of Peace 2025 will focus on the country Cameroon. The month will begin on the first Sunday of Advent, Nov. 30th through New Years Day. The materials for the month will be produced and distributed by October. The sisters and friars are planning an online seminar to share their experiences with us, talk about what project they hope to do, what are the challenges, and how we can help.

International Dominican Commission on Justice and Peace (IDCJP)

The Dominican Co-promoters of Justice from the five regions (North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia Pacific) will meet in Bogotá, Colombia, October 12–18, 2025. Brendan and I will be attending.

The North American justice promoters suggested we bring the following points to the commission:

- **Gender rights** – the safety and protection of gay, lesbian, and transgender members.
- **Truth** – the importance of upholding the value of truth across the Dominican family.
- **Expectations of the commission** – this will be discussed further at our Sept. 30 NADJPCC quarterly meeting.
- **Month of Peace 2026** – we propose that the United States be chosen as the focus country.

North American Dominican Justice Promoters

Joan Agro (Blauvelt), Jessica Bowen (Grand Rapids), Patti Bruno (San Rafael), Cecilia Canales (Mission San Jose), Brendan Curran (NA Co-promoter), Betty Devereaux (Tacoma), Gemma Doll (Peace), Chris Eggleton (Southern Province), Mary Feigen (Hope), Eileen Gannon (Sparkill), Thomas More Garrett (Eastern Province), Linda Gibler (Houston contact person), Tim Hall (Racine), Marcelline Koch (Springfield), Prakash Lohale (Canadian Province), Didi Madden (Blauvelt), Emily Masse (Amityville), Reg McKillip (Sinsinawa/NA Co-promoter), Susana Nchubiri (Maryknoll), Lena Picillo (Caldwell), Anne Pratt (DSIC- UN Representative), Marie Ryan (Laity), Alberto Solis (Mexican Province Laity), Pat Stringer (Caldwell), Francis Thibodeau (Roman), Dennis Woerter (Central Province), Sharon Zayac (Alliance Eco-Justice).

Submitted: September 24, 2025

Reg McKillip, OP

North American Dominican Co-Promoter of Justice



September, 2025

Dear Elected Leaders of DSC,

We are grateful to all of you for your continued support of the DSC and all you do to lead your communities. We recognize that as leaders, it is your responsibility to affirm the budget for the DSC and have oversight of it.

In preparation for the annual October meeting, we would like to acknowledge the Finance Advisory Committee: Jose Enrique, Judy Rimby, OP, Laura Reicks, RSM, Maryann McMahon, OP, and Yvette Hutchins, Bookkeeper. Xiomara Méndez Hernández, OP, DSC Executive Director, and Pat Stringer, OP, DSC Executive Committee Treasurer. We meet each month to review the finances and to project the next year's budget. We are very grateful to them.

The Finance Advisory Committee and the Executive Committee of the DSC would like to present the budget for 2026 to you.

You will have an opportunity to ask questions about the budget during the October meeting, and we will also host a follow-up Zoom meeting before the vote.

Regarding the 2026 budget, **the FLT** working groups, in collaboration with Lisa Kane, submitted their budgetary needs. You will notice an increase in some areas, primarily due to the planned increase in FLT membership. The FLT also worked on securing grants, including requests to the Dominican Sisters of HOPE and LCWR, to support their projects. We appreciate Lisa and the FLT's hard work.

We anticipate the remaining \$10,000 owed to the Pooled Investment Fund will be fulfilled by 2027.

We would like to share additional information before we present the budget.

1. The **Financial Advisory Committee** composed of dedicated and knowledgeable individuals, meets monthly. This year, they recommended that the Executive Committee begin a succession plan, which will commence in F'26. They are also developing financial policies, including guidelines for the percentage of income and principal that can be used annually to fund DSC operations, and salary guidelines.

2. **Dominican Charism Initiative (DCI)** - Last year, we informed you that we would continue conversations with Catholic Faith Technology - Nelnet Community Engagement (now F.A.C.T.S.), which hosts the DCI, to review the October 2020 Business Plan. Due to unfulfilled promises, we have decided to transition all DCI material to our new website. As of 2025, each community paid a fee, and other user contributions covered expenses. Starting next fiscal year, each Congregation will contribute a flat rate of \$200 to cover expenses. We have also initiated conversations

with Veritas Ministries (VM), which now includes many Dominican schools, to partner in sustaining this initiative.

Regarding the 2026 budget, the following information is offered.

As you know, the **NGO** office expenses were switched to DSIC on December 31, 2024.

The ***Encuentro 2025*** is an inclusive meeting of leaders, sister members, and associates, and it has its own budget. We have received donations of \$158,618.00 and we are grateful to Xiomara for all her hard work alone with the fundraising committee. When all of the expenses are finalized, you will receive a final report.

The return on our Common Spirit/Northern Trust fund has been lower than last year because of the insecurity of the market.

We are offering a balanced budget by taking money from the principal. Attached is the FY 2026 budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Stringer, OP – DSC Treasurer and Finance Advisory Committee Chair
pstringer@caldwellop.org

Xiomara Méndez Hernández, OP – DSC Executive Director
sisters@domlife.org

Dominican Sisters Conference				
Statement of Activity - Aug 2025 YTD w/ Budget 2025, Draft Budget 2026		as of 9.23.25		
	2025	2025	2026	2026
	Actual Aug YTD	Budget	Draft Budget	Draft Budget Comments
Income				
40000 Annual Contributions				
40100 Membership Contributions	0.00	0.00	0.00	
40200 DSI Contribution	0.00	0.00	0.00	
40300 Other Contributions	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Total 40000 Annual Contributions	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	
41000 Annual Leadership Meeting				
41100 Registrations	0.00	100,000.00	25,000.00	
Total 41000 Annual Leadership Meeting	\$ 0.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	
45100 Honoraria				
45110 Executive Director Honoraria	0.00	1,000.00	0.00	
45120 Honorarium - NGO	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Total 45100 Honoraria	\$ 0.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 0.00	
46000 DCI Fees	12200.00	11,000.00	2,800.00	
47000 Gifts & Grants/Sponsorship				
47500 Gifts	155,000.00	0.00	0.00	
47510 Pooled Investment Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	
47520 Gifts & Grants - Futuring	1,205.00	47,000.00	0.00	Lisa working on applications
47590 Grants - Other	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Total 47000 Gifts & Grants/Sponsorship	\$ 156,205.00	\$ 47,000.00	\$ 0.00	
48000 Investment Income		\$ 156,000.00	\$ 130,000.00	Northern Trust Bank/Common Spirit acct
48100 Interest Income	\$ 46,588.37			
48175 Investment Income	\$ 23,565.46			
48200 Dividend Income	\$ 15,223.26			
48300 Realized Gain/Loss	\$ 294,813.56			
68300 Unrealized Gain/Loss	\$ 277,245.96			
Total 48000 Investment Income	\$657,436.61	\$156,000.00	\$130,000.00	
Total Income	\$ 825,841.61	\$ 315,000.00	\$ 157,800.00	
Gross Profit	\$ 825,841.61	\$ 315,000.00	\$ 157,800.00	
Expenses				
50000 Director's Office				
50100 Executive Director Salary, Benefits	48,010.88	72,000.00	74,300.00	
50150 Administrative Assistant	0.00	13,000.00	13,000.00	New hire
50250 Contracted services	1,725.00	17,300.00	18,000.00	Annual Financial Review and Bookkeeper (Bookkeeper rate increase by 10%. (200+20)*12) \$30 vs \$33
50275 Bookkeeper Software	792.00	1,150.00	1,300.00	QB increases annually
50300 Travel/R&B	2,984.70	6,500.00	6,500.00	
50310 Meeting Registrations	810.00	1,100.00	2,000.00	
50410 Office Rental	0.00	7,000.00	7,000.00	In-kind for 2026 due to no agreement
50420 Computer and Office Supplies, Equipment	105.93	1,600.00	500.00	
50440 Postage, shipping	43.80	200.00	200.00	

	2025	2025	2026	2026
	Actual Aug YTD	Budget	Draft Budget	Draft Budget Comments
50460 Printing, copying	0.00	200.00	200.00	
50470 Telephone, Internet	200.00	800.00	800.00	in case we have to obtain another office space
50600 Subscriptions & Books	0.00	100.00	100.00	
50610 Legal and Financial Fees	170.32	2,500.00	2,500.00	
50620 Bank charges	185.00	400.00	450.00	Chase Maintenance Fee + ACH fees
50630 Insurance	1,419.00	1,600.00	1,600.00	
50650 Archive Maintenance	0.00	200.00	200.00	Paid \$125 in 2021. Paid \$150 since 2022.
50700 Gifts, Donations, Memorials	104.48	500.00	500.00	
50800 Hospitality	0.00	500.00	500.00	
50900 Miscellaneous	0.00	50.00	50.00	
Total 50000 Director's Office	\$ 56,551.11	\$ 126,700.00	129,700.00	
51000 Annual Meeting		<u>Encuentro Oct 2025</u>		
51100 Annual Meeting Facilitation	0.00	4,000.00	7,100.00	due to increase collaboration
51150 Annual Meeting Liturgist	0.00	3,000.00	2,000.00	
51200 Annual Meeting Speaker	0.00	1,000.00	2,000.00	
51500 Annual Meeting Supplies-1	543.51	1,000.00	350.00	
51600 Annual Meeting Lodging, Transp, Food	0.00	53,000.00	33,000.00	
51640 Annual Meeting Printing	0.00	500.00	200.00	
51650 Annual Meeting Other	62,200.00	50,500.00	175.00	
51800 Annual Mtg. Exec Comm TR	1,222.10	2,000.00	3,200.00	
Total 51000 Annual Meeting	\$ 63,965.61	\$ 115,000.00	\$ 48,025.00	
52000 Communications/Marketing/DCI				
52100 Communicator Compensation	37,200.00	57,600.00	57,600.00	
52200 Technological Expense	1,939.34	2,300.00	3,500.00	
52300 Travel / R&B	0.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	
52350 Meetings	0.00	300.00	1,500.00	
52410 Office Rental	0.00	0.00	0.00	
52420 Computer Supplies. Equipment	0.00	300.00	300.00	
52450 Contracted Services	11,405.00	30,000.00	5,000.00	Website Consolidation, may be completed in 2025 and beginning of 2026
52470 Telephone. Internet	0.00	0.00	0.00	
52500 Memberships	0.00	150.00	150.00	
52600 DCI - Dom. Charism Initiative	9,250.00	10,000.00	2,800.00	
52650 Other	0.00	100.00	100.00	
52800 Hospitality	0.00	200.00	200.00	
Total 52000 Communications/Marketing/DCI	\$ 59,794.34	\$ 103,450.00	\$ 73,650.00	
53000 Committees/Entities				
53050 DSC Team of Facilitators	3,100.00	25,000.00	20,000.00	
53100 Executive Committee	1,314.42	20,000.00	20,000.00	
53200 Planning Committee	666.22	4,000.00	4,000.00	
53500 Finance Committee	0.00	200.00	200.00	
53600 Associate/ Sisters Committee	0.00	200.00	200.00	
Total 53000 Committees/Entities	\$ 5,080.64	\$ 49,400.00	\$ 44,400.00	
56000 DSC Futuring				
56100 Assoc Dir Salary, Benefits	\$ 41,718.40	62,600.00	64,300.00	
56300 Team Building, ADF Travel/R&B	\$ 2,055.59	13,150.00	16,300.00	
56310 Meeting Registration	\$ 0.00	0.00	0.00	

	2025	2025	2026	2026
	Actual Aug YTD	Budget	Draft Budget	Draft Budget Comments
56350 Cohort Support	\$ 6,361.83	24,100.00	34,955.00	
56410 Cohort In-Person Mtg	\$ 0.00	5,000.00	0.00	
56420 Computer Supplies. Equipment	\$ 386.82	400.00	400.00	
56430 Office Supplies	\$ 0.00	150.00	150.00	
56435 Office Rental	\$ 0.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	
56440 Postage, Shipping	\$ 0.00	100.00	100.00	
56470 DSC Annual Mtg	\$ 931.77	16,000.00	19,500.00	non leaders' travel
56475 Telephone, Internet, Fax	\$ 200.00	300.00	300.00	
56500 Facilitation	\$ 550.00	0.00	0.00	
56700 Gifts, Donations	\$ 0.00	200.00	200.00	
56800 Hospitality	\$ 0.00	0.00	0.00	
Total 56000 DSC Futuring	\$ 52,204.41	\$ 128,000.00	\$ 142,205.00	
58000 Investment Acct. Fees	\$ 16,774.33	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	
65200 Grant - Other	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	
65000 LCWR Grant	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	
Total Expenses	\$ 254,370.44	\$ 540,550.00	\$ 457,980.00	
Net Operating Income	\$ 571,471.17	-\$ 225,550.00	-\$ 300,180.00	
Other Expenses				
Reconciliation Discrepancies-1	0.00	0.00		
Transfer to Pool Investment	-\$ 80,000.00	-226,000.00	-305,000.00	should not be part of P&L, balance sheet entry
Total Other Expenses	-\$ 80,000.00	-\$ 226,000.00	-\$ 305,000.00	needed from Investment account in 2026
Net Other Income	\$ 80,000.00	\$ 226,000.00	\$ 305,000.00	
Net Income	\$ 651,471.17	\$ 450.00	\$ 4,820.00	
	2025	2025	2026	2026
	Actual Aug YTD	Budget	Draft Budget	Draft Budget Comments

Statement of Activity - Classes				
Dominican Sisters Conference				
January-August, 2025				
Distribution account	Encuentro	General	Total	Comments
Income				
46000 DCI Fees		12,200.00	12,200.00	
47000 Gifts & Grants/Sponsorship			0.00	
47500 Gifts	155,000.00		155,000.00	San Rafael \$12K, Grand Rapids \$5K, Peace \$35K, Discerning Deacons \$3K, Private Donor \$100K
47520 Gifts & Grants - Futuring		1,205.00	1,205.00	
47590 Grants - Other			0.00	
Total for 47000 Gifts & Grants/Sponsorship	155,000.00	1,205.00	\$156,205.00	
48000 Investment Income			0.00	
48100 Interest Income		46,588.37	46,588.37	
48175 Investment Income - Common Spirit		23,565.46	23,565.46	
48200 Dividend Income		15,223.26	15,223.26	
48300 Realized Gain/Loss		294,813.56	294,813.56	
68300 Unrealized Investment Gn/Loss		277,245.96	277,245.96	
Total for 48000 Investment Income		657,436.61	\$657,436.61	
Total for Income	155,000.00	670,841.61	\$825,841.61	
Cost of Goods Sold			0.00	
Gross Profit	155,000.00	670,841.61	\$825,841.61	
Expenses				
50000 Director's Office			0.00	
50100 Executive Director Salary, Benefits		48,010.88	48,010.88	
50250 Contracted services		1,725.00	1,725.00	
50275 Bookkeeper Software		792.00	792.00	
50300 Travel/R&B		2,984.70	2,984.70	
50310 Meeting Registrations		810.00	810.00	
50420 Computer and Office Supplies, Equipment		105.93	105.93	
50440 Postage, shipping		43.80	43.80	
50470 Telephone, Internet		200.00	200.00	
50610 Legal and Financial Fees		170.32	170.32	
50620 Bank charges		185.00	185.00	
50630 Insurance		1,419.00	1,419.00	
50700 Gifts, Donations, Memorials		104.48	104.48	
Total for 50000 Director's Office		56,551.11	\$56,551.11	
51000 Annual Meeting			0.00	
51500 Annual Meeting Supplies-1	543.51		543.51	
51650 Annual Meeting Other	62,200.00		62,200.00	AV and Nix Deposits
51800 Annual Mtg. Exec Comm TR	1,222.10		1,222.10	
Total for 51000 Annual Meeting	63,965.61		\$63,965.61	
52000 Communications/DCI			0.00	
52100 Communicator Compensation		37,200.00	37,200.00	
52200 Technological Expense		1,939.34	1,939.34	
52450 Contracted Services		11,405.00	11,405.00	
52600 DCI - Dom. Charism Initiative		9,250.00	9,250.00	
Total for 52000 Communications/DCI		59,794.34	\$59,794.34	
53000 Committees/Entities			0.00	
53050 DSC Team of Facilitators		3,100.00	3,100.00	
53100 Executive Committee		1,314.42	1,314.42	
53200 Planning Committee	666.22		666.22	

Statement of Activity - Classes				
Dominican Sisters Conference				
January-August, 2025				
Distribution account	Encuentro	General	Total	Comments
Total for 53000 Committees/Entities	666.22	4,414.42	\$5,080.64	
56000 DSC Futuring			0.00	
56100 Assoc Dir Salary, Benefits		41,718.40	41,718.40	
56300 Team Building, ADF Travel/R&B		2,055.59	2,055.59	
56350 Cohort Support		6,361.83	6,361.83	
56420 Computer Supplies. Equipment		386.82	386.82	
56470 DSC Annual Mtg	665.73	266.04	931.77	
56475 Telephone, Internet		200.00	200.00	
56500 Facilitation		550.00	550.00	
Total for 56000 DSC Futuring	665.73	51,538.68	\$52,204.41	
58000 Investment Act. Fees		16,774.33	16,774.33	
Total for Expenses	65,297.56	189,072.88	\$254,370.44	
Net Operating Income	89,702.44	481,768.73	\$571,471.17	
Other Income			0.00	
Other Expenses			0.00	
Net Other Income			\$0.00	
Net Income	89,702.44	481,768.73	\$571,471.17	
Accrual Basis Thursday, September 11, 2025 06:29 PM GMTZ				

Balance Sheet
Dominican Sisters Conference
As of Aug 31, 2025

Distribution account	Total	Comments
Assets		
Current Assets		
Bank Accounts		
07000 Fidelity Investment	197,279.91	\$120K transferred into acct 07/25, \$70K will go into NT as soon as possible
08000 Common Spirit	8,534,768.57	
09000 Chase Checking	43,522.63	\$35K min to avoid mo fee
Total for Bank Accounts	\$8,775,571.11	
Accounts Receivable		
12000 Accounts Receivable	10,000.00	Pooled Investment Balance Due. Remaining congregations chose to contribute overtime
Total for Accounts Receivable	\$10,000.00	
Other Current Assets		
15000 Prepaid Expenses	0.00	
Total for Other Current Assets	0.00	
Total for Current Assets	\$8,785,571.11	
Fixed Assets		
Other Assets		
Total for Assets	\$8,785,571.11	
Liabilities and Equity		
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities	0.00	
Accounts Payable	0.00	
20000 Accounts Payable	181.77	Uses Bill Pay feature in QB
Total for Accounts Payable	\$181.77	
Credit Cards	0.00	
Other Current Liabilities		
Accrued Expense	0.00	
Deferred Income	0.00	
Total for Other Current Liabilities	0.00	
Total for Current Liabilities	\$181.77	
Long-term Liabilities	0.00	
Total for Liabilities	\$181.77	
Equity		
32000 Retained Earnings	8,175,300.17	
30000 Opening Balance Equity	38,618.00	
Net Income	571,471.17	
Total for Equity	\$8,785,389.34	
Total for Liabilities and Equity	\$8,785,571.11	

Profit and Loss by Class
Dominican Sisters Conference
January 1-September 29, 2025

Distribution account	Encuentro	General	Total
Income			
41000 Annual Leadership Meeting			0.00
41100 Registrations	30,010.00		30,010.00
Total for 41000 Annual Leadership Meeting	30,010.00	0.00	\$30,010.00
46000 DCI Fees		12,200.00	12,200.00
47000 Gifts & Grants/Sponsorship			0.00
47500 Gifts	158,705.00		158,705.00
47520 Gifts & Grants - Futuring		1,385.00	1,385.00
47590 Grants - Other			
Total for 47000 Gifts & Grants/Sponsorship	158,705.00	1,385.00	\$160,090.00
48000 Investment Income			0.00
48100 Interest Income		46,588.37	46,588.37
48175 Investment Income - Common Spirit		23,565.46	23,565.46
48200 Dividend Income		15,223.26	15,223.26
48300 Realized Gain/Loss		294,813.56	294,813.56
68300 Unrealized Investment Gn/Loss		277,245.96	277,245.96
Total for 48000 Investment Income	0.00	657,436.61	\$657,436.61
Total for Income	188,715.00	671,021.61	\$859,736.61
Cost of Goods Sold			
Gross Profit	188,715.00	671,021.61	\$859,736.61
Expenses			
50000 Director's Office			0.00
50100 Executive Director Salary, Benefits		54,012.24	54,012.24
50250 Contracted services		1,915.50	1,915.50
50275 Bookkeeper Software		907.00	907.00
50300 Travel/R&B		4,195.10	4,195.10
50310 Meeting Registrations		810.00	810.00
50420 Computer and Office Supplies, Equipment		105.93	105.93
50440 Postage, shipping		43.80	43.80
50470 Telephone, Internet		225.00	225.00
50610 Legal and Financial Fees		170.32	170.32
50620 Bank charges		200.00	200.00
50630 Insurance		1,419.00	1,419.00
50700 Gifts, Donations, Memorials		104.48	104.48
50800 Hospitality		156.53	156.53
Total for 50000 Director's Office	0.00	64,264.90	\$64,264.90
51000 Annual Meeting			0.00
51150 Annual Meeting Liturgist	180.00		180.00
51500 Annual Meeting Supplies-1	811.45		811.45
51600 Annual Meeting Lodging, Transp, Food	416.97		416.97
51650 Annual Meeting Other	62,566.33	5.40	62,571.73
51800 Annual Mtg. Exec Comm TR	1,222.10		1,222.10

Total for 51000 Annual Meeting	65,196.85	5.40	\$65,202.25
52000 Communications/DCI			0.00
52100 Communicator Compensation		39,360.00	39,360.00
52200 Technological Expense		2,055.09	2,055.09
52450 Contracted Services		11,405.00	11,405.00
52600 DCI - Dom. Charism Initiative		9,250.00	9,250.00
Total for 52000 Communications/DCI	0.00	62,070.09	\$62,070.09
53000 Committees/Entities			0.00
53050 DSC Team of Facilitators		3,100.00	3,100.00
53100 Executive Committee		1,314.42	1,314.42
53200 Planning Committee	666.22	50.78	717.00
Total for 53000 Committees/Entities	666.22	4,465.20	\$5,131.42
56000 DSC Futuring			0.00
56100 Assoc Dir Salary, Benefits		46,933.20	46,933.20
56300 Team Building, ADF Travel/R&B		2,055.59	2,055.59
56350 Cohort Support		6,361.83	6,361.83
56420 Computer Supplies. Equipment		386.82	386.82
56470 DSC Annual Mtg	665.73	266.04	931.77
56475 Telephone, Internet		225.00	225.00
56500 Facilitation		550.00	550.00
Total for 56000 DSC Futuring	665.73	56,778.48	\$57,444.21
58000 Investment Act. Fees		16,774.33	16,774.33
Total for Expenses	66,528.80	204,358.40	\$270,887.20
Net Operating Income	122,186.20	466,663.21	\$588,849.41
Other Income			
Other Expenses			
Net Other Income	0.00	0.00	0.00
Net Income	122,186.20	466,663.21	\$588,849.41
Accrual Basis Monday, September 29, 2025 04:49 PM GMTZ			

Dominican Spirituality

Edward Schillebeeckx, OP

For the most part people live by stories. I myself live by my own story. When I became a Dominican I linked my life story with the family Story of the Dominicans; as a result, my life story took on a new orientation and I picked up the thread of the story of the Order in my own way. So my own life has become part of the Dominican family story: a chapter in it. Through the story of the Order I have attained my own identity. Stories of the Dominican Order keep us together as Dominicans.



Without stories we should lose our memories, fail to find our own place in the present and remain without hope or expectation for the future. Thus as Dominicans we form a group by virtue of being our own storytelling community, which hands down its own traditions within the wider story of the many religious communities, within the all embracing story of the great community of the church, and within the even greater community of humankind. This makes us our own special family, recognizable from all kinds of family characteristics. Some are major, some are minor, but none of them can be hidden.

In saying this, I have already said something about Dominican spirituality. The story of my life can be my own life story only in so far as it has become a chapter of the Dominican family story. The story of my own life extends and enriches the history of Dominican spirituality, while as a small almost infinitesimally small – almost infinitely small – chapter in it, it is at the same time relativized and criticized by the already older and wider story of the Dominican family. This makes me ask whether I really am not distorting this family story. So I am already others as a norm for Dominican spirituality. Furthermore, thank God, there are still Dominicans alive today. In other words, our story is not yet exhausted, completely told; there is still something to be laid.

A first conclusion already follows from this: a definitive all round definition of Dominican spirituality can not be given. You cannot make a final judgment on a story which is still going strong. We can only trace some of the main line in the plot of the story, which has now been handed down for seven centuries in constantly different ways: the one basic story has been told in countless other languages to constantly different listeners, and has varied depending on their cultural, historical circumstances and the nature of their church.

The basic story which stands at the beginning of our own Dominican storytelling community is of fundamental importance here. But the origin of any relevant story usually blurs into an obscure past which is difficult to reconstruct historically. Dominic (1170-1223), the origin of the Dominican family story, did not write any books. Nevertheless, through laborious historical reconstruction which extracts the "real Dominic" from all kinds of legends (so typical of the Middle Ages), we have sufficient firm ground under our feet. In particular, though Dominic may not have left behind any books or documents, what he did leave behind as a living legacy was the Dominican movement, the Order, a group of people who wanted to carry on his work in his footsteps. The Dominican story therefore begins with Dominic and his first companions; together they stand at the beginning of what was to become the Dominican family story. They gave the story its theme: they set its tone.

However, this story, often retold and sometimes rewritten, is in itself a particular way in which the thread of an already older story, that of Jesus of Nazareth, is taken up and continued in a new manner. This already brings us to a second conclusion. Dominican spirituality is valid only in so far as it takes up the story of Jesus and brings it up to date in its own way. In its Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life, the Second Vatican Council said that "to follow Jesus" is the ultimate and supreme norm of any form of religious life (*suprema regula*, no.2).

Dominican spirituality is therefore subject to the criterion of the sources of all Christian life. This also means that even the Dominican spirituality of Dominic and his first followers is not directly an absolute law for Dominicans. A fuller and more sophisticated knowledge of the story of Jesus which has become possible since then (e.g. through new devotional experiences based on the Bible or through more refined exegesis of scripture) may therefore lead us to different emphases from those of Dominic and his followers. For according to the Council's Decree on Religious Renewal, this renewal must happen in the first place through a return "to the sources of all Christian life" (no.2), the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1.1). That source is never exhausted and always offers new possibilities, for which even Dominic himself did not know the all embracing "Open Sesame".

At the same time this implies that the story of every religious Order must be judged as a part or, better, as a modulation of the greater story of the "community of God", the church ("a participation in the life of the church": *ibid.*, no. 2). Here the Council points to the "present day projects" of the church: biblical, liturgical, dogmatic, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary and social. That is, Dominican spirituality essentially presupposes a critical involvement in the very specific needs and problems of today's church in its historical circumstances; it cannot be an isolated

cultivation of our own "Dominican" garden alongside the ongoing life of the world and the church.

Given all this, however, governed by the gospel and subject to the constant historical criticism that it exercises, and at the same time as a concrete historical feature of the necessary major projects of the church in the world here and now, in fact "the original inspiration of one's own religious institution" (thus the Council's Decree on Religious Life, no.2) is the basic theme of the Dominican family story, and is therefore normative. Here the Council Decree points not only to the original "specific project" (*proprio proposita*) of the founder, but also to the Order's "own religious traditions", at least in so far as these are sound (*sanae traditiones*); that is, to the "spiritual heritage" of a religious order: its spirituality.

The third conclusion may therefore be that Dominican spirituality is valid as a special mode of the church's task "to follow Jesus", especially - for us - in the footsteps and the inspiration of Dominic, as this inspiration has constantly provided new height and direction in the best moments of the history of the Order. Therefore we must clearly bring this basic historical story to mind, for in the course of time the Dominican community has also had a broken relationship to its own origins. When the Inquisition brought, for example, Joan of Arc to the stake, the Dominicans involved were essentially contradicting Dominic's inspiration and orientation. People had become deaf and blind to the origin of new charismata: this was an essentially un-Dominican attitude.

As a third criterion for renewed religious life, the same Decree of the Council gives the relationship of the story of Jesus and the original basic story (for us, of the Dominicans) to the altered circumstances of the time (no. 22). This implies that Dominican spirituality cannot be defined purely by a reference to the original story or purely by a reference to the further modulations and updating of this basic story in the course of the history of the Order, though this is presupposed. Dominican spirituality also involves the way in which we live out this Dominican family story here and now, in our time. Dominican spirituality does not indicate simply how things were "at the beginning" or in the course of the history of the Order. In that case we would simply be writing a historical report of the way in which Dominicans were inspired in former times.

But historical knowledge is not yet spirituality. Thus someone who was a good historian but not a Dominican could reconstruct it better than we could. If it is not to be purely the "history" of a spirituality (and furthermore, if it is not to become an empty ideology), Dominican spirituality is a living reality today; it is handed on (or distorted) by Dominicans living now, who reshape the Dominican family story here and now with an eye to the situation in the world and the church, the cultural historical situation of the moment.

Thus the fourth conclusion runs as follows: without a living relationship to the present, any talk about Dominican spirituality remains a purely historical preoccupation with the part of the Order (often an excuse for neglecting tasks which are urgent now). Dominican spirituality is a living reality which is to be realized among us now. Otherwise we simply repeat stories which others have told for a long time, as though we ourselves did not have to write our own chapter in what is of course a story which had already begun before us. Whereas now we do have to write a new chapter that is still unpublished, if after us anyone else is going to think it worth taking up the thread of this Dominican story again. If in fact we can, may and will write that new living chapter, I am certain that many young people, men and women, will again be drawn to continue the Dominican tradition after us.

For any meaningful story has a power of attraction; it is retold, and no one can stop its snowball effect. Whether that happens, however, depends on the tone in which we write our chapter in the great Dominican family story and the tension it contains. Will it be a dull, unread little paragraph? Or will it be an alien story which does not take up the thread of the family story that has already begun, and so allows the Dominican story to die out, perhaps for good? Or will it become an attractive episode, attractive perhaps only because all that the hearer notices is that we are zealously in search of the real thread of the story, which for the moment we have lost track of? That too can also be an important part of the already old Dominican family story.

A "golden thread" runs through the Dominican family story, from Dominic down to the present day. As may become evident, this golden thread sometimes runs across the fabric of Christianity - a fact that we must not obscure when we are writing our share in the great history of the Order. Provided that this golden thread is woven into our life story, however different it may be in content, we have in fact realized Dominican spirituality. "Spirituality" is not spirituality so long as it is only described, whether in an assertive or an authoritarian tone. It is spirituality to the degree that is realized in practice - as a completely new rendering of an old Dominican melody.

How does this older melody go, this constantly recurring theme, this basic story?

I would say that it is a cross-grained story! In the twelfth century and at the beginning of the thirteenth there were two burning issues: a need for renewal in the priestly life and a need for renewal in the monastic life. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 dealt with the two problems separately, without any relation between them, and without connecting the two. This Council was not without its influence on Dominic who, as an Augustinian canon of Osma, on a journey to the south of France had already gathered round him a group of fellow workers to provide for the pressing needs of priestly care in the diocese of Toulouse, which had severe pastoral problems. Dominic saw the signs of the times. In

the twelfth century, religious movements had arisen: a great many lay people joined them. The basic tendency of these movements was to combine gospel poverty with preaching, but they often had an anti-clerical tone.

All kinds of clerical abuses had prompted the question: does Christian preaching require the permission of the church (the bishop), and involve commissioning and sending by the church? Or is not religious life, and life according to the gospel in the footsteps of the apostles (at that time called the *vita apostolica*), itself a qualification for Christian preaching? This last view was the standpoint of many religious movements, whereas it was officially regarded as "heresy" by the Councils. We could say that the heretical movements of that time were inspired by the gospel and Christ, while the official preachers, though orthodox, did not lead a life in accordance with the gospel - at least to all outward appearances - and were completely embedded in feudal structures. All manifestations of this new religious movement - above all in France, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands (the rich countries of that time) - show striking common features (independently of each other): living out the gospel *sine glossa* (without compromises). Its spirituality was characterized by a deep devotion to the humanity of Jesus: following the poor Jesus. (This happened under the influence of the Cistercian movement and the Gregorian reform.)

At the same time there was clear influence from the contemplative, Greek Byzantine East (through the Crusaders and cloth merchants). The situation became more serious when these gospel movements came into contact with dualistic Eastern movements which arrived in the West through the Slavonic lands of the Danube; they were called Cathars, a collective term for Gnostic and dualistic trends. As a result the whole of the "gospel movement" became even more suspect to the church. The problem became that of saving the gospel movement for the church and mobilizing it against heresy. We must set the phenomenon of Dominic against this historical background of all kinds of enthusiastic revivals of evangelism, but on the periphery of the official church. Dominic was not alone in seeing the problems in the situation: Pope Innocent III, Bishop Diego, with whom Dominic traveled to the south, and Francis of Assisi also saw it. With outspoken realism, Dominic formulated a clear rescue programme.

He saw that an enormous potential for the gospel was being lost to the church. Though trained in the already traditional canonical priestly life, he was nevertheless sympathetic to these new counter-experiments. But he saw quite clearly why they either kept failing (splitting off into "heretical" sects), or came to be incorporated once again into traditional monastic life (e.g. the Premonstratensians). He wanted to make these counter movements authentic alternative forms of the church's evangelism, a church movement: he wanted as it were to "live like the heretics" but "teach like the church".

Evangelism must be a challenge within the church; in other words it must be the church and not a sect. Dominic's own vision came near to this in that he saw the solution of the problems of the time in the combination - in one institution - of apostolic preaching (that is, preaching with a critical remembrance of the need for a proclamation endorsed by the pope or by the episcopate), and the *vita apostolica* (that is, radical evangelism: following Jesus like the apostles). He brought together organically, in one programme, the themes treated separately by the Fourth Lateran Council.

Because this same Council, to some extent contrary to the personal views of Pope Innocent III, had forbidden all new forms of religious life and "banned" unauthorized preaching, Dominic combined the best of traditional monastic life with the basic trends of the new counter movements which had arisen all over Europe and which, to make the Christian proclamation credible, required a life commensurate with the gospel from those who proclaimed it. In so doing he broke down the feudal structures of the old monastic life: thus there arose a new form of religious life, the Order of Preachers, the Dominicans. Hence our earliest constitutions are largely made up of elements from the constitutions of traditional religious life, especially from the Norbertines and Cistercians (at that time the most lively religious institutions). However, Dominic and his first followers transformed these elements by the very purpose of the Order: apostolic itinerant preaching; that is, the new spirit of what were then modern, experimental gospel movements brought into the perspective of the church.

Dominic had been caught up in this spirit through his contact in the south of France with all this heretical gospel enthusiasm, which was shared by a broad spectrum of people, high and low. Through the structure of his Order, Dominic had weakened the economic stability which had been the basic principle of the older monastic institutions. On the basis of a religious criticism Dominic thus attacked the foundations of the feudal system (in church and society). Furthermore, the association of the contemplative monastic element with itinerant preaching resulted in a basic difference from the traditional form of monastic life. The new "corporative" idea (a particular form of organization, as in the official guilds) was adapted to the religious institution: there was no "monarchical" authority from above but a democratic form of government with a range of choices (democratic and personal). Paradoxically, Dominic's evangelism led to a new incarnation in secular structures, especially those of the rising democratic mediaeval bourgeoisie.

By thread and cross-thread, Dominic wove a new fabric, created a new religious programme. Thus the Dominican Order was born from the charisma of the combination of admonitory and critical recollection of the spiritual heritage of the old monastic and canonical religious life with the "modernistic" religious experiment of the thirteenth century.

Dominic had a fine sensitivity both to religious values from the past and to the religious promise for the future emanating from the modern experiments of his time. The Dominican Order was born out of this two fold-charisma. I would say that this is our "gratia originalis", the grace at the origin of our Order.

Dominican spirituality is therefore in the first instance to be defined as a spirituality which, on the basis of admonitory and critical reflection on the heritage left behind by the past religious tradition, takes up critically and positively the cross thread provided by whatever new religious possibilities for the future keep emerging among us. Therefore it can never be a material repetition of what our Dominican forebears have themselves done admirably. Nor, however, can it be an uncritical acceptance of whatever "new movements" (in the mystical or political sense) are now evident in our midst. For Dominic, the essential thing was the question of truth. In his heart Dominic was ultimately one hundred per cent behind the new apostolic experiments of preaching combined with poverty, but remembering the good achievements of the previous patterns of religious life - he unconditionally observed the guidelines laid down by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) for any renewal of both priestly and religious life. His charisma was organically to combine two divergent guidelines and thus personally to extend the aims of this Council.

On the basis of this spirituality, which found expression in our very first Dominican Constitutions, the further history of the spirituality becomes understandable. This brings the historical, changing, cross-grained, new element into the very heart of Dominican spirituality. For example, the Constitutions from the years 1221-31 said: "Our brothers may not study the books of pagan writers (referring above all to Aristotle) and philosophers (what is meant is Arabic philosophy, the great modernism in the Middle Ages); far less may they study the secular sciences."

However, only about twenty years later, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas were to regard the study of secular sciences and the "pagan philosophers" as a necessary condition of the preparation and formation of an appropriate Dominican apostolate. Thus on the basis of an authentic Dominican spirituality these two Dominican saints boldly went against a Dominican constitution set up in earlier times and were therefore in opposition to what was then in fact called official "Dominican spirituality". They did this inspired by what Dominic did in his time so successfully that the definition was later removed from the Constitutions by a General Chapter; indeed, later Constitutions urged Thomas as a model (Raymond of Penafort had centres for the study of Arabic built in Nursia and Tunis).

That is an authentically Dominican development. after the heart of St Dominic, who himself tried to reconcile "the past" and new "possibilities for the future". (This brought with it the new danger that Thomas would later cease to be a beacon pointing towards the future and would become a closed frontier.) If no cross thread can be seen in the story that the Dominican perceives and takes up again himself, there is every chance that Dominican spirituality will fade; worse still, that on the basis of an "established" Dominican spirituality - which is a contradiction in terms - we shall wrongly write off as apocryphal talk new attempts at a truly Dominican spirituality.

The greatest moments in the history of our Order are when at the same time this history becomes anti history or a cross thread: Dominic himself, Albert and Thomas, Savonarola, Eckhardt, de Las Casas, Lacordaire, Lagrange, Chenu, Congar, to name a few. However, at the same time Dominicans have sometimes (in the first instance at least) run into difficulties with the already established Dominican story when in an un-Dominican way it has refused to take up the new cross thread. Without mistaking the fundamental worth, by which we are all supported, of the many anonymous Dominicans who have quietly lived a successful Dominican religious life (though their tranquility can have a broad influence and produce cross-grained stories within the Order), nevertheless it only becomes clear what is typically Dominican when Dominicans sometimes, following the example of Dominic, reshape "the old" and combine it with the dynamism of constantly new and different forms. If this does not happen at regular intervals, then there is every chance that the well known Dominican concern for truth will be dishonoured in an Inquisition and the new "Dominican possibilities" are rejected. These possibilities may then come to life outside the Dominican family. I would not want to include this less rosy story which is also part of our Order - in the golden thread of our family story, which is always in a state of constantly taking up the cross-thread again. However, the cross-thread sometimes ensures the continuity! The history of this cross thread is the golden thread of the Dominican family story, woven into a broader, as it were more serene, whole.

That St Ignatius of Loyola was shut up in the cellars of one of our monasteries because he shocked the people of his time with a new charisma is one of the many stories in which "Dominican spirituality" has perversely become its opposite; it now shows us to be guilty of un-Dominican chauvinism. In other words, this is typical of times in which the Dominicans were no longer "Dominican" and on the basis of their own "established" position had already dubbed the new counter thread heretical. The constantly new forms which Dominican spirituality must take in accordance with Dominic's basic story will emerge even more clearly, precisely through the moments in which we have failed in the past.

It is essential for Dominican spirituality to attend to God as God has already revealed himself to us in the past and to attend to the present day "signs of the times" in which the same God, who is faithful to us, makes his appeal. Any one-sidedness in one track, uncritical judgment either of the past or of what prove to be symptoms of the future in the present is un-Dominican. Dominic submits the present, with its own possibilities of experiment, to comparison with

the dangerous recollection of certain events and legacies from the past, just as at the same time he opens up the global past and gives it the stamp of the cross-grained experimental present: it is out of this kind of attitude that the Order was born. This must remain its "genius".

The "présence à Dieu" and the "présence au monde" (as Lacordaire puts it) describe the very nature of Dominican spirituality throughout the history of the Order. And perhaps today we are going to see clearly that in recollection of the religious part the "présence au monde" or critical solidarity with the human world is the only possible mode of our "présence à Dieu". At the same time his insight confirms the need for a critical recollection of the religious past in which the same "présence à Dieu" is always revealed in the communication of what were then the contemporary signs of the time.

The "modernism" of the Dominican Order lives on dangerous memories from the past. After what was almost a centuries long sleep, Père Lacordaire and Master General Jan del were the ones who in the nineteenth century recalled the Dominican Order to its original charisma and brought about a break with the serene traditionalism to which the "established order" had succumbed. "Lacordaire" (and everything connected with that within our Dominican history) was in fact the rediscovery of the Order by itself. For the Lacordaire movement was nourished by the original charisma of the Order and as a result again raised the problem of "Dominican spirituality".

Some characteristics of Dominican spirituality are clear from this:

1. Belief in the absolute priority of God's grace in any human action: the theological direction of the Dominican life and its programme in relation to ethics, the world, society and the betterment of people. There must be no obsessive concern with the self but trust in God: I can trust God more than myself. The result is a tranquil and happy spirituality. God still gives an unexpected future to the limited meaning and scope of my own actions.

2. Religious life in the light of the gospel (vita apostolica) as the atmosphere in which the Dominican is apostolic (salus animarum, salvation as the aim of the activity of the Order): through preaching in all its forms. The result of that is contemplari and contemplate aliis tradere (i.e. the agreement between what a person proclaims and his own life; here Thomas Aquinas is contrasting the character of the mendicants with that of other religious institutions and at the same time connecting this with "poverty": being free from financial worries). This general mendicant view became typically Dominican through the insertion of study as an essential element into the structure of this Dominican evangelism. This particular element was not characteristic of the mediaeval evangelical movements. "Study is not the aim of the Order but an essential instrument for this work" (says Humbert of Romans in his commentary on the Constitutions).

The failure of many gospel movements was also caused by a lack of thought. Furthermore, while the universities, which were only established at that time, had intensified the element of academic study, at the same time they had concentrated it and centralized it so that there were no intellectuals in the dioceses. Dominic saw this, and therefore incorporated study as an institutional element in the very organization of his Order. He would not have any monastery founded "without a doctor in theology", and every monastery had to be a "school of theology": a Dominican monastery is "permanent instruction". The distinction between study monasteries and pastoral monasteries is un-Dominican; both must be monasteries for study and pastoral ministry. Thomas Aquinas defended a religious institution "founded for study".

3. The "Jesus spirituality" of the order - the "humanity of Jesus" (Albert, Thomas, Eckhardt, Tauler, Suso, etc., here directly connected with the only two Dominican devotions, to Mary and to Joseph), but this humanity experienced as a personal manifestation of God's joy for humankind - is the centre of Dominican spirituality and mysticism without any predilection for "derivative devotions". All this is typical of the twelfth century; along with all the other characteristics it is also typically Dominican.

4. « Présence au monde » (« la grâce d'entendre ce siècle », as Père Lacordaire says) : openness for constantly new charismata which different circumstances require of us. Hence the need for structures which do not hem us in but are democratic and flexible, through which it becomes possible for Dominicans to accept the rise of new stories that go against the grain. It is characteristic that the Dominicans never had their Constitutions approved by the pope, so that they themselves could adapt them to new circumstances.

5. (As a consequence of 4.): Since Albert and Thomas, Dominican spirituality has been inwardly enriched by the inclusion of the Christian principle of secularisation within the essentially religious, gospel trend (Dominicans at first rejected this, but soon they generally accepted it). This involves first coming to know things (objects, inter-personal relationships, society) in their intrinsic characteristics and their own structures rather than prematurely defining their relationship to God. In modern times this has enormous consequences by comparison with all kinds of forms of pseudo-mystical supernaturalism, which often ends up as a sense of superiority masquerading as piety.

To begin with, the Order agonized over the introduction of "natural sources" into Dominican evangelism. The traditional rejection of the "profane sciences" by the monks continued to have an effect, though this was limited by

the Dominican principle of dispensation. The first Dominicans were "anti-philosophical" (thus running the risk of an evangelical supernaturalism). The *Vitae Fratrum* reeked of "holy naivety". Albert and Thomas changed the direction, Albert even arguing fiercely against fellow brethren "who thus again want to become the murderers of Socrates". The dispute was over the consequences of integral evangelism, which Albert and Thomas wanted to be enlightened in character, not naive. In the Chapter of Valenciennes (1259), the trend supported by Albert and Thomas won through: the study of the "profane sciences" became compulsory in Dominican training.

6. The other elements: a liturgical choral office, monastic observances and community life, are traditional and generally religious, and in this sense not typically Dominican. That was the dangerous recollection of the monastic and canonical past to which Dominic continued to give expression in his new religious and apostolic programme, albeit in critical, reduced and more modest form.

7. The "principle of dispensation" (historically this seems to go back to Dominic himself in person), i.e. respect for the particular personal charisma of a fellow Dominican within the Dominican community, bearing in mind the purpose of the Order. Of course this is an extremely dangerous principle, which has been abused to disastrous effect. However, Dominic would rather take that risk than give up the human and Christian significance of the dispensation principle because of the threat of abuse. As a general principle this was a completely new Dominican discovery in the Middle Ages. In furtherance of study in the service of the "salvation of men" (*salus animarum*) and in furtherance of the apostolate, it is, paradoxically, possible to be a Dominican (if necessary) on your own. This presupposes having been trained as a Dominican, but it is in no way understood as a matter of standing outside the law: on the contrary, dispensation is a constitutional Dominican law. Conformity is alien to the original Dominican legislation. Even now, this original Dominican principle opens up broad possibilities for "modern experiments" in our time, even experiments which some people accustomed to an "established" Dominican spirituality cannot stand. (However, these experiments also always need to happen from and within the dangerous recollection of a tradition which is already centuries old. This tradition prefigures permanent perspectives which are always worth thinking about - without it all experiments seem doomed to religious failure.)

Although there are countless examples of this characteristic from our rich family archives, I want to point to just one event in the first redactions of our Dominican Constitutions. The striking "democratic structure" of our Order has been said by experts in administration to be unique among Catholic monastic institutions. This feature can be understood precisely as a result of the typical cross-grained spirituality of the Order (along with its respect for all that is good in the tradition). The Constitutions were "reformulated" during a revision at a time when great canon lawyers from the universities of the *Lime* had entered the Order (for example, Raymond of Penafort). This reformulation took place at a General Chapter in Bologna. Shortly before and during this Chapter, social Protest was voiced in the university and city of Bologna, and in addition there was already a dispute between the Ghibellines (the conservatives) and the Guelphs (the progressive popular party).

Dominicans were involved throughout this conflict as advisors. The "co responsibility of all" required by the progressive party had its influence on our Dominican Constitutions. "What affects all must also be resolved on by all." This new civic principle called for at that time was also supported by the Dominicans and later sanctioned in our Dominican Constitutions (under the influence and as a result of the civic experiences in Bologna). New "secular experiences" thus came to exercise a substantial influence on our earliest Constitutions. The emancipatory social movements of that time left a substantial mark on our Constitutions, differing completely from the traditional administrative model then current. Following the example of Dominic, these Dominicans did not just raise a warning finger and point to what had been the custom from earliest times, but at the same time listened to the voice of God in what came out of the human secular emancipatory movements of the time (however turbulently). As a result of these experiences they rewrote the Dominican monastic structure, barely twenty years after Dominic. That is just one case of the cross thread that the Dominican family story keeps showing as its "own theme" down the ages.

I have recalled only a few Dominican characteristics: more could be mentioned. Furthermore, I should point out explicitly that I am in no way denying that perhaps non Dominicans do the same things. In that case Dominican spirituality can simply say with delight: all the better! It is not our concern to maintain an unparalleled exclusiveness. It is a question of what we, as Dominicans, do here in any case, and do in the strength of the charisma of the Order and our Dominican commitment (through our profession). If others also do the same thing, this can simply confirm the validity, the correct intuition of our view. When a typical view is universalised, it in no way loses its value: quite the opposite.

The man who was once an Augustinian canon, Domingo de Guzman, while trusting in the original direction of his life, nevertheless gave it a new course (which became the beginning of the Dominican Order), thanks to a living contact with needs of people and of the church of which he was unaware when he was first called. One cannot accuse Dominic of betraying his first calling, which was meant to be irrevocable. His change of course was a new way of life (in contact with what then appeared to him to be better possibilities), in order to remain faithful to the deepest sense of his calling, when confronted with new needs. (According to, Dominic's earliest biographers he could be moved to

tears at the sight of the needs of others. Hence the desire of this realistic organizer - which remained with him all his life to go to the Cumani, somewhere in the Balkans, evidently the place where the dualistic heresy crossed from East to West.) The Order came into being from such an amazing change of course in trust. A change of course in trust is therefore part of the essence of the Dominican charisma.

No theologian, canon lawyer, professional psychologist or sociologist can work out at his study desk or in his armchair what we must do now. This must be tried by way of concrete experiment, by charismatically inspired religious, albeit bearing in mind the sometimes dangerously cross-grained element - the golden thread - in our Dominican family story. In so doing it will adopt, with due criticism, the successful attempts in the context of our part, gratefully rethinking them and making them fruitful in the context of the new programme. With Thomas Aquinas, who clearly followed the matter-of-fact and brilliant temperament of Dominic here, we can say, "The excellence of a religious institution does not lie so much in the strictness of its observances as in the fact that these observances are designed with greater skill towards the purpose of the religious life." And in the circumstances of our time this calls for a renewed and skilled religious decision in which all have a share, both high and low, so that the structures themselves remain open to this new cross thread.

This question is our duty. For in our profession we also opt for a particular community, a Dominican community and its ideals. There can be such faults and defects in a particular community (whether through betrayal of the Dominican family story or because this story is no longer alive there and has become fossilized and dead) that out of faithfulness to his or her Dominican ideal the professed religious is ethically permitted (and in some cases may even be obliged) to leave the Dominican community because it does not give him or her the support to which they have a right by virtue of their profession. For paradoxically, here we expose ourselves to the danger that as Dominicans we may expel a "Dominican charisma" from our ranks.

The Dominican family story gives us adequate pointers if we also listen to God's voice in the characteristics of contemporary movements and trace their lines of force, so as to enrich this story with a new chapter which is still to be published. Many people think that the Dominican family story is exhausted, because hardly anyone still comes under its spell. Those of us who are Dominicans today, men and women, are the only ones who can give it a new twist so, that the story flourishes again (not as a stunt or a sensation but as an authentic Dominican family story), so that others in turn will join the Dominican story telling community and continue to hand the story on. Here we may also happily pals on the folklore which each order has alongside its own great story: that simply points to the fact that the great Dominican family story is made up of, and told by, ordinary, very human, people, though they transcend themselves through the strength of God's unmerited and loving grace. However, it would be fatal for the Dominican family story if this greater story eventually became narrower and was reduced to the story of the folklore of Dominican houses.

I am aware that I have said a great deal and very hale. That is perhaps the most appropriate thing for the chapter which we are all adding, here and now, to the story of a great family tradition. I hope that it will become a serial which lasts longer than the stories which have entranced the whole world on television, but which have not in any way renewed the face of the earth: Neighbours, Coronation Street or the Forsyte Saga. May the Dominican story be a parable which in an unspoken, but compelling, way ends with the words of Jesus: "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10.37).

In 1206, even before Dominic was thinking of a Dominican Order, he had founded a convent at Prouille. However, the aim of this convent was on the same lines: Dominic wanted to make the evangelical religious movement, which many women had also joined, into a church movement - that is, to bring the gospel to the church and to bring the church to sectarian gospel movements. Evangelism without the church or the church without evangelism is essentially un-Dominican, that is, it goes against the original charisma which brought the Order into being.

In Dominic's time, gospel inspiration was almost always to be found in "deviant" movements. Hence Dominic's own preaching among the "heretics". From among such women (Waldensians who remained orthodox, the "Catholic Poor") Dominic recruited the first occupants of Prouille: he gave a church atmosphere to the gospel they had experienced outside the church. In 1219 he also founded convents in Madrid and Rome (S. Sisto), to which he gave Constitutions (which would later also form the basis of the Dominican Order). After many difficulties the convent of S. Agnese was founded at Bologna with the financial support of an 18 year old girl, Diana of Andalo (later the friend of the second General, Jordan of Saxony), but only after Dominic's death.

However, it is typical that at the end of his life Dominic, and after his death the whole rule of the Order, systematically began to oppose the incorporation of new convents into the Order. This opposition would involve them in fights with popes until 1259. It is evident from the archives that this opposition was motivated by the aim of the Order itself the tare of the sinners hindered the Dominicans in their task of preaching elsewhere. At a special Chapter in 1228 (in Paris) all Dominicans were prohibited from involvement in spiritual direction and pastoral care in our convents (with the exception of the first four great convents), on pain of expulsion from the Order. In northern areas, however, the growing Dominican movement had encountered the very lively evangelical women's movement there: all of a sudden this became Dominican (or sometimes Franciscan).

After a time there were hundreds of convents, each with more than a hundred evangelical Dominican women. No one had planned this: it was a spontaneous consequence of the encounter between Dominican preaching and the evangelical women's movement of the time. After that, the male Dominicans came to be fundamentally opposed to having to care for the sisters, which hindered the purpose of their own Order. Time and again, papal bulls enjoined the Order against its will to provide both financial and spiritual care for these sisters. In 1252, at the Chapter of Bologna, the Order opposed the repeated papal bulls (occasioned by an appeal from our sisters to Rome).

In a bull of 15 July 1252, Innocent IV made some concessions: Rome would stop issuing the bulls for the moment but the existing convents had to be taken into the care of the Dominicans. However, the Dominicans would not accept this, and in the end they secured a retraction from the same pope, who said: "I have allowed myself to be convinced that preaching is the most essential task of the Order. This aim must have priority and is hindered by the care of the women's convents. Therefore the pope resolves to release the Order from all obligations towards the convents ... with the exceptions of Prouille and San Sisto in Rome."

However, all the convents stormed the papal Curia with heartfelt pleas. The pope was caught between two Dominican fronts: the men and the women. He knew that the men were opposed in principle. Then the Master General, Johannes Teutonicus, died (in 1252). Cardinal Hugo a Santo Caro, who had become a Dominican and was himself enthusiastic about the evangelical women's movement, was given full authority by the pope to come to an arrangement with the Order.

First he wanted to break the opposition of the men "with quiet measures": until the election of the new General (Humbert of Romans), the Dominicans had at least to take over the spiritual care of the sisters. The Order remained obstinate and at the Chapter of Milan in 1255 it was resolved that (in contrast to the monasteries) three successive General Chapters would be needed to come to a decision as to whether a convent was to come under Dominican direction. This first resolution was endorsed in Paris (1256) and Florence (1257) and thus became a Dominican ruling.

In 1259 a definitive resolution was passed that all convents already established had the right to the pastoral care of Dominican priests. (This ending of resistance by the Order was the result of the mediation of the Dominican cardinal Hugo a Santo Caro, who combined both the official Dominican standpoint and that of the church in his own person. In the Order, from Dominic onwards, the specific Dominican character was often a compromise between the papal perspective and the views of the Dominicans; both parties knew how to secure the essentials of their position.) After about 30 years of opposition the Order capitulated: for new convents, the Dominican resolution, passed by three Chapters, remained in force. The combination of papal Curia and Dominican sisters had won the argument.

Furthermore, the Order was obliged to make Constitutions for the whole of the women's side. In the General Chapter of 1259 at Valenciennes, Humbert of Romans approved the Dominican Constitutions as adapted for sisters. All this also gave the sisters economic security, so that they could devote themselves to a life of study and contemplation (since left to themselves, the sisters often lived in very real poverty as a result of over population). The close collaboration of male and female Dominicans that now took place resulted in the Dominican mystical movement which rose in the fourteenth century. This followed from the theological and mystical direction of women by Dominican lectors and the women's response to the direction (1300-1480). This was in the time of the Great Plague, which also affected thousands of Dominicans and had broken their initial verve. Furthermore, the Order was divided by the schism: Avignon and the two popes.

Later, above all in the nineteenth century, many congregations of sisters were founded outside the Order, so that the Order did not have any responsibility for them and no one was concerned for a truly Dominican spirituality: this spirit was often that of normal nineteenth century religious life with its inspiration towards works of charity.

As Dominicans, therefore, we need to remember that in our day many developments have taken place in which men and women together are seeking a form of Dominican spirituality in a modern revival of life in accordance with the gospel, combined with social criticism. Although it is still a search, we may not simply rule out this Dominican possibility. A Dominican community spirit and the collaboration of Dominican brothers and sisters may perhaps help us to understand the mystical Dominican movement in the fourteenth century (a high point of Dominican spirituality). Taught by our own history, we may not dismiss possible new charismata out of hand. "Dominican options" which are new and at first sight disconcerting are possibilities for the future and may not be suppressed per se, though we must pay attention to the danger of references to the religious past.

(Source : Schillebeeckx, Edward. *Dominican Spirituality*. Taken from Borgman, Erik. *Edward Schillebeeckx. A Theologian in His History*. Continuum, 2002.)

ESPIRITUALIDAD DOMINICANA

*El “Hilo Contracorriente” en la Antigua Historia Religiosa como
El Hilo de Oro en la Historia de la Familia Dominicana* por Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P.

Tomado de los números de marzo, mayo y agosto de 1975 de *Dominican Topics* en Sudáfrica.

En gran parte, las personas viven de historias. Yo mismo vivo de mi propia historia. Cuando me hice dominico, até la narrativa de mi vida a la de la familia de los dominicos; de este modo, la historia de mi propia vida tomó una nueva orientación y, por otro lado, el hilo de la historia de la Orden fue recogido por mí a mi manera. Mi propia vida se convirtió en parte de la historia de la Familia Dominicana, solo un capítulo de ella. La historia de mi vida tomó una nueva línea dentro de la historia de la Orden.

Las historias de la Orden de los Dominicos nos mantienen “unidos” como dominicos. Sin un registro careceríamos de recuerdos del pasado, no encontraríamos nuestro propio lugar en el presente y permaneceríamos sin esperanza ni expectativas del futuro. Por eso, como dominicos, formamos nuestra propia entidad, exactamente como nuestra propia comunidad de narradores. Dentro de la narrativa más amplia de las muchas familias religiosas y dentro de la historia abarcadora de la gran comunidad de la Iglesia y de la comunidad aún más extensa de la humanidad, relatamos nuestras propias tradiciones. Así llegamos a ser una familia propia y separada, reconocible por una variedad de grandes y pequeños, pero innegables, rasgos familiares.

Con esto ya he dicho mucho acerca de la “Espiritualidad Dominicana.” No puede ser otra cosa que mi propia historia de vida, en la medida en que se ha convertido en un capítulo de la historia de la Familia Dominicana. El relato de mi propia vida amplía y enriquece la historia de la Espiritualidad Dominicana. Pero es solo un pequeño, casi insignificante capítulo; se le da su propio lugar limitado y se evalúa según la historia ya más antigua y más amplia de la Familia Dominicana, la cual cuestiona críticamente si no introduzco líneas equivocadas en el cuadro de esta historia familiar.

Por eso dudo de cualquiera que quiera imponer a otros su “propia visión” o “su propia experiencia” como norma de la “Espiritualidad Dominicana.” Además, hay —gracias a Dios— todavía dominicos vivos, es decir, la historia aún no se ha agotado, aún no ha llegado a su fin. Todavía hay algo que decir.

Podemos sacar ya una primera conclusión: ¡No se puede dar una definición final y completa de lo que es la Espiritualidad Dominicana! No se puede emitir un juicio definitivo sobre una historia si aún se está contando con plena fuerza. Solo podemos buscar algunas tendencias principales en la trama de la historia. No podemos hacer más, porque la historia se está contando a lo largo de

siete siglos con modalidades siempre nuevas, en las que la historia básica se repite en lenguajes y discursos siempre distintos, según los oyentes cambiantes. La narrativa se cuenta y se escucha en entornos histórico-culturales y eclesiales que nunca fueron los mismos.

La narrativa básica que constituye la fuente de la propia comunidad dominicana formada por ella es, en este sentido, de importancia fundamental. Pero el origen de mi historia relevante suele desvanecerse en un pasado oscuro, difícil de reconstruir históricamente. Domingo (1170-1223), la fuente de la historia de la Familia Dominicana, no escribió libros. Sin embargo, gracias a la minuciosa investigación histórica que desenvuelve al “verdadero Domingo” de entre toda clase de leyendas —tan típicas de la Edad Media— tenemos terreno suficientemente firme bajo nuestros pies; y, particularmente, aunque Domingo no nos dejó libros ni documentos, nos dejó una reliquia viva en el Movimiento Dominicano, la Orden, un grupo de personas que quisieron continuar su obra siguiendo sus huellas. La historia dominicana comienza, por lo tanto, con Domingo, junto con sus primeros compañeros. Juntos se situaron al inicio de lo que iba a ser la historia de la Familia Dominicana. Ellos decidieron cuál sería el tema; compusieron la melodía principal.

Sin embargo, esta historia, siempre repetida, siempre compuesta de nuevo, es a su vez una historia más antigua: la de Jesús de Nazaret. Esta historia se retoma de una manera particular y de un modo nuevo. Esto nos lleva a una segunda conclusión:

La Espiritualidad Dominicana solo es válida en la medida en que retoma la historia de Jesús a su manera y la hace de nuevo actual en nuestro tiempo.

El Concilio Vaticano II dijo en su Decreto sobre la Renovación de la Vida Religiosa que: “seguir a Jesús” es la norma suprema de cualquier forma de vida religiosa (n. 2). La Espiritualidad Dominicana está, por lo tanto, bajo la norma crítica de la “fuente de toda vida cristiana.” Y esto significa que la “Espiritualidad Dominicana,” incluso la de Domingo y sus primeros seguidores, no es una “ley absoluta” para los dominicos, como si no se pudiera decir nada más. Hoy existe un conocimiento más desarrollado y más diversificado de la “Historia de Jesús.” (Podríamos mencionar aquí la orientación bíblica de la vida espiritual o la exégesis más refinada de las Escrituras).

Esto bien podría llevarnos a poner acentos distintos de los que pusieron Domingo y sus compañeros. Pues, según el Decreto mencionado arriba, la renovación debe hacerse en primera instancia “volviendo a las fuentes de toda vida cristiana.” El Evangelio de Jesucristo (Mc 1,1). Y el Evangelio es una fuente que nunca se agotará y que ofrece nuevas posibilidades todo el tiempo. Es una fuente de la que ni siquiera Domingo conocía la fórmula mágica para abrir todos sus tesoros.

La espiritualidad dominicana es, pues, crítica consigo misma. Si se piensa que la historia de la Familia Dominicana puede entenderse como un hilo continuo de siete siglos, en realidad se trata

de una urdimbre entretejida con múltiples hilos, algunos que se refuerzan y otros que se oponen. Esta tensión es precisamente lo que da vitalidad a nuestra tradición.

El “hilo de oro” de nuestra historia no es uniforme, sino que aparece como un motivo recurrente que atraviesa épocas muy diferentes. El relato de Jesús, recibido y asumido de manera nueva, ha sido el contrahilo que ha mantenido unida la tela dominicana. Sin él, la historia de la Orden se habría reducido a un simple capítulo del pasado, sin resonancia en el presente.

La espiritualidad dominicana se configura, entonces, como una tradición abierta, siempre en diálogo con el Evangelio y con los signos de los tiempos. La fidelidad a Domingo y a los primeros compañeros no consiste en repetir mecánicamente sus gestos o palabras, sino en recrear, en cada época, la misma pasión que ellos tuvieron por la verdad del Evangelio y por la salvación de los hombres.

En este sentido, la espiritualidad dominicana no se agota en devociones particulares, ni en prácticas fijas, ni en esquemas rígidos de vida religiosa. Más bien, se trata de una actitud fundamental: la disponibilidad para escuchar la Palabra de Dios en la historia concreta y la valentía para anunciarla con libertad, aunque ello suponga entrar en conflicto con poderes establecidos, incluso dentro de la misma Iglesia.

De ahí que nuestra espiritualidad haya estado siempre marcada por una tensión fecunda entre tradición y novedad, entre fidelidad y creatividad. Esta tensión no es un defecto, sino el signo de una vida en movimiento, de una historia que aún se está contando.

El origen mismo de la Orden muestra ya esta tensión. Domingo no fundó una escuela espiritual con normas fijas, sino un movimiento evangélico con gran libertad interior. Él y sus primeros compañeros no se encerraron en un esquema único, sino que buscaron responder, con creatividad, a las necesidades de su tiempo: la predicación itinerante, la vida fraterna, la pobreza compartida, el estudio constante de la Palabra.

Lo característico fue, desde el comienzo, una espiritualidad en movimiento, una forma de vida que se dejaba interpelar por la urgencia del anuncio evangélico. De ahí que los primeros dominicos no hablaran tanto de “espiritualidad dominicana”, sino simplemente de la vida apostólica: una vida entregada a la predicación del Evangelio, sostenida por la oración, el estudio y la fraternidad.

Con el paso de los siglos, esta intuición originaria se fue expresando de modos diversos. A veces, la Orden se inclinó más hacia la vida intelectual y académica; otras veces, hacia el compromiso pastoral directo con el pueblo sencillo; en ocasiones, hacia una fuerte vida conventual de oración y observancia; en otras, hacia un servicio de predicación profética en medio de los conflictos sociales. Todas estas formas, aunque distintas, son hilos que se entretejen en el tapiz de nuestra historia.

De ahí que no podamos encerrar la espiritualidad dominicana en una sola definición. Es, más bien, una pluralidad de acentos, de prácticas y de expresiones, unidas por un mismo impulso evangélico: seguir a Cristo anunciando la verdad de su Evangelio para la salvación del mundo. Lo constante no es una fórmula, sino una pasión: la pasión por la verdad, entendida no como una idea abstracta, sino como el mismo Cristo vivo que nos hace libres. “La verdad os hará libres” (Jn 8,32). Este amor a la verdad, buscada en el estudio, contemplada en la oración y anunciada en la predicación, constituye el centro de nuestra espiritualidad.

De este amor a la verdad nace también otra característica esencial de la espiritualidad dominicana: el estudio. No se trata de un lujo intelectual ni de un simple medio para obtener conocimientos, sino de una forma de búsqueda espiritual. El estudio es para el dominico una manera de escuchar la Palabra de Dios en la historia humana, de discernir los signos de los tiempos, de confrontar la fe con la razón y la cultura.

Por eso, Santo Tomás de Aquino pudo afirmar que estudiar es un acto de vida religiosa, una forma de oración. El dominico estudia no para acumular erudición, sino para predicar mejor, para anunciar con mayor claridad y profundidad el Evangelio. El estudio, unido a la contemplación, se convierte así en fuente de predicación: *contemplata aliis tradere* —“transmitir a otros lo contemplado”— es la fórmula clásica que resume nuestra espiritualidad.

Esta unión de contemplación y predicación hace que nuestra vida no se cierre en sí misma, sino que se abra constantemente al mundo. La espiritualidad dominicana no se orienta al perfeccionamiento individual, sino a la misión. La vida fraterna, la oración común, la austeridad y el estudio encuentran su sentido en la entrega al anuncio del Evangelio.

De ahí que nuestra espiritualidad tenga siempre un carácter comunitario. No somos buscadores solitarios de Dios, sino hermanos y hermanas reunidos en torno a una misma misión. La comunidad no es solo un marco organizativo, sino un lugar teológico donde se discierne la voluntad de Dios y donde se hace visible la fraternidad evangélica. La corrección fraterna, el diálogo, el compartir los bienes y la vida cotidiana son parte integral de nuestra espiritualidad.

Finalmente, todo esto nos conduce a reconocer otro rasgo fundamental: la libertad interior. Domingo y sus compañeros quisieron vivir sin ataduras, disponibles para ser enviados a cualquier parte del mundo, listos para responder a las necesidades de la Iglesia y de la humanidad. Esta libertad, fruto del desapego y de la confianza en Dios, sigue siendo un sello distintivo de nuestra tradición espiritual.

Esta libertad interior ha permitido a lo largo de los siglos que la espiritualidad dominicana adopte múltiples formas sin perder su identidad. Algunos dominicos la han vivido en las universidades, dedicados a la enseñanza y la investigación; otros, en los conventos, en una vida más contemplativa; otros, en medio de los pueblos, predicando en plazas y caminos; y muchos, en tierras de misión, anunciando el Evangelio en lenguas y culturas nuevas.

Cada una de estas expresiones responde a un mismo dinamismo espiritual: hacer presente, de manera creativa y fiel, la historia de Jesús en cada tiempo y lugar. Esa capacidad de adaptación, unida a la fidelidad al Evangelio, ha hecho de la Orden una comunidad en permanente renovación.

El Concilio Vaticano II subrayó precisamente esta necesidad de renovación constante, no por mera modernización, sino por fidelidad al Evangelio. En este sentido, la espiritualidad dominicana, lejos de ser un tesoro cerrado, es una tradición abierta, una fuente viva. Cada generación de dominicos está llamada a redescubrirla y recrearla, no solo para sí misma, sino para la Iglesia y para el mundo.

Por eso, no podemos reducir la espiritualidad dominicana a un conjunto de normas exteriores. Es, ante todo, una forma de vivir el Evangelio de Jesús en comunidad fraterna, en la búsqueda de la verdad y en el servicio de la predicación. Se trata de una espiritualidad dinámica, crítica y dialogante, que se arriesga a confrontar el Evangelio con las realidades de cada época.

Si a lo largo de la historia la Orden ha conocido también momentos de crisis, de decadencia o de división, ello no significa el fracaso de su espiritualidad, sino la prueba de que se trata de una historia viva, marcada por la fragilidad humana pero sostenida siempre por la fidelidad de Dios. En medio de esas luces y sombras, el “hilo de oro” del Evangelio ha seguido brillando y manteniendo unida a la familia dominicana.

De este modo comprendemos que la espiritualidad dominicana no puede encerrarse en un esquema fijo ni en una fórmula definitiva. Ella vive de la tensión entre la fidelidad a la tradición y la apertura a lo nuevo, entre el respeto al pasado y la valentía de arriesgar el futuro. Esto explica que, a lo largo de los siglos, grandes figuras dominicanas hayan aparecido precisamente cuando la Orden supo asumir los movimientos contracorriente de su tiempo: Domingo frente a los herejes, Tomás de Aquino frente a los temores ante Aristóteles, Las Casas frente a la opresión de los indígenas, Lacordaire frente al inmovilismo del siglo XIX, Chenu y Congar frente a las resistencias previas al Concilio Vaticano II.

Cada uno de ellos, y muchos otros menos conocidos, mantuvieron viva la tradición no repitiendo mecánicamente lo antiguo, sino encarnando de nuevo el Evangelio con creatividad. Esa es la verdadera fidelidad dominicana: no la repetición estéril, sino la actualización valiente. Por eso, cuando la Orden ha dejado de escuchar los signos de los tiempos y se ha refugiado en una falsa seguridad de “espiritualidad fija”, ha corrido el riesgo de traicionar su propia vocación. La tentación de absolutizar el pasado, de rechazar lo nuevo como herético, ha sido siempre un peligro. En esos momentos, la espiritualidad dominicana se ha visto oscurecida y ha perdido su fuerza profética.

Pero siempre, de una u otra forma, el “hilo de oro” ha reaparecido. Porque lo dominicano auténtico consiste en buscar la verdad con pasión, en escuchar con atención tanto a Dios en la

Escritura como a Dios en la historia de los hombres, y en predicar esa verdad con libertad y alegría.

Escuchar a Dios, tal como se reveló en el pasado y escuchar los “signos de los tiempos presentes”, a través de los cuales el mismo Dios, fiel a sí mismo y a nosotros, nos interpela, es esencial para la espiritualidad dominicana.

Cualquier unilateralidad, cualquier tendencia rígida y acrítica —ya sea al aferrarse solo al pasado, o al dejarse llevar ingenuamente por lo nuevo— resulta poco dominicana. Domingo supo mirar su presente con realismo, captar sus posibilidades de renovación y experimentación, y al mismo tiempo valorar lo mejor del pasado. Esa capacidad de conjugar memoria y novedad dio origen a la Orden de Predicadores. Ese debe seguir siendo el “genio” de la Orden.

Estar **presente a Dios** y estar **presente al mundo** son dos cualidades inseparables que definen la espiritualidad dominicana a lo largo de la historia. Quizá hoy comprendemos mejor que nunca que la única manera de estar presentes a Dios es estando en solidaria y crítica cercanía con el mundo de los hombres y mujeres de nuestro tiempo.

A la vez, esta convicción nos recuerda la necesidad de mantener una reflexión crítica sobre nuestra propia tradición, porque en ella nuestros antecesores también vivieron su presencia a Dios a través de los signos de los tiempos de sus días. El “modernismo” dominicano siempre ha vivido de una memoria peligrosa: la de quienes en el pasado se atrevieron a escuchar y a cambiar.

El movimiento de Lacordaire en el siglo XIX es un ejemplo claro: despertó a la Orden de un largo letargo, recordándole su carisma original y rompiendo con un tradicionalismo cómodo que la había paralizado. Ese redescubrimiento fue, en realidad, un volver a lo esencial, a la fuente viva de la espiritualidad dominicana.

Así, la espiritualidad dominicana se muestra como una historia viva, tejida de fidelidades y tensiones, de crisis y de renovaciones, de silencios y de voces proféticas. No es un patrimonio que se guarda en un cofre, sino una corriente que sigue fluyendo.

Lo dominicano, entonces, no consiste en venerar un pasado intocable, sino en permitir que el Evangelio siga tomando carne en nuevas circunstancias. Somos herederos de una tradición, pero no sus guardianes inmóviles, sino sus continuadores creativos.

Por eso, cada generación de la Familia Dominicana tiene la responsabilidad de discernir cuál es hoy el “hilo de oro” que mantiene viva la trama de nuestra historia. ¿Dónde se nos llama hoy a predicar? ¿Qué verdades deben ser proclamadas con valentía? ¿Qué injusticias debemos denunciar en nombre del Evangelio?

Responder a estas preguntas no es opcional, es parte de nuestra espiritualidad. La fidelidad dominicana se mide, en última instancia, por nuestra capacidad de dejar que la Palabra de Dios resuene en los problemas de nuestro tiempo y los ilumine.

Si Domingo y sus primeros compañeros aparecieron como respuesta a los desafíos espirituales y sociales de su época, hoy la Familia Dominicana está llamada a hacer lo mismo frente a los desafíos contemporáneos: la incredulidad, la injusticia, la pobreza, la opresión, la crisis ecológica, las nuevas formas de esclavitud, el vacío espiritual.

Allí, en esos lugares donde la vida clama, debe estar nuestra espiritualidad, porque allí está también el Dios de Jesucristo.

En conclusión, podemos decir que la espiritualidad dominicana no es una definición acabada ni un sistema cerrado, sino una **historia en curso**. Es la narración de hombres y mujeres que, a lo largo de más de ocho siglos, han intentado seguir a Jesucristo de una manera particular: en la búsqueda de la verdad, en la vida fraterna, en el estudio contemplativo y en la predicación profética.

Se trata de una espiritualidad que **vive en tensión**: entre tradición y novedad, entre contemplación y acción, entre comunidad y misión universal. Esa tensión no es un obstáculo, sino la fuerza que mantiene viva nuestra vocación.

El “hilo de oro” que recorre nuestra historia es, en definitiva, el Evangelio de Jesucristo. Todo lo demás —las instituciones, las prácticas, las costumbres— son valiosas en la medida en que nos mantienen unidos a esa fuente. Cuando olvidamos este centro, corremos el riesgo de perder el rumbo; cuando lo recordamos, renace nuestra misión con frescura.

Hoy, como ayer, se nos invita a entrar en esta narración común, a hacer de nuestra propia vida un capítulo nuevo en la historia de la Familia Dominicana. Cada uno y cada una de nosotros escribe con su vida, en fidelidad creativa, un nuevo párrafo en esta trama que no ha concluido.

Por eso, más que hablar de “la espiritualidad dominicana” en abstracto, debemos reconocer que es una **espiritualidad encarnada en vidas concretas**: la tuya, la mía, la de cada hermano y hermana que, con sus dones y limitaciones, continúa el camino iniciado por Domingo de Guzmán.

Y mientras esta historia se siga contando, mientras haya dominicos y dominicas que prediquen el Evangelio con libertad y amor a la verdad, podremos decir con esperanza: la espiritualidad dominicana sigue viva, porque sigue viva la Palabra que la sostiene.

What Pope Francis Means By a Culture of Encounter

JULY 1, 2015 BY [THOMAS J. EGGLESTON](#)



Fritz Eichenberg's engraving depicts
Dorothy Day's understanding
of Christ in the poor from
Matthew 25 in the Bible

In a homily given on his first Pentecost as our pontiff, Pope Francis suggested that the word “encounter” is central to the way he thinks of Christian relationships. In the homily he encourages the faithful to be fearless in the ways in which they look beyond their own needs and wants to those of others. He says that “in this ‘stepping out’ [of ourselves] it is important to be ready for encounter. For me this word is very important. Encounter with others... Because faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus does: encounter others.” With this line of thinking, Christians encounter other people in their imitation of Christ, but on top of that, the disciple encounters other people as a *response* to having an encounter with Christ in the first place. Francis on a regular basis has spoken of a Culture of Encounter as a goal for human society. A society that espouses a Culture of Encounter facilitates right relationship among humans and involves a spirituality that emphasizes a personal friendship with God who first encounters us in love.

The Meaning of Encounter

In Spanish, the pope’s first language, the word *encuentro* is often used in spiritual terms, and in this pontificate it is being translated into English as “encounter.” The term in Spanish, however, is packed with more meaning than a literal translation to the English cognate is able to convey. An encounter between God and one’s self begins first and foremost by acknowledging that we are *being encountered* by our Creator who loves us infinitely—an encounter requires a dynamic back and forth between two entities. In his pastoral exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, Francis urges the faithful to “a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them” (3). Underscored here is an important point about the dynamism of an encounter. Christ is constantly reaching out to all persons, but the *event* of an encounter happens when that invitation is acknowledged and responded to by a human being. There is a divine vulnerability to reaching out, an eager waiting in hope of a response. The philosopher Enrique Dussel, who hails from Argentina along with the pope, adds much to an understanding of encounter. In his book *Introducción a la filosofía de la liberación* (Introduction to the

Philosophy of Liberation), Dussel explains that two people encountering one another involves action, a give and take. But even more importantly, it involves openness to mystery and relationship. To encounter another person is to realize that no matter the depths to which we may get to know each other, the well of mystery will never be exhausted, a strange fact that long-time married couples know well. Interpersonal encounter in the Christian sense is thus both active and relational—it occurs between two or more persons or between a person and God. An encounter between two people is a graced experience in which one realizes a strange paradox: the seemingly contradictory human situation of the utter connectedness within which we live in solidarity with each other and at the same time the wild otherness which makes us our own beings living in solitude.

Dussel, a Catholic, notes that only sentient beings may encounter one another. He explains that a person may look at an insect, even examine it under a microscope; the bug might, in turn look back, but the person and the bug do not have the experience of actively encountering each other because the action lacks a certain depth and mystery of which the insect is incapable. The mystery of an encounter occurs between persons. On top of that, the philosopher notes that there is an analogous quality to encountering the *other*. Certainly to encounter another person is to experience the grace of the living God. But in encountering “the other,” the event also mimics our encounter with the Divine Other. To put it another way: to encounter a living-breathing friend, to embrace a child, or to share a meal with a hungry person is to have an experience which is in essence the way which we encounter the intangible and invisible God. The Culture of Encounter is simply then, the structuring of a society in which persons encounter each other and because of this are able to encounter the living God.

The Culture of Encounter Denounces Exclusion and Isolation

Any system or relationship that is not based off of human encounters which respect the dignity of both persons is an affront to both persons’ human dignity. The Culture of Encounter thus denounces such situations as well as any system that promotes structures in which the poor and marginalized. Thus any inter-human communication, law, exchange, conversation, or interaction whatsoever must respect the inherent dignity of both parties. In such a culture there are macro and interpersonal implications. In short, all interactions with other people must underscore the notion that that person is human.

In *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis stresses this challenge by noting the daunting particulars of our current global situation. He writes, “today, when the networks and means of human communication have made unprecedented advances, we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a ‘mystique’ of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage” (87).

Francis points to how the possibility of encounter has risen massively of late, while our human attempts to encounter seem to have diminished. He notes in a recent address celebrating World Communications Day that “it is not enough to be passersby on the digital highways, simply ‘con-nected’; connections need to grow into true encounters. We cannot live apart, closed in on ourselves...The digital world can be an environment rich in humanity; a network not of wires but of people.” The possibilities for true, human encounter are heightened by technology yet the reality is strikingly opposite—people are having fewer deep encounters than ever.

Pope Francis notes that global capitalism is one such system that inhibits a Culture of Encounter. Indeed one matter at which capitalism succeeds immensely is convincing the consumer that all economic endeavors are private. In capitalism, the consumer may purchase anything he or she can afford; the seller may vend anything that a consumer will pay for. The relationship between the consumer and the seller, however, falls far short of encounter because they are tacitly encouraged to see each other as a means to an end—a way of making a financial gain and a way of getting something one wants respectively. The relationship between bosses and labor is very often one of seeing each other as a means to an end as well; it is a relationship of fear and often coercion rather than one of human encounter between management and employees.

Even if an encounter event takes place between a person purchasing something and a person selling something, capitalism stealthily allows for this to be perceived as a very private matter between the two individuals present. The reality, however, is that in nearly every economic transaction, there are many more humans involved. To purchase a garment in a store never requires one to consider those who worked to grow and harvest the cotton or spin the fibers or the workers in factories who stitched the garment together who much too often work in deplorable labor conditions for paltry pay. To purchase an apple at a supermarket does not require one to encounter the farmer nor the migrant worker who picked the fruit. Capitalism stymies a Culture of Encounter by having us all believe that our economic transactions do not involve anyone but ourselves. The tragic consequences for such a falsehood is the

shadowy background in which many persons are persecuted and at the same time the opportunities for genuine human encounter being stymied. The pope, in his animating a Culture of Encounter, denounces a capitalist system which stands in the way of genuine human to human encounter.

The Culture of Encounter Proclaims Relationship

While living in a society that may justly be critiqued using the Culture of Encounter as a lens, it must not be forgotten that along with denouncing injustice, the prophets of encounter also proclaim the goodness of human relationship. One such assertion is that the Culture of Encounter is first and foremost *personalist*. John Paul II in *Love and Responsibility* offers insight into how the philosophy of personalism aids us in thinking of each other as God sees us. He writes, “the term ‘person’ has been coined to signify that a man [or woman] cannot be wholly contained within the concept ‘individual member of the species,’ but that there is something more to him, a particular richness and perfection in the manner of his being, which can only be brought out by the use of the word ‘person.’” To encounter another person is to realize her inherent human dignity and the manner in which she—and only she—may direct us to the unique way in which God loves her. To see another person as a personalist does is to see that person as an unrepeatable individual whose mystery is limitless, an *other* who points toward the Divine Other in a way that only he can.



by Angel Valdez

The poor hold a privileged place in the Culture of Encounter. In the aforementioned Pentecost homily, Francis notes that in stepping out of ourselves, we will see that other people “have something in common with us: they are images of God, they are children of God. Going out to meet everyone, without losing sight of our own position. There is another important point: encountering the poor.” The pope is very critical of a system that would obsess over individual ticks in a stock market yet ignore even a single death of a homeless person. The personalist focuses on the person, not data or vacillations in a market. The poor are of particular importance because they are the most ignored and seen as the most dispensable. Yet in God’s eyes they are equal in dignity and importance to the rich and powerful person. Indeed to encounter the poor person is quite literally to encounter Christ. With this in mind, the Culture of Encounter proclaims the equal dignity imbued in each and every person who is the image and likeness of God.

The Culture of Encounter Is a Journey through Mystery

Lastly, the Culture of Encounter places value on mystery. To see the world through the lens of encounter is to realize the presence of God all around us and that we are connected to each other through ties both visible and invisible. God is mysteriously present in each and every person, and that unique person

manifests God's love in a way in which only he or she is able. The spirituality of encounter, while it denounces and proclaims certain aspects of society and human relationship, at its core is a realization of God's immanent presence and an acknowledgement that we experience the love of God in relationship with other people. The Culture of Encounter moves us to walk the journey of our lives tenderly holding each other's hands knowing all the while that it is Christ who is our veiled and shining companion.
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