

# **DOMINICAN SPIRITUALITY or The "Counter-Thread" in the Old Religious Story as The Golden Thread in the Dominican Family-Story**

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For the greater part people live by stories. I myself live by my own story. When I became a Dominican, I tied the narrative of my life to the one of the family of the Dominicans; in this way my own lifestory took a new orientation and, on the other hand, the thread of the story of the Order was taken up by me in my own way. My own life itself became a part of the Dominican Family-story, just one chapter of it. My life-story took a new line within the story of the Order.

Stories of the Dominican Order keep us 'together' as Dominicans. Without a record we would be void of remembrances of the past, we would not find our own place in the present and remain without hope of expectations of the future. Therefore, as Dominicans, we form our own entity, exactly as our own storytelling community. Within the wider narrative of the many religious families and within the all-embracing story of the big Church community and the still more extensive community of man, we relate our own traditions. So we are made into an own, separate family, recognizable through a motley of big and small but undeniable family traits.

With this I have said a lot already about "Dominican Spirituality." This cannot be but my own life-story, in as far as it has become a chapter of the story of the Dominican Family. The record of my own life extends and enriches the history of Dominican Spirituality. But it is only a small, nearly insignificant chapter; it is given its own restricted place and is evaluated by the already older and wider story of the Dominican Family, which critically questions whether I do not introduce wrong lines into the picture of this family-story.

That is why I doubt anybody who would want to impose on others his "own insight" or "his own experience" as a norm for "Dominican Spirituality." Moreover, there are -- thanks be to God -- still Dominicans alive, i.e. the story has not been exhausted yet, has not reached its end yet. There is still something to be said.

We can draw a first conclusion already: A final all-round definition of what is Dominican Spirituality cannot be given! You cannot give final judgement about a story if it is still being told in full strength. We can only look for some main trends in the plot of the story. We cannot do more, because the story is being told through seven centuries with ever new modalities, in which the basic story is repeated in ever new languages and speech, always different in view of constantly changing listeners. The narrative is told and heard in cultural-historical and ecclesiastical surroundings that were never the same.

The basic narrative which is the source of the own, Dominican community formed by it, is in this respect of fundamental importance. But the origin of my relevant story usually slips away in to a dark past, difficult to reconstruct historically. Dominic (1170-1223), the source of the Dominican Family-story, has written no books. Nevertheless, through painstaking historical research which unwraps the "true Dominic" out of all sorts of legend -- so typical for the Middle Ages -- we have sufficiently firm ground under our feet; and, particularly, although Dominic did not leave us books or documents, he left us a living relic in the Dominican Movement, the Order, a group of people who wanted to continue his work by following in his footsteps. The Dominican story starts therefore with Dominic, together with his first companions. Together they stand at the course of what is going to be the story of the Dominican Family. They decided what the theme should be; they composed the main melody.

This story, however, ever repeated, ever composed anew, is itself again an older tale; one of Jesus of Nazareth. This story is taken up again in a particular manner and in a new way. This leads us to a second conclusion:

The Dominican Spirituality is valid only in so far as it takes up the story of Jesus in its own way and makes it of our own time again.

The Second Vatican Council said in its Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life that; "to follow Jesus" is the supreme norm of any religious form of life.

(No. 2). The Dominican Spirituality is therefore under the critical norm of the "source of all Christian life." And this means that the "Dominican Spirituality," even of Dominic and his first followers, is not an "absolute law" for the Dominicans, as if nothing more could be said. Today there is a more developed and more diversified knowledge of the "Story of Jesus." (We could mention here the biblical orientation of spiritual life or the more refined exegesis of the Scriptures).

This could well lead us to the laying of accents different from those laid by Dominic and his companions. For, according to the Decree mentioned above, the renewal must be done in the first instance "by going back to the sources of all Christian life." The Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1). And the Gospel is a source which will never be exhausted and gives new possibilities all the time. It is a source of which even Dominic did not know the magic formula to open up all its treasures.

This includes that every story of an order must be judged as a part, or rather a "modulation" of the greater narrative of the "Community of God," the Church ('a participation in the life of the Church' -- same decree). In this connection the Council points at "projects of today"; biblical, liturgical, dogmatic, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary and social. This means: Dominican Spirituality supposes an essential and critical relationship to the very concrete needs and pains of the Church of today in its historical situation. It cannot be an isolated cultivation of an own "Dominican" garden patch, "next to" the developing life of world and Church.

"The original inspiration" of the own religious institutes (mentioned in the decree) is the basic theme of the Dominican Family-story, and gives direction to it if: 1.) the norm is taken from the "Gospel" and if that "Gospel" continually criticizes it; and 2.) it that "Gospel" as part of history, is all the time related to the necessary, big projects of the Church here and now.

The third conclusion must be: Dominican Spirituality is valid as a particular modality of the mission of the Church: to follow Jesus. This means to us: in the footsteps of the inspired Dominic, as they have, again and again, oriented so many of us at the best moments in the history of the Order. That is why we must have a clear view of this historical basic story, for the relationship to the inspirational source has been broken during the course of time. When, for instance, the Inquisition delivered Joan of Arc to the burning stake, the Dominicans who were instrumental thereto, were essentially in contradiction to the inspiration and orientation of Dominic. We had become deaf and blind to the development of new charisms: an essential un-Dominican attitude of life!

The same Council decree gives as a third criterion for renewed religious life: the relationship between the Story of Jesus and the original (Dominican) basic story on the one hand, and the changed requirements of the times. This means that Dominican Spirituality cannot be determined by simply appealing to the original story, neither by simply looking at further modulations and actualizations of this basic narrative as it occurred in the history of the order. All this is presupposed. But Dominican Spirituality is also determined exactly through our actualization "here and now," in our time. Dominican Spirituality does not only say how it was "in the beginning" of the history of the Order. Should it be this only, we should write a history about how the Dominicans were inspired in the past. But history is not yet "spirituality." It could well be that a non-Dominican who is a good historian, could reconstruct this past better than any of us is able to do.

Dominican Spirituality exists: does not want to be a history only of spirituality and -- if it is not to be an empty ideology -- it should be a reality that is alive now; it is carried (or spoiled) by Dominicans living now who compose the Dominican Family-story here and now, keeping in mind the worldly and ecclesiastical historico-cultural situation of this very moment.

The fourth conclusion therefore must be this: Without a relationship actualizing the 'here and now,' any talk about Dominican Spirituality remains a purely historical occupation with the past of the Order -- which is often used as an escape from a task which is urgent now. Dominican Spirituality is a living reality which WE must realize NOW! If we do not do this, we just repeat a story others have told long ago, as if we ourselves have no chapter to write within a narrative started before us. If after us, anybody should find it worthwhile to take up again the thread of our Dominican Family-story, we have to write a new chapter yet unpublished. If we indeed are able to write it -- if we have the courage and the will to write such a new living chapter -- I am sure that many young men and women will be drawn again to continue this Dominican tradition after us.

For every story that makes sense is contagious in its power; it is being told over and over again; nobody can stop this snowball rolling on. Whether this happens or not depends on the contents and tension with which we are busy writing our little chapter in the great Dominican Family-story. Is it going to be a dull paragraph nobody will read anyway? Or worse: is it a strange story, a foreign excursion which does not even take up the thread of the old family-narrative, and so smothers it to death -- and this possibly for ever?

Or is it going to be a captivating episode -- already captivating because the reader notices that we zealously search to find again the true thread of the story, of which we lost track ourselves. Also this can become an important part of the old story of the Dominican Family?

Dominican Spirituality, as I have outlined with the historical references to the golden thread which runs through the Dominican family-story, from Dominic's days right up to ours, continues to present us with sufficient inspiration and direction. When we write about our part in the wider history of the Order we may never neglect this. As long as this golden thread is woven in our apparently deviating life-story, we have realized Dominican Spirituality indeed. Spirituality is not spirituality in as far as it is being 'described' whether it be in beseeching or authoritarian tone, but in as far as it is made real in a concrete way, as a completely new performance of an existing Dominican melody.

What is this long existing melody, the ever-returning motif and basic line? I would say: it is the story of counter-movements.

## **DOMINIC'S DILEMMA**

In the twelfth century and in the first part of the thirteenth there were two pressing issues: a renewal was needed in both the priestly life and in the religious life. Without relating these two points, the Fourth Council of Lateran (1215) dealt with both problems separately. This council did not remain without influence on Dominic. While still an Augustinian Canon of Osma, he traveled the southern parts of France, particularly the spiritually devastated diocese of Toulouse. Then and there he collected a group of helpers in order to provide for the pressing needs in the priestly care of the faithful. Dominic saw what was happening. During the twelfth century religious movements came into being; among their adherents a great number of lay people were to be found. The basic tendency of these movements was the linking up of evangelical poverty and preaching, but the inspiration for this was often of an anticlerical nature. All sorts of malpractices among the clergy raised the question: does Christian preaching require an ecclesiastical (hierarchical) permission and consequently an ecclesiastical ordination and mission, or is the religious or evangelical life in its imitation of the Apostles (*vita Apostolica*) not by itself a warrant for Christian preaching? The latter was the view of many religious movements, whereas the councils officially considered it as 'heretical.' One can put it this way: the heretical movements in those days had evangelical and christian ideas, while the 'official preachers' were orthodox but, at least ostensibly, not evangelical in behavior and completely engulfed in feudal structures. All these new religious currents -- especially in France, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands (in those days the affluent countries) -- show, independently of each other, remarkably common trends" evangelical life" sine glossa" (without compromising concessions). Their spirituality was marked by a deep devotion to the humanity of Jesus; they wanted to follow the poor Jesus. (Note the influence of both the Cistercian movement and the whole of the Gregorian reform.) Moreover, the contemplative, Greek-Byzantine East exercised a strong influence via the Crusaders and the Merchants. The situation became even more questionable when -- in the North, these evangelical movements came into contact with the Eastern, dualistic currents, which came to the West

through the Slavic countries of the Balkans. These gnostic and manichaeian-dualistic heresies are commonly known as Cathari (the "pure"). In this way the whole of the 'evangelical movement' came under even strong suspicion of the church. The problem now became: how to save the evangelical movement for the church and how to mobilize it against heresy.

## DOMINIC'S VIEW

Against this historical backdrop of the enthusiastic revival of evangelism everywhere on the very fringe of the official church, we must place the phenomenon of Dominic. He was not alone in seeing the problem of the situation; Pope Innocent III, Bishop Diego with whom Dominic traveled to Southern France, and also Francis of Assisi saw the difficulties. With his strong sense of reality Dominic came to a clear conclusion which brought about a solution. He saw that so many evangelical possibilities threatened to be lost to the church. Although formed in the already traditional way of life of canons regular, he was sympathetic to the new experiments which moved counter to the vested traditions. He quickly saw why these experiments continued to fail either by ending up in heretical sects or by being absorbed into the traditional life of the cloisters (e.g. Prémontré). He wanted to change these counter movements to truly ecclesial countermoving evangelism within the structure of the hierarchical church. Evangelism had to become a challenge within the church, not a 'church' (or 'sect') on its own.

The vision of Dominic which was particularly his own, came to this: that he saw the solution of the problem of the time in the combination -- within one institution -- of the apostolic preaching with the "vita apostolica," apostolic way of life.

The apostolic preacher had critically to bear in mind that his preaching needed authorization by Pope or episcopate. At the same time he had to be aware that his preaching should be carried by the apostolic way of life, a radical evangelism which made him follow Jesus as the Apostles did. The Fourth Council of Lateran had treated these two themes as separate entities, Dominic linked them together into one project of life.

The same Council had prohibited all new forms of religious life (Mans) Vol. 22, p. 1002), and labeled unauthorized preaching as "heresy" (Mans) l.c. p. 990), somewhat against the personal opinion of Pope Innocent III. This is why Dominic combined the best elements of the traditional religious life with the basic demands of the new evangelical-counter-moving-movements rising up all through Europe. He did this to inaugurate an evangelical way of life of preachers for the sake of the credibility of christian preaching itself. So he broke down the feudal structures of the old religious life, and a new type of religious life came into existence: the Order of Preachers, the Dominicans.

This is why our oldest Constitutions have been formed with elements of the constitutions of traditional religious life -- that is of the Norbertines and Cistercians (in those days the most lively religious institutions), elements which Dominic and his first companions intrinsically transformed through the aim itself of the order: the apostolic itinerant (traveling) preaching. This is the new spirit of the modern, experimental, evangelical movements brought within ecclesiastical perspective, a spirit which Dominic had made his own while traveling in Southern France, while in contact with all that 'heretical' evangelical enthusiasts, so widespread among the higher and lower classes of the population.

Structuring the Order as he did, Dominic gave up economic stability which had been the foundation-stone of the older religious institutes. Starting from a religious criticism, Dominic tackled the basics of the feudal society, church and state. But also: the combination of the contemplative monastic elements with the itinerant preaching caused a fundamental change of the traditional set-up of the cloisters. The new "Corporate" idea -- a specific form of organization -- was applied to religious institutes; no longer was there a monarchical superior, but authority became democratic, with many elections in a democratic and personalistic system. (Later on, this will lead to the idea of episcopal collegiality in the church itself.)

In a paradoxical way Dominic's evangelism led to a new incarnation in secular structures, particularly in the structures of the newly developing society of 'democratic' commonalty.

## **CRITICAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS PAST AND PRESENT**

Dominic wove a new cloth by bringing thread and counter-thread into one and the same religious project. So the Order of the Dominicans has been born of the charism which combined the warning critical reflection on the spiritual heritage of the old, monastic and canonical religious life with the 'modernistic' religious experiments of the thirteenth century. Dominic was acutely sensitive to both the religious values of the past and the promise of a future, rising-up from the modern experiments of his time. Of this twofold charism the Dominican Order was born. I should like to say with Fr. Cormier, a modern master general of our Order: this double charism of Dominic is our "gratia originalis" -- the grace that created our Order.

Dominican Spirituality, therefore, is in the first instance to be determined as a spirituality, which rises up from the warning and critical reflection on what past religious tradition has left as a heritage, a spirituality which critically and positively appraises continuously the counter-movements expressing all that lives among us in new systems and possibilities for the future. For all the eminence of the past, Dominican spirituality cannot merely be a material repetition of what Dominican forebears have done. Neither can it become an uncritical acceptance of new movements (mystical and political), developing in our times.

For Dominic the quest for truth was essential here. Dominic stood somehow squarely behind the new apostolic experiments of "preaching" combined with "poverty," but, remembering the good which the religious past had done, struck unreservedly to the directive of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) for many renewal of both priestly and religious life. It was his charism to link up these separate trends organically. So he extended personally what the Council had had in mind.

This spirituality which found expression in our very first Dominican Constitutions makes the further development of it understandable. It puts the historical changing, every counter-moving new element at the very heart of Dominican spirituality. For instance, the Constitutions of the years 1221-1231 stated: "Our brothers may not study the books of pagan writers (this refers particularly to Aristotle) and of the philosophers (here it meant the whole of Arabic philosophy, and the great 'modernism' in the Middle Ages); neither are they allowed to study secular sciences." But within 20 years Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas will consider the study of profane sciences and the philosophy of the pagans as a necessary condition of the preparing and moulding of relevant Dominican apostolate. These two Dominican Saints contradicted freely the constitutions laid down in former times. They did so on the bases of a truly 'Dominican Spirituality'. They opposed what in those days was officially called: "Dominican Spirituality." Inspired by what Dominic did in his days they went into opposition, with happy results: the stipulations concerned were afterwards deleted from the constitutions by a General Chapter. There is more. Later constitutions urged Thomas as an example, so much so, that Raymund of Pennafort built centers of study of Arabic languages in Nurcia and Turin. This is truly Dominican, according to the heart of St. Dominic, who himself had tried to combine the past and possibilities for the future in his own time. Simultaneously however, a new danger will arise, the danger that we make Thomas a barrier to the present instead of a signpost of the future.

## **"SO-CALLED" DOMINICAN SPIRITUALITY**

If in the story the Dominican hears and hands on, no counter-thread becomes visible, the chances are very great indeed that Dominican spirituality falls asleep. What is even more serious, we may take a stand on a so-called solidly "fixed" Dominican spirituality -- a contradiction in terms -- and, mistakenly declare new efforts towards truly Dominican spirituality to be a heretical and apocryphal story. The history of our Order has known its peaks precisely where it became at once historical and anti-historical, moving against the trends of the time: Dominic himself, Albert and Thomas, Savonarola, Eckhart, De las Casas, Lacordaire, Lagrange, Chenu, Congar -- just to mention a few. They are, however, also in difficulties with the 'already fixed' Dominican story, which -- very un-dominican -- refuses to take in the new and counter-movement of the time. Without disregard for the fundamental, all pervading values of the many anonymous Dominicans who lived a quiet, successful Dominican life -- the broad stream to provide impetus for new, successful currents with the Order -- the typically Dominican attitude becomes very clearly discernible every time when Dominicans -- from Dominic's example -- composed the old story in a

new way and linked it up to the dynamics of the possibilities of the future which kept presenting themselves in new forms. Should this not happen at certain times, the chances are that the well-known Dominican 'passion for truth' deteriorates into an Inquisition, and turns into a rejection of new Dominican possibilities which then will live out the new charism outside the Dominican family or are shunted aside. This less rose-colored story belongs to the Order just as much, is exactly the one I should not like to call the "golden thread" of our family story, because the true story exists in the taking up of the counter-thread all the time. The history of this 'moving into counter-direction' is exactly the golden thread of the Dominican family-story, the thread woven into a broader, so to say, more serene whole. The fact that St. Ignatius of Loyola has been locked up by our forefathers in the cellar of one of our cloisters because he tried to meet a new charism in this time, is one of those many stories in which the so-called 'Dominican spirituality' has been perverted into its opposite, and which, to this day, declares us guilty of un-dominican chauvinism. This means that such a thing is typical of times in which the Dominicans were not "dominican" any longer, times when they, seeing the scene from their own 'fixed' attitudes, declared any new counter-movement to be heretical. It is these periods of failure in the past which manifest what, according to Dominic's basic story, Dominican spirituality should be, and this right throughout history.

## OUR TIME

Listening to God, as He has revealed himself in the past AND listening to the "signs of the times present," through which the very same God in his loyalty to Himself and to us, appeals to us, is essential for Dominican spirituality.

And one-sidedness, any one-tract, uncritical trend, in dealing with the past or with the symptoms of the future as they reveal themselves in the present, is un-dominican.

Dominic looked at the present with its own particular possibilities of experiment in the light of a dangerous reflection on certain happenings and acquired values of the past, but, simultaneously, he breaks open the totality of the past and revalues it from the point of view of the counter-trend of the experimental present. It is this attitude of life which gave birth to the Order. This must remain the "genius" of the Order.

To be "present to God" AND to be "present to the world" are the two qualities which characterize the essence itself of Dominican spirituality throughout the history of the Order. Perhaps today only, remembering the religious past, we have begun to see really that to be "present to the world" in critical solidarity with the world of people, is the only possible way in which we are "present to God."

At the same time, this insight confirms the necessity of critical reflection on the religious past, because there the same "presence to God" was lived out by means of the "signs of the times" of those days. The 'modernism' of the Dominican Order lives on dangerous memories of the past! It was Fr. Lacordaire and Master-general Jandel who, during the nineteenth century roused the Dominican Order from a sleep which had lasted for centuries, by reminding it of its original charism, and by breaking with serene traditionism to which the "settled" Order had fallen prey.

The phenomenon "Lacordaire" (and everything connected to it within our Dominican history) is truly the rediscovery of itself by the Order. For the 'Lacordaire-movement' fed on the original charisms of the Order, and posed again the question of the "Dominican Spirituality."

From the foregoing considerations some consequences become clear. Dominican Spirituality means:

(a) Faith in the absolute priority of God's grace to any human activity. There is the direction towards God Himself of Dominican Life, also of the Dominican ethical design for the betterment of world, society and man himself. No convulsive self-activity, but faith in God: I can trust God more than myself. Therefore a quiet, joyful spirituality. God will give an unexpected future to the restricted meaning and scope of my own actions!

(b) Dominican spirituality means: religious evangelical living (vita apostolica) as the atmosphere within which the Dominican is apostolic, by proclaiming the Gospel in every possible way (salus animarum -- salvation is the aim of the activity of the Order). The result of this is "contemplari" and "contemplata aliis tradere" -- there must be harmony between what one proclaims and what one lives. This is what St. Thomas (II-II, 188, arts. 6-7) sees as typical for the 'mendicants' over against the other religious institutes, and he connects this specific character also with "poverty" -- freedom of financial worries. This vision, which applies to all mendicants, becomes typically Dominican when study receives an essential place in the structure of this Dominican evangelism. The element of study was precisely not part and parcel of the evangelical movements of the Middle Ages. In his commentary on the Constitutions Humbert of Romans puts it this way: "Study is not the aim of the order, but an essential tool towards its aim." Lack of sound knowledge was one of the causes why many evangelical movements failed badly. Moreover, the newly established universities, although they intensified the element of scientific study, had concentrated and centralized it, and so drained dioceses of their 'intelligentia.'

Dominic saw this clearly and this is why he fitted the study as an institutional element into the very structure of his Order. No convent was to be established if it would not have a 'doctor of theology'. Every convent must be a "school of theology" -- a Dominican cloister is permanent education. It is undominican to make a distinction between "convent for study" and "convent for ministry"; each cloister must be both. St. Thomas explicitly defended the right of convents being founded for the purpose of study. (II-II, 188 art 5)

(c) The order has a spirituality "directed towards Jesus"; the "humanity of Jesus." (Albert, Thomas, Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, etc.) Incidentally, immediately linked to this are the two particular Dominican devotions to Mary and Joseph. But this humanness of Jesus is seen and experienced as a personal manifestation of God for the good of mankind, and is the center of the Dominican spirituality and mysticism, without any preference for 'derived' devotions. This directedness to Jesus' humanity is universal during the twelfth century, but' taken together with all other characteristics, it is also typically Dominican.

(d) Dominican spirituality is a "presence to the world" -- the grace of understanding the present century," as Fr. Lacordaire has said. There is openness to every new charism, required by the changing circumstances. Therefore the necessity of structures which do not "close the door." Structures must be democratic and flexible, enabling Dominicans to catch up with the emergence of new counter-moving stories. It is characteristic that the Dominicans have never submitted their constitutions to papal approval, so that they change them according to new circumstances, and this on their own authority.

(e) The flexibility of structure led to another development. Since Albert and Thomas the Dominican spirituality has been enriched. Although the Dominicans initially opposed it, they all soon accorded a place to the christian principle of 'secularization' within the essentially religious and evangelical direction: first one must acknowledge matters in their own inner value and structure (things, inter-personal characteristics, society), and only then one should consider their relation to God. In modern times this has far-reaching consequences in viewing all sorts of forms of pseudo-mystical supernaturalism, which often enough end in pedantic dogmatism under the cloak of piety.

Initially, the Order hesitated to make use of 'natural sources' in the Dominican evangelism. The traditional mentality of the monks, who rejected the use of 'profane sciences' remained active, although it was restricted through the Dominican principle of "dispensation." The early Dominicans were anti- philosophical (with the danger of an evangelical supernaturalism). The "Vita Fratrum" (G. Frachet) extols the "holy naivety." Albert and Thomas turned the tide, Albert rather sharply scolding the brethren "who so wished to be the murderers of Socrates again." The struggle concerned the consequences of the integral evangelism, which Albert and Thomas wanted to see as something enlightened, and not naive. In the Chapter of Valencienns (1259) Albert and Thomas won the day: In the Dominican formation the study of "profane sciences" becomes obligatory.

(f) The other elements: liturgical choir-office, religious observances and community life are, traditionally, of a universally religious nature, and thus not typically Dominican. There were the 'dangerous memories' of the past of

monks and canons, a past which Dominic kept on giving shape within his new religious and apostolic project -- although he allotted it a more moderate and more critically adapted role only.

(g) The principle of dispensation -- historically going back to Dominic himself -- is another consequence of the view on the spirituality of the Dominican Order. It embodies the respect for the particular personal charisms of the fellow-Dominicans within the Dominican community, in view of the over-all aim of the Order. True, it is an extremely dangerous principle, and it has been used in a way that cries for vengeance. But Dominic took the risk rather than giving up the human and christian value for salvation which this principle itself represents. He did so in spite of the threatening abuse of it. As a general principle it was in the Middle Ages a completely new, Dominican invention. For the sake of the "study" in the service of the 'salvation of man' and for the sake of the apostolate itself, it is -- paradoxically -- quite possible to be Dominican, even when unsupported! This presupposes that a person has had thorough Dominican formation, but the situation was in no way experienced as "being outside the law." On the contrary: dispensation is a Dominican constitutional law. "To be bound by what all others do" is foreign to the original Dominican law book.

Because of this original Dominican principle there are, even now, wide openings for "modern experiments," even experiments which some, who are caught in a "fixed" Dominican spirituality, -- a spirituality which is really un-Dominican -- cannot make room for. There is this restriction though: these experiments must always be undertaken from a basis within the dangerous memory of the religious traditional past, the memory which draws beforehand those lasting, always 'memorable' perspectives, without which all experiments are doomed to become religious failures.

Our rich family archives give many examples of this freedom to be oneself. I shall point out only one occurrence as it happened during the first formulations of our Dominican Constitutions. The remarkably "democratic structure" of our Order, which according to experts in administration, is a unique feature among the catholic religious institutes, becomes understandable precisely when seen from the typical, counter-thread-spirituality of the Order, although the respect for all that is good in the tradition is always kept in mind.

During a revision of the Constitutions -- at a period in which 'great canonists' from the universities of those days had entered the Order (among others Raymund of Pennafort), the Constitutions were reformulated. This was done at a General Chapter of Bologna. Immediately before and during this Chapter sounds of counter-movements were heard in the universities and in the towns; and besides this, there was the struggle between the Ghibellines (conservatives) and the Guelphs (the progressive people's party). Dominicans were involved in this whole conflict as advisers. The progressives demanded a say for all those who had a stake in what was happening. This movement has had a definite influence on our Dominican Constitutions. "What touches all must be decided by all," was the new principle among the citizenry and it was defended by the Dominicans also. And afterwards -- under the influence of their experiences of civic life in Bologna -- it was sanctioned in our Dominican Constitutions. New "secular" experiences have so had an essential effect on our oldest Constitutions. The movements of those days for emancipation and social progress put an essential stamp on our Constitutions. And this happened in total deviation from the traditional models of government of the time. These Dominicans have, after Dominic's example, not only raised a finger in admonition and pointed at what was the custom from the days of yore, but at the same time listened to the voice of God in what -- as tumultuous as it may have been -- became vocal in the human, secular movements of the period for emancipation. Based on these new experiences, they have "rewritten" the structures of the Dominican cloisters, and this not yet twenty years after Dominic! This is only one case of taking up the 'counter-thread.' And the Dominican family-story has done this over and over again as its own particular theme, right through the times.

I have mentioned only some Dominican characteristics; much more could be said. Moreover -- and this I say with much emphasis -- it is in no way denied that nonDominicans may do the very same things. In such a case the Dominican spirituality can only say gladly: 'so much the better!' We do not intend to claim as our own something exclusive, unheard of before. The point we want to make is that we show what we have to do in any case, and this by virtue of the charism of the Order and of our Dominican dedication (through our profession). The fact that others

do the same after us can only confirm the validity and correct intuition of our vision! When a typically personal vision becomes universal -- it does not mean it loses its value in the same measure. On the contrary!

Dominigo de Guzman, originally an Augustinian canon, had the courage of entering on a new course in his life because he was loyal to the choice of life he had originally made. This new course in life, which became the beginning of the Order of the Dominicans, was taken up because of a living contact with human and ecclesiastical needs he did not know about when he followed his 'first call'. One cannot accuse Dominic of having betrayed his first vocation, as irrevocable as it was meant to be! His change of direction was a new "way of life." He took this new course when contact with better possibilities made him aware of the fact that he had to make the change in order to remain faithful to the deepest sense of his original vocation, in confrontation with the new needs. Out of such a rather perplexing, course changing loyalty the Order came forth!

To change course, therefore, belongs to the core of the Dominican charism: how should we act today? No theologian, canonist, psychologist or sociologist sitting at his desk, can think it out from his chair. The contemporary way must be tried out through experiment by charismatically motivated religious persons. They will have to remember the 'dangerous memories' of the counter-thread -- the Golden Thread that appears in our Dominican family-story all the time. They may thereby lose the critical evaluation of successful efforts in the past. They must gratefully remember them and make them bear fruit within the context of the new prophet of today.

But, with Thomas Aquinas who clearly follows the matter-of-fact and genial temperament of Dominic, we can formulate a directive: A religious institute is not more excellent because it has stricter observances, but its excellence lies in the fact that the observances are more expertly measured against the aim of religious life. (II-II, 188 and 6 ad 3) And this asks, in new periods of time, for a renewed, expert and religious decision, in which 'leader' and 'follower' take part, in order that the structures themselves should remain open to the new 'counter-thread' movements.

Asking this question is a duty. For at our profession we, too opt for a specific, i.e. Dominican community and its ideals. There may be faults and defects in a concrete community, maybe through betrayal of the Dominican family-story, or, perhaps the story is not alive any more and has become stereotyped and got stuck. The defects may be such that the professed person, who wants to be loyal to his or her Dominican ideal, has the ethical right, and sometimes even the duty, to leave the Dominican community which does not give him or her the support to which he or she is entitled by virtue of his or her profession. This fact may make us think carefully. For, paradoxically, we, as Dominicans, run here the risk of expelling from our ranks a precisely "Dominican charism." If we also listen to God's voice in the symptoms of contemporary movements and try to seek out their dynamic lines, we find sufficient indication in the Dominican family-story to enrich it with a new, as yet unpublished chapter. As for many the telling of the Dominican family-story seems to be finished, since hardly anybody comes under the spell of it (where are the new novices?), it is laid into the hands of only us, Dominican men and women of today, to give it a new turn which may grip new listeners. And this not as a sensational stunt, but precisely as authentic Dominican family-story, so that others are again prepared to join the Dominican story-telling-community and will hand on the narrative again.

Then there is also place for the 'folk-lore-story' every Order possesses next to its main narrative. It only shows that the main family story is made and told by ordinary, very human people, who, by virtue of God's unmerited and so humane gracefulness, rise to the occasion every time again. It would, however, become deadly for the Dominican family tale if this main story would end up by being narrowed down and turned into the tale of the "Dominican-home-folklore."

I am quite aware that I have said both too little and too much. This may well fit best into the chapter which all of us, in this year 1975, add to the narrative of the great Dominican family tradition. May it be a serial lasting longer than the seemingly endless TV stories of 'Peyton Place' and the 'Forsythe Saga' stories which held the whole world spellbound, but did nothing to renew the face of the earth. May the Dominican Story be a parable which ends with the unspoken invitation of Jesus: "Go, and do likewise." (Luke 10:37)



# DOMINICAN SPIRITUALITY AND VATICAN II'S EXPECTATIONS OF LAY PEOPLE

by Christopher Kiesling, O.P.

Shortly before, during, and immediately after Vatican Council II, our moment of church history was often called The Era of the Laity. The recognition was growing, both among clergy and laity, that lay people are not second-class citizens in the Church, not mere hangers-on or camp followers of the clergy and religious, but rather are constitutive of the Church along with the clergy. These ideas were enshrined in Vatican Council II's documents, especially *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People).

In this talk I wish to indicate first what Vatican Council II expects of lay people. Then I shall describe Dominican spirituality. Finally, I hope to show that Dominican spirituality enables lay people to fulfill the Council's expectations of them.

## VATICAN II -- EXPECTATIONS

### Articulate Faith

Vatican II has three radical expectations of lay people--namely, that they be (1) articulate in their faith, (2) appreciative of creation, and (3) zealous for building a better world. These expectations are radical, since they are the root of many other more specific expectations that Vatican II holds out for the laity.

In regard to articulate faith, the *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* states: "The apostolate of the Church and of all her members is designed primarily to manifest Christ's message by words and deeds and to communicate his grace to the world" (6). Noteworthy in this statement is that *all* members of the Church are to manifest Christ's message by word as well as by deeds, and to communicate his grace. The Council document acknowledges the special role of the clergy's ministry of Word and sacraments but explicitly does not limit to the clergy the Church's mission to teach and sanctify.

The decree makes a familiar affirmation when it states that one of the ways in which the laity exercise the apostolate of "making the Gospel known and more holy" is through the witness of an exemplary life. But the decree goes further: it affirms that an apostolate of this kind does not consist only in the witness of one's way of life; a true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ by words addressed either to non-believers with a view to drawing them to Christ, or to believers with a view to instructing and strengthening them, and motivating them toward a more fervent life. "For the love of Christ impels us" (2 Cor. 9:16), and the words of the Apostle should echo in every Christian heart: "For woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).

What is significant about these quotations is that the Council is saying that the laity are to do the equivalent of preaching. They are to lead others -- not only non-believers but fellow Christians -- to a deeper faith, not simply by their lives, or example, but by words.

So Vatican II clearly expects the laity to speak about their faith and even instruct, strengthen, and motivate others, not only non-believers, but fellow Christians as well.

We are only beginning to implement this idea of Vatican II as we increasingly involve parents in their children's preparation for the reception of the sacraments and in their children's religious education generally. We are implementing the idea as we employ more and more lay teachers in Catholic schools and religious education programs. Lay people are implementing this expectation of Vatican II as they come forward to assist priests and

religious in conducting retreats, in such events as marriage encounter weekends. A very strong argument could be made from these quotations that such a thing as a properly conducted dialogue homily could be legitimate, though present Church discipline does not recognize it.

## **Appreciative of Creation**

A second radical expectation of Vatican II is that lay people be appreciative of creation. The *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* states:

The Lord wishes to spread his kingdom . . . in this kingdom, creation itself will be delivered out of the slavery to corruption and into the freedom of the sons and daughters of God (cf. Rom. 8:21) . . . the faithful, therefore, must learn the deepest meaning and value of all creation, and how to relate it to the praise of God. They must assist one another to live holier lives even in their daily occupations. In this way, the world is permeated by the Spirit of Christ and more effectively achieves its purpose in justice, charity, and peace. ( 36)

Vatican II is saying that baptized believers must see and esteem creatures in the light of revelation. This revelation testifies to creatures' original goodness and to their relation to the fulfillment of creation intended by God and anticipated in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The laity should revere the uniqueness and beauty of each creature, even as the poet does. They should not view them with the cold, utilitarian eye of the technician. Yet technology, too, is God's creature through the God-given inventiveness of human beings. Christians should understand and rightly evaluate technology's place and its impact on society. Especially should the Christian be appreciative of humanity and the mysteries of being human: the body, feeling, emotion, love, sex, work, play, community celebration, art, science, the aspirations of the human mind and the longings of the human heart -- all bathed in God's universal love.

Concretely, this expectation mandates the laity to contribute to the Church's life and mission their understanding and evaluation of the human factors involved in that life and mission. Today, for example, psychiatrists and psychologists assist religious communities and seminaries in assessing their candidates for religious life and the priesthood. Management and communications experts are occasionally called in to help dioceses, parishes. Religious communities function more efficiently, not only within but also in missionary outreach. Married couples assist in preparing young people for marriage. Architects and artists continue to contribute their knowledge and appreciation of creatures to the life and mission of Church.

## **Better World**

Finally, a radical expectation of Vatican II (the third one) is that the laity be zealous in building a better world for all men, women, and children. The *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* states:

By their competence in secular fields and by personal activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them [lay people] labor vigorously so that by human labor, technical skill, and civic culture created goods may be perfected for the benefit of every last human being . . . Let them work to see that created goods are more fittingly distributed among men and women and . . . in their own way lead to general progress in human and Christian liberty. (*ibid.*)

Baptized believers should also, "by their combined efforts remedy any institutions and conditions of the world which are customarily inducements to sin, so that all such things may be conformed to the norms of justice and may favor the practice of virtue rather than hinder it." They need to "imbue culture and human activities with moral value" (*ibid.*).

The call here is not simply to social service -- that is, relieving the misery of those suffering injustice. The call is to social action, to change the institutions of society that generate suffering, whether it be economic, psychic, social, moral, or spiritual.

Lay people obviously have a significant role to play in this apostolate of the Church, since it concerns the very institutions in which they and their families live their daily lives: the neighborhood, the city, the state, the corporation, the factory, the office, the publishing and entertainment industries, the building trades, hospitals, schools, and so on. The role of the laity in this apostolate cannot be conceived, moreover, merely as executing directives of the clergy. Those directives must be developed by the laity, for they live in the institutions for which the renewing directives are meant. They know these institutions inside and out, their strengths and weaknesses, their benefits and drawbacks. No doubt the clergy can and must be involved in this apostolate as having been ordained to care for the whole community; but their role is one of stimulating, encouraging, and supporting lay men and women, who must plan and carry out this mission of the Church in the world.

So we have three expectations of Vatican Council II with regard to the laity. Dominican spirituality can assist lay people to assume their role in the life and mission of the Church as delineated in Vatican Council II. The organization that goes by the name "Dominican Laity" enables lay men and women to bring to bear on their lives the Dominican spirituality, which will aid them in entering fully into the life and apostolate of the Church. The purpose of the Dominican Laity is not to enable lay people to turn away from the world to draw comfort and ultimately salvation by cuddling up, so to speak, to Dominican priests and religious. Rather it is the means whereby the spirituality developed by St. Dominic and his disciples down through the centuries moves out into the world to contribute to the coming of God's reign over all creation.

But what is Dominican spirituality? We must now address this question.

## **DOMINICAN SPIRITUALITY**

### **Spirituality**

By *spirituality* here is meant practices by which we open ourselves to the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. These practices do not simply precede grace or the Spirit's influence as if performed by our own native powers. They, too, are the fruit of the Spirit at work within us, opening us up to his further influence. But at certain stages, levels, and moments of our life of grace moving us toward intimate communion with God, we play significant roles. We are free creatures; the Spirit of God does not negate our freedom but actualizes it; the spiritual life issues not only from the Spirit of God but also from our spirit. So we have practices in which we freely engage, by which we place ourselves at the disposal of the Holy Spirit, and by which we thus contribute to the life of the Spirit in us. These practices constitute spirituality.

The word *practices* in this context, should not be limited to external conduct, such as vocal prayer, fasting, maintaining silence, or living with a minimum of material goods. *Practices* in this context includes a variety of internal activities, and these are, in the long run, more important. Meditation, for example, an internal activity, is a practice alluded to here. Adopting certain attitudes would also fall under the term *practices* in this context, for example, being willing to obey commands of legitimate superiors, loving others in a celibate manner, regarding manual labor or study as a special value, living within modest means.

The Spirit of God has worked wonders in saintly men and women down through the ages. The practices by which they opened themselves to the Holy Spirit's influence have been remembered by other Christians and adopted by them in their own pursuit of Christian life. From time to time a whole cluster of practices of some outstanding saint has been adopted by his or her disciples, often having been imbedded in a religious rule of life by the saint. Over the centuries different religious groups have accumulated sets of practices built up by succeeding generations of saintly men and women. Thus we come to various spiritualities or schools of spirituality that are simply clusters or

sets of practices, external and internal, by which women and men open themselves to the Holy Spirit's influence. We have Benedictine, Cistercian, Dominican, Franciscan, Carmelite, Teresian, Ignatian, Passionist, Sulpician spiritualities and many others. The difference among spiritualities is often not so much in the practices themselves but rather in the emphasis given to various practices and the interrelationship seen between them. An attitude of poverty, for example, is characteristic of every spirituality but is strongly emphasized in Franciscan spirituality and takes precedence over practices that are of greater concern in other spiritualities.

## **Dominican Spirituality**

Dominican spirituality is the cluster of practices for opening self to the influence of the Holy Spirit which St. Dominic engaged in and bequeathed to his followers in the rule and constitutions of his Order, and which subsequent generations of Dominicans have practiced, developed, preached, written about, and expounded theologically.

Which practices constitute the cluster designated as Dominican spirituality are not difficult to state. We can list them as a number of imperatives. To anyone wishing to open self to the influence of the Holy Spirit in the Dominican way, we say: "Be loving of God and neighbor, live together in peace and harmony, proclaim the Word of God, be apostolic, be poor, be chaste, be obedient, pray liturgically and privately, study God's Word, seek truth, contemplate and give the fruits of contemplation to others, be faithful to all the elements of this way of life."

Other imperatives, refining these, could be added. Some of these given here overlap to some degree. But we do have here the basic practices of Dominican spirituality. They will be carried out differently by Dominicans living in religious communities and those living as lay men and women; cloistered nuns will carry them out differently from roving preachers. But all these people will be Dominicans insofar as they are moved by this cluster of imperatives to open their lives to the Spirit of God.

Now that we have identified Dominican spirituality, we can show how it enables lay people to fulfill Vatican II's expectations of them. We will make this demonstration by relating certain practices of Dominican spirituality to each of the three radical expectations of Vatican II for the laity. There is, however, much more overlapping in actual life than will appear here.

## **DOMINICAN SPIRITUALITY AND VATICAN II**

### **Articulate Faith**

Vatican II expects lay people to have what we have called articulate faith. Several practices of Dominican spirituality are directed to this articulate faith.

Dominican spirituality enjoins us to study God's Word. The Dominican laity will nourish their lives on God's Word, especially as contained in Sacred Scripture. Like St. Dominic, who carried with him the Gospel according to Matthew and the letters of St. Paul, Dominican lay men and women will daily or frequently have recourse in the Scriptures. They may thoughtfully and prayerfully read a brief passage each day -- or a longer passage every few days -- reflect upon it, contemplate the mysteries recorded there. They may do this alone or in groups. When feasible they will read the Scriptures with the aid of study guides that assist the reader through the Scriptures. Such books and pamphlets offer information to help understand the various Biblical books as well as individual passages more fully than we ordinarily can because our world and culture are so different from those of the original authors. Occasionally, a lecture about Scripture may also be available. All lay Dominicans, however, aim at the study of God's Word and the search for truth in prayerful, contemplative reading of the Scripture.

Lay persons practicing Dominican Spirituality will not hoard the good news they apprehend in their reading and contemplation of the Scriptures. They will share the fruits of their contemplation; they will proclaim the Word of

God. Normally they will not deliver homilies or sermons or give retreat conferences, though some will. But they can share with friends, or those who might seek help, their insights into their beliefs, their struggles with doubts or wonderment while still believing, their convictions, their favorite passages of Scripture that sustain them in trials. Lay people disciplined by practices of Dominican spirituality such as study of God's Word, the search for truth, and contemplation will be in good position to prepare their own children for the reception of the sacraments, to teach in CCD courses, and to participate in adult education programs. The Dominican imperative "Be apostolic" will inspire Dominican lay men and women to undertake such educational efforts.

## **Appreciation of Creation**

The practices of Dominican spirituality foster also that appreciation of creation which Vatican Council II expects of laity. A motto of the Dominican Order is *Veritas*, Truth. The truth referred to is not only the truth of our minds about things but also the truth of things insofar as they reflect the divine mind that creates them and calls them to intended perfection. Ultimately, of course, this Truth pursued by Dominican spirituality is Jesus Christ, and further still, the Divine Being who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The point here is that Dominican spirituality strives to know what is, whether creature or Creator, to know it in its individuality and uniqueness, and knowing it, to respect and cherish it, and to praise God for it. Our brother Thomas Aquinas manifested in his philosophical and theological works this search for the truth of things and through it, The Truth, who is our God.

The Dominican imperative to contemplate also suggests appreciation of creation. The *contemplation* connotes a loving sort of knowledge arising from, accompanying, and leading to more appreciation. Contemplation, in pondering the mysteries of faith, inevitably enhances appreciation for creation, for all these mysteries entail creation in some way. Certainly, the mystery of creation does, but so does the mystery of God's dealings with Israel and then the mystery of Jesus Christ, who is man like us in all things save sin. Even the contemplation of Divinity itself results in a keener appreciation of creatures in comparison and contrast to which we apprehend the Godhead. Contemplation is customarily associated with the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. Thomas Aquinas shows how these gifts, in helping us to know and esteem God, simultaneously give us knowledge and appreciation of creatures. In a sense, we come to know and appreciate God in the measure that we know and appreciate creatures, for these latter both point to what God must be and yet tell us what he is not.

The liturgical prayer enjoined by Dominican spirituality certainly fosters appreciation of creation. Liturgy relies very much on the rhythm of the day and the seasons of the year. It differentiates our inner sense of time to preserve it from becoming monotonous duration. The liturgy calls upon the sun and stars, the earth and seas, plants and animals in its prayers; and it uses bread and wine, water and oil, cloth and wax in its rites.

Dominican spirituality says "Be chaste." This chastity may be celibate or conjugal or single chastity. In any case it is respect for women and men in their bodily being; it regards men and women as persons to be revered and served rather than bodies to be used.

## **Better World**

The third radical expectation of Vatican II for lay people is zeal for building a better world embodying God's rule over his creation. Dominican spirituality leads to such zeal. At the core of Dominican spirituality is the great commandment of love of God and its companion like to it -- namely, love of neighbor as self. These two imperatives stand at the head of St. Augustine's rule, the rule that St. Dominic chose for himself and later for his companions and disciples. The injunction of Dominican spirituality stated earlier as "Live together in peace and harmony" is simply another version of the second commandment above. It, too, stands at the head of the Rule of St. Augustine as the aim of our coming together in the Dominican family -- namely, that we may be one in heart and mind in God.

If we come together in the Dominican family to realize among ourselves Christian love and care for one another, we do not intend to limit that concern to our own circle. On the contrary, we pursue love and care among ourselves in order that collectively we may bear witness to the power and glory of Christian love for the inspiration of others, and that individually we may have support in our own often frustrating efforts to extend that love and care to countless others in the course of our lives.

The love of God and neighbor called for by Dominican spirituality thus inspires the lay Dominican with zeal for building a better world. True, love for neighbor in God is realized in individual instances of compassion, kindness, and relief in the midst of suffering. But love of neighbor seeks also more permanent solutions to suffering; it pursues a social order marked by justice, peace, and freedom for each human being, regardless of race, sex, age, or other distinction. The achievement of this goal seems an endless and fruitless effort, but Dominican spirituality goads us on to it when we grow weary.

The imperative of Dominican spirituality "Be apostolic" is fulfilled by Dominicans primarily by proclaiming the Word of God. But we need to keep in mind that proclaiming the Word of God is by no means limited to verbal expression. In fact, if that is the only way in which we proclaim the Word of God, our proclamation will have little effect. St. Dominic realized this when he established his religious community of preachers. He provided for his preachers a style of life that would reinforce and proclaim in action and nonverbally the Word they announced verbally. The Dominican imperative to proclaim the Word and to be apostolic impels us, then, also to be zealous for the building of a better world and to acquire the skills we need to contribute to this cause in accord with our particular position in life and in the Dominican family.

The imperative of Dominican spirituality "Be poor," taken seriously, also fosters this zeal for building a better world and equipping ourselves to do that work. To be realistic, for the most part this imperative is not going to identify many Dominicans in this country with the poorest people economically and socially, so that our zeal for a better world springs from the despair of the oppressed. But in response to this maxim to be poor, we are enjoined to struggle to free ourselves from the value system of our society -- whatever it may be -- in order to judge and act by the justice of God and the norms of the Gospel. If we then work within our society with those new standards, we will be zealous for building a better world.

Dominican spirituality enjoins us to be obedient. *Obedience* etymologically means "to listen to." Ultimately, obedience is listening to the Word of God. To be obedient is to strive ceaselessly to hear ever more clearly God's Word, the Gospel, Jesus Christ. Obedience to the command of a superior or of a community presupposes that God's Word is discerned in this command; and the obedience to it actualizes, in a particular situation, obedience to God's Word. Listening to or hearing God's Word implies, of course, taking that Word to heart and shaping one's life according to it. "Blest are they who hear the word of God and keep it," Jesus declares (Luke 11:29). Obedience to God's Word in the Gospels, for instance, includes loving and serving the hungry, the naked, the imprisoned, the ignorant, the sinner, and all who are in any way oppressed. Obedience, therefore, leads Dominican lay men and women not only to individual acts of love and service for those in need, but also to the building of a better world that will prevent so much of that suffering in the first place.

An ingredient of any spirituality will be the imperative to persevere in the practices that constitute it. This imperative of Dominican spirituality resides in the traditional means-to-the-end called *regular observance*. In its original sense, *regular observance* refers to certain external practices predetermined by rule, such as maintaining silence, wearing a religious habit, preserving cloistered quarters, and the like. These practices were always regarded as means to ensure that the substance of Dominican life endured -- namely, liturgical and contemplative prayer, study, evangelical and common life, and preaching in various forms. The Constitutions and Ordinations of the Order of Friars Preachers revised in 1968 reflect this understanding:

. . . In order, therefore, that we may remain faithful in our vocation, we should intelligently set great store on regular observance.... (39)

All the elements that constitute Dominican life and supply the arrangements of its community discipline come under the heading *regular observance*. Amongst these elements stand out common life, the celebration of the liturgy and private prayer, the observance of the vows, the assiduous study of truth and the apostolic ministry, in the faithful fulfillment of which we are helped by cloister, silence, the habit, and penitential practices ( 40, emphasis in original).

Significant in this quotation is that regular observance is defined to include the basic elements of Dominican life itself -- the common life, liturgical and private prayer, the vows -- and not simply a number of external practices. Therefore, the imperative "Be regular in observance," which has been and remains a maxim of Dominican spirituality, can be interpreted today to mean: "Be faithful to all the elements of this way of life." Two aspects of this imperative are to be noted.

First, this is an imperative to perseverance in, or fidelity to, the practices of Dominican spirituality. The person who opens himself or herself to the Holy Spirit is not the one who only occasionally does so, but he who continually does so. If there is failure to be open, the person repents and tries again, and again, and again, probably becoming increasingly open with every repeated effort. It is only through perseverance that any spirituality will eventually be effective. Insofar as its effectiveness depends upon us, so we should expect such an injunction in Dominican spirituality.

Secondly, this imperative call for perseverance in the totality of the practices constituting Dominican spirituality. To be faithful to only one or another or some of the practices to the neglect of others will not generate openness to the Holy Spirit -- at least not the Dominican kind of openness. Dominican spirituality calls for a certain mix of practices internal and external. While at times there is tension between them, they also balance one another. To cite the frequently obvious example, Dominican spirituality calls for time devoted to liturgical and private prayer and for time given to preaching and apostolic involvement. To neglect prayer will eventually result in the deterioration of apostolate, and vice versa. Study is no substitute for contemplation and prayer, liturgical and private. On the other hand, the Word of God is exposed to distortion in preaching if study is wanting. If the vows or promises are not observed, preaching will lack credibility. If the effort to love God and neighbor is wanting, the vowed or promised style of life is not serving the purpose for which it is intended.

Dominican spirituality is a specific set of practices for opening ourselves to the influence of the Spirit of God who dwells within us through faith and baptism. Although it originated with St. Dominic in the 13th century, it clearly enables lay people to meet the Church's expectations of them as expressed in Vatican Council II in the 20th century.

This makes the Dominican Laity a force for the reform and renewal of the Church sought by Vatican Council II.