

THE DOMINICANS

Summer 2024

The Magazine of the Dominican Friars of the English Province



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Dialogue & Witness

The General Chapter held in 2022 in Tultenango, Mexico, declared that 'The whole Dominican Family strives to preach the truth by witness and dialogue' (ACG 2022, 146). Dialogue and witness seem to be the unifying features of the articles in this edition of our magazine. At its most basic level, it seems to me that dialogue means simply talking with another. This is at the heart of the experience of the Order of Preachers. For St Dominic, our founder and model in this regard, was said to have been 'either speaking to God or about God'. Speaking or true dialogue entails active listening and thinking about what one hears lest our conversation lapses into monologue. Thus, speaking to God – that is, prayer – requires first of all a contemplative and receptive heart which is open to listening to God. This same receptivity and openness is necessary when we speak *about* God, for if we speak and preach without sensitivity to our audience or context, then our words fall on deaf ears, or at least on ears which cannot understand us!

These thoughts of dialogue and communication come freshly from my experiences in May this year: I visited four countries in Europe, and around the feast of the Translation of St Dominic, I accompanied our Province's novice to the European Novices meeting in Caleruega, Spain, which was a culmination of a month of travelling and dialogue. In Caleruega, immersed in the birthplace



of St Dominic, we learnt that this medieval frontier village of Castille had, from the time of St Dominic, been a place of encounter and dialogue. Some 41 novices and their formators and members of the Dominican General Curia, including the Master of the Order, came together in Caleruega for six days – we prayed together, we ate and talked together, and we laughed and we exchanged ideas despite our linguistic differences, and diverse experiences, ages, and cultural expectations. Underlying our differences was a fraternal desire to communicate, to share our lives together, and so to discover 'the truth of others'. This experience of dialogue within the diversity of the Dominican Order is deeply instructive and necessary it seems to me, for it prepares us, with patience and humility, to become facilitators of dialogue in our world, to be bridge-builders, who can

communicate the Gospel of salvation with a wide range of people and contexts, whether in especially challenging places like Jerusalem, or in Asia, or indeed, in our parishes such as Holy Cross, Leicester, or even through a café in Oxford! Each of these places are opportunities to speak with God and about God, following the example of St Dominic.

In facilitating dialogue and the sharing of lives, we Dominicans have also been called to offer a witness to a divided world. When I look at the reality of our Dominican communities, and reflect on the grace that enables us to live together and to communicate with one another, I believe our communities, at their best, bear a precious witness to charity: brothers dwelling in unity (cf Ps 133:1). Christ is the One who unites us, the Word of God who has first been spoken into creation, into our human society, and into our hearts. He alone causes charity to well up among us, and this is the mystery, the truth, about which we speak. In my experience, this speaking begins with our daily Rosary, our principal dialogue, as we speak to God who thus teaches us how, with charity, patience, and self-giving, we might speak about him to others.

Fraternally,

– Fr Lawrence Lew OP, Editor

You can send any comments or feedback to me via magazine@english.op.org

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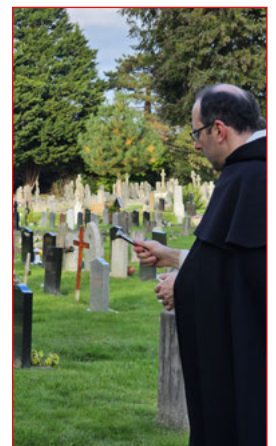
Requiescant in Pace

We remember with affection and gratitude all the recently departed, including the following who made gifts to the Friars in their Wills.

- **Susan Black (St Martin's Missions)**
- **Ellen Buckley** (St Dominic's Parish, London)
- **Fr Richard Marriott** (Blackfriars Hall, Oxford)
- **Elizabeth Murphy** (St Dominic's Parish, London)
- **Mary Watts** (English Province)

May they and all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Since 1221, gifts made in Wills have always played a vital part in sustaining the mission of the friars. **If you are considering leaving such a gift, please see the back page of this magazine or visit www.english.op.org/legacies**





An Unexpected Renaissance?

In April, Fr Nicholas Crowe was elected Prior Provincial by the friars gathered for their four-yearly Provincial Chapter. Here he offers an overview of our Province for the years ahead.

It is a testimony to the quality of the friars' pastoral work – and to the creativity of friars, employees and volunteers – that many of the innovations developed in response to Covid lockdowns have continued and grown in their wake. The experiments with livestreaming Masses, for example, have borne the unexpected fruit of new and international online congregations. It is a great joy that so many of our online congregants have chosen to remain in touch with us now that life has returned to normal, and we have exciting plans to develop our online offering further over the next four years.

The Covid-19 restrictions limited our ability to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Province's founding in 2021 as we had hoped. Despite this, we can see that the Jubilee Year bore many fruits. Fr Richard Finn's new history of our Province has been a particular blessing in helping us understand where we have come from, and providing inspiration. Reading it, I was struck by the remarkable resilience of the brethren down the centuries. We know well that the Church in Britain has faced many dark days, the Province has endured many trials, yet each challenge has sparked new creativity and energy. Reviewing the work of each house, the chapter fathers wondered if we were once more seeing the first signs of another 'unexpected renaissance', as many brethren reported a new vitality in both established ministries and recent initiatives.

In London, the parish has rebounded strongly and the Rosary Shrine continues to grow as a focal point of devotion, strengthened by its collaboration with Radio Maria. Radio Maria also has strong ties with our Cambridge community, where the brethren are finding new ways to minister to the city's growing population and engage in meaningful dialogue with Cambridge University's staff and students.

In Leicester, our parish is booming with a new generation of young Catholics, reflecting the Church's global character. The Edinburgh community has significantly raised the Order's profile in Scotland through the arts and conferences celebrating and communicating the Dominican charism.

In Oxford we teach theology in a robustly Catholic environment in our Studium, training our own men for the priesthood, but also Franciscans, Carmelites, Benedictines, Oratorians, and now religious sisters. We hope to explore new ways of sharing the resources of the Studium with lay people, perhaps by means of the internet and short courses. In Blackfriars Hall, we test our ideas against the best of secular thought via our insertion into one of the world's great universities. We are excited by the Hall's plans to develop a café (*see p.11*) to improve our provision to our students, and the apostolic opportunities that this new space will offer. We are also excited by the possibilities raised by the continuing development of the Aquinas Institute, the Las Casas Institute, and a new project focused on Theology and the Arts. We believe that engaging confidently in conversation with secular thinkers is a precious gift for the whole Church.

Our brothers in the Caribbean also report signs of new life and hope. Many people were inspired by Fr Clifton Harris's tour of the Province last year, where he reported on how the brethren are serving the poor and raising up a new generation of confident Caribbean Catholic leaders on the islands of Grenada and Jamaica. We hope to develop our recently established pre-novitiate in Jamaica, with the missions on both islands poised for further development.

The greatest source of hope is our young brothers. In recent years we have been blessed by the arrival of talented men willing to lay down their lives for Christ by following St Dominic. With so many religious orders failing to recruit, we are very aware that the gift of these vocations is a grace and a responsibility. The Acts of the Chapter require me to prioritise the training and mentoring of our young men, that they be given the opportunity to explore and develop their gifts and talents and maximise their potential as servants of God. This might mean it will take them a little longer to be fully available to our apostolates, however we are confident that it will reap a rich harvest.

Finally, we offer our heartfelt thanks to Fr Martin Ganeri for his two terms as Provincial, which he served with calm competence and great generosity. We wish him every blessing for his well-deserved mini-sabbatical, and then his new role as teacher and researcher at the Angelicum in Rome.

Thank you also to all our supporters and benefactors; your prayers and contributions are vital to our mission. We look forward to continuing this journey together, renewed and inspired by the recent Chapter.

Building Bridges in Jerusalem



The first thing that visitors or pilgrims to Jerusalem notice is the wall built by Sultan Suleiman in the 15th century. The city is enclosed behind its wall, which was intended to be impregnable. My own priory is surrounded by a wall that hides it from intruders, and which allows for the serenity and calm that many visitors praise. Many visitors are surprised to see brothers or teachers doing their exercises in the large park hidden by the wall.

You can also climb up to the roofs to see the 'security fence' or 'separation barrier'. This wall, with its surprising route, divides Israel from Palestine. The wall then creates a bubble. But there are also invisible walls. On the Google Maps of Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem, Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem are white, which means they are off-limits. While it is not forbidden to go there, fear prevents them from doing so. Even in Jewish and Arab neighborhoods, there are separations. Jerusalem is a patchwork of bubbles living side by side. The bubble of the Ecole Biblique is close to the many bubbles of Mea Shearim, and the small Syriac bubble opposite us is surrounded by a larger Muslim bubble. The 'republic' of Tel Aviv is no exception to the rule, as the Israelis call it 'the bubble'. It is evident that the bubble is a pervasive phenomenon. The bubble, delimited by a real or imaginary wall, allows each group to lead its own existence, sheltered from others, who are often perceived as a threat to one's own development or even one's life. The construction of walls,

whether of stone or concrete, creates an inner wall which, in turn, creates a real wall. This vicious circle must be broken. Walls are all made to fall, just as the Berlin Wall once fell.

What is the best approach to dismantling the wall? I have decided to adopt the 'Pontifex attitude', which I have observed to be effective when working with the scouts whom I accompany. It is not about becoming Pope. It is about becoming 'pontiffs', which means 'bridge-builders'. This is the Christian attitude: not to take sides, but to meet others and allow others to meet. Christians in the Holy Land served as a neutral third party between communities in conflict. Let us endeavor to bridge the gap between our Christian communities and the wider world, as well as between communities. Dialogue, service, humility, prayer, and service to our neighbours who are so different (!) but have a story to tell. This is an excellent opportunity for me as a preacher and for our *sancta praedicatio* in Jerusalem!

It is essential that we listen to others without judging their stories so that they can speak directly to each other. An English Christian friend of mine interviewed dozens of Israeli and Palestinian children to listen not only to their stories but also to better understand what their forbidden stories might be: how can a Palestinian child hear the stories of the Shoah and an Israeli child the suffering of a child whose grandfather lost his land? My friend consistently emphasised the potential of the 'bridge of words' to dismantle

barriers, including those within individuals' hearts. The Christian is a mediator of the human word and the Word of God. Fortunately, there are no great concrete walls in our countries. However, there are invisible walls between neighborhoods of our cities, within our own communities, and within our own hearts. Am I prepared to hear the accounts of others, to extend a hand and construct a bridge when our hearts are closed? This requires courage and trust, but it is the right and good thing to do. Building a bridge takes time and resources, and it is not without risk. However, it can have a significant impact on the outcome. The bridge becomes a neutral meeting place that overcomes the limitations of the surrounding walls. It eliminates barriers of hatred. Let us, as Dominicans and Christians, be bridge-builders, and we will not have worked in vain.



Fr Olivier Catel OP spent seven years at the Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem, and is currently spending a year at Blackfriars, Oxford, writing his PhD dissertation before returning to Jerusalem later this year.

Studying the Bible in the Land



When in 1890 Servant of God Fr Marie-Joseph Lagrange OP founded the *École Pratique d'Études Bibliques* in a former abattoir in Jerusalem, it was because he was convinced that there was no substitute to studying the Bible in the land whence it came. In fact, so keen was he to start that the abattoir still had the rings in the ceiling! Today the *École Biblique et Archéologique Française*, as it became, continues to live this vision: Dominican friars and scholars investigating the land and the text through detailed exegesis, archaeology and cultural engagement.

I had visited many times over the years, but in 2023 I was an invited researcher of the school, spending the second semester of the academic year there. This extended period allowed an absorption of experiences, connecting text with context, and faith with life, in the rich environment of Jerusalem and its area. There were many contexts and many religions through which the people of the Holy City navigate their daily lives, providing a unique background to the study of the sacred texts.

There are really three aspects to my time there on which I continue to reflect. First, the clash of life and religions. The period of my sojourn covered the whole period of Western Christian Lent and Easter. The qualification 'Western' immediately indicates the variety of experience even within Christianity, because Eastern Christianity with its many representatives in Jerusalem marked Easter at a different time. While it is an experience to celebrate

the salvation events in the city where they took place, on the other hand, Easter appears unremarkable, and unremarked, among the majority of the city's residents. But was this so different when Christ carried his cross? There is a certain focus on the Christian claim when most others conceive the contribution of Jerusalem to cosmic events in a completely different, even competing way. For while we were contemplating the Lord's Passion in Holy Week, the Jews were feasting for Passover and the Muslims fasting for Ramadan, heading to the Al-Aqsa Mosque for Friday prayers. Jerusalem's various quarters live according to quite different realities and value systems.

Secondly, studying the Bible in context. My interest is Iron Age Israel and biblical texts that describe it, such as the book of Judges. The unrivalled library of EBAF allowed me to expose certain questions about these texts, the world they describe, and hence their meaningfulness for the people who cherished them through the ages. But the presence of this school in the land meant that the sites and locations mentioned in the texts could be discovered and visited. Most weekends I and a couple of other friars drove out to the Shephelah, an area west of Jerusalem on the way to the Mediterranean, in search of Israel and Philistia's Iron Age settlements. Geography, topography and archaeology lent an experience of the land's contours that readers and writers of Judges *et al.* must have shared. As a friar at the school remarked, the difference with studying in

Israel is that one day I read about a place in a book; the next, I can go and see it.

The third experience that I took away was how unexpected and thus not fully grasped was the immense opportunity available by studying in the land. The structure of life in the Convent of St Étienne distils the Dominican charism of contemplation. Lauds at 7.30, Mass at 12 noon, Vespers at 19.30 – hours of space for study, gestation of ideas, pursuit of speculative tangents among the library's shelves. Yet, unprepared as I was for this contemplative space, I was overwhelmed by it. It was only gradually that ideas began to develop and avenues of study open. I emerged from Jerusalem with the groundwork for many projects, but left the experiences, the proximity to the land and the reflective space behind.

Yet, this contemplative deceleration enriches our busyness and activity when we must return to normal. The artist David Hockney had a custom of painting nothing for two months and then completing a work in a couple of weeks. When this was remarked upon, he replied, 'Well, that means that the painting took two and a half months'. Processing the experience of Jerusalem required space, inactivity, contemplation. It will bear fruit in due season. This is the incomparable benefit of studying the Bible in the land. Marie-Joseph Lagrange was right.

Fr Bruno Clifton OP is Vice-Regent of Blackfriars, Oxford, and a scripture scholar.

A Heavenly Throng



Fr Richard Ounsworth OP, after serving two terms as Provincial Bursar, reflects on his current role as Prior of Holy Cross, Leicester.

One of the things that first attracted me to the Dominican Order was the likelihood of a widely varied ministry. Teaching, university or prison chaplaincy, parish work, whatever it might be, it would be a participation in the preaching of the Gospel in a distinctively Dominican way. Little did I suspect, back in the mid '90s, that I would spend so much of my life in financial administration.

That task, too, offered a way, and indeed a vital one, of participating in our preaching mission, but I won't deny that it was with some relief that I received an assignation to Leicester when a brief interlude between two lockdowns allowed us all to move around in the autumn of 2020. Of course, the nature of the work was very different, concentrated now on hearing confessions, preaching at Mass and offering individual instruction and pastoral support, rather than spreadsheets and administrative norms; but for the first time I found myself in the midst of a type and intensity of popular piety that was not what I had known in Oxford.

Our congregation in Leicester is a large one: the church has a capacity of around 550, a number often exceeded at one or both of the two largest Sunday Masses, with total Mass attendance on Sundays continuing to rise and now topping a thousand. The 10.30 Mass is a sung Mass with a large number of enthusiastic young altar servers and a dedicated choir offering a traditional-style Mass that proves especially popular with the substantial south Indian and Nigerian populations. The 7pm Mass is now the only Sunday

evening Mass in Leicester, and draws a large and varied crowd of young people as well as families.

One of the first things that struck me was the level of devotion among the people. In stark contrast to our Oxford Priory church – a church I have always loved – Holy Cross church is simply full of statues and other images, and literally hundreds of candles are lit in front of them each week. There are parishioners at weekday Masses who will not leave until they have visited all their favourite saints, and it is wonderful to see that, when the Sunday evening Mass ends, the throng of those crowding to the exits is matched by those heading to the Lady Chapel to make their devotions. Alas, we have yet to inculcate a great devotion to St Dominic, but St Martin de Porres is much loved, and a statue recently given to us by the Stone Sisters has engendered a new interest in St Catherine of Siena.

Dominicans have always been great supporters of popular piety, and have recognised that to support it means to give it a firm doctrinal foundation. This, it seems to me, is why it is good to have a Dominican presence in a place like Leicester, and in a church like Holy Cross: good, clear, engaging and well-founded preaching ensures that the devotional life is well integrated into a wider Christian life of informed participation in the sacramental mysteries and works of charity.

Alongside preaching, another key to this integration of the Christian life is regular confession, and it is wonderful – if occasionally exhausting – to have so many people availing themselves of the sacrament. The scheduled time on Saturday mornings regularly overruns, and it can often be that the two confessionals are kept busy for the whole period between the end of the 10 o'clock Mass

and the start of Benediction at 12.15, before the lunchtime Mass. It is important for us priests to resist the temptation to simply work our way speedily through the throng: Dominicans have, since our earliest times, been known as good confessors – compassionate, certainly, but also thoughtful, careful, willing to spend the time to help penitents come to a better understanding of their own sinfulness and of God's mercy.

To see a full church, not only on a Sunday but even on a weekday, and especially on Saturday mornings, is of course very encouraging. I have also been greatly heartened by the number of people who regularly attend our Tuesday-evening Scripture Group, which is about to move on from the Apocalypse to the Gospel of St John. When we read about people of every nation and people and tongue thronging to the heavenly city, we could see that reflected in our own group, and it has been fascinating to hear insights into the scriptures from those who have come to England from very different societies and cultures.

The Catholic Church in England has for many years been a church of immigrants, whether Irish, Italian or Polish, and now increasingly African and Asian. In a time when some seek to stir up resentment against those who come to our country seeking safety or indeed better opportunities to work and study, it is the role of the Church to remind us that our citizenship is a heavenly one and that the future of humanity is indeed that great throng of peoples, nations and tongues. This future is powerfully reflected in the diversity and unity visible at Holy Cross, and it is a joy for me, for all of us here, to play a part in shaping the future of the Church and – I hope – the future of our country.

East meets West

Br Jordan Scott OP is a Cooperator Brother of the Province of England, currently working in Taiwan. Here he reflects on the crisis of the West and the hope of the East.

For well over a few hundred years much ink has been spilled about what exactly is going on with European/Western culture. Times are changing and whatever one thinks of this, if we look to Church attendance then surely we are bound to admit that things are not, for the Church at least, going well.

Declining religious practice in fact corresponds to what the aforementioned ink-spillers often cite as the most important process of the past few hundred years: the decline of Christian belief. Not obviously good news for Christians but surely a matter worth exploring, if only to get some glimpse of what might be coming next.

When talking about today's world, scholars and commentators like to throw about words such as Secularism or Disenchantment, and more often than not such folk refer to that phrase popularized by Nietzsche: 'the Death of God'. Western civilisation, his idea is, having lost its belief in God is facing the most tumultuous, disturbing and disruptive centuries of change: 'the earth is off its axis and spinning in all directions'.

While many follow Nietzsche in exploring this notion, few have time to recount in detail one of his most significant claims: the decline of Christianity is a consequence of Christian convictions themselves, above all the conviction that 'the Truth' is a thing to be pursued with absolute fervour and grasped tenaciously – salvation depends upon it after all.

Concern for the truth is a sensible attitude and we might scoff at the idea that



a zealous preference for it could lead to anything ultimately negative. Of course, being single-minded in pursuit of something is no guarantee of finding it and, indeed, it is the being 'single-minded' that presents the issue. What if our zeal, over time, inculcates a mode of thinking that in fact leads us astray?

Iain McGilchrist, in his famous book 'The Master and His Emissary', his title borrowed from a parable of Nietzsche's, sets out to tell exactly how such a thing might come about. McGilchrist claims that Westerners have long prioritised 'Left-Brain' analysis. That is that our brain's Left Lobe, which likes to identify and define things into ever more precise parts, is overworked, while we neglect to sufficiently apply the powers of our more holistically thinking Right Lobe, which likes to assemble the Left's jigsaw pieces and bring the whole perspective into view. A consequence of our one-sided-mindedness, says McGilchrist, has been an ever increasing atomising myopia which, suitable though it may be for addressing many, many problems, alas, leaves us with a disorientated conception of the whole – we've lost the wood for the trees.

Is there, however, an alternative? Just as scholars have long talked about a great shift in Western civilisation, so too have scholars gestured towards a reception of rejuvenating modes of thinking from an as yet under-appreciated East.

Certainly, just as it is often noted that the Church in the West is in decline, so

too is it reported that the Church in Asia and Africa is growing. This story is more complex than headlines allow, but one thing is certain: in a matter of decades, more than three quarters of the world's Catholics will live between these two continents.

If we are to discern in this the hand of Providence, as we must, then it seems fair to suggest that God is leading the Church through a period of not just geographic but perhaps even intellectual-spiritual re-calibration.

Nietzsche claimed that the Christian attitude towards Truth, the ardent desire to possess something that, in fact, transcends the mode through which we sought to possess it, our 'Left-Lobial' definitions, led to its own undoing. This ardour, he believed, actually preceded Christianity in the philosopher Plato, Plato the intellectual father of the world into which the Gospel was received. What then, if the Gospel had been first received elsewhere, by people who thought according to different lights?

A Chinese interlocutor who heard the words 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life', would have had more interest in the first epithet: *I am the Way*. The 'Dao' or 'The Way' is at the core of Chinese thought and, crucially for my slightly contrived scenario, it is obviously not something you can grab hold of. On the contrary, the Way is something that encompasses you: to follow the Dao is to be caught up in its course as in a river.

Modes of thinking and acting flowing from worldviews orientated according to basic conceptions different from those in the West remain alive across East Asia. They are usually by no means utterly alien to the West's traditions, just as much of what is thought of as fundamentally Western is found in non-Western places. However, little differences of emphasis can result, over time, in whole new ways of seeing and being.

Whether a Chinese apostle, emphasising the Way, would have avoided Nietzsche's problem and led to a different trajectory for the Church is not the point. Rather, the suggestion is simply that just as the Church grows in new places with more Christians than as yet have ever lived, then so too exciting new vistas lie ahead, and perhaps the best wine has not yet been served.

Preaching the Rosary



As the Dominican Order's 'General Promoter of the Rosary', Fr Lawrence Lew now dedicates himself to preaching and promoting the Rosary worldwide. In keeping with Dominican tradition, he combines his passion for theology and the sacred arts to inspire devotion through retreats, books and international missions.

The Order of Mary

Reflecting on the origins of the Dominican Order, Fr Lawrence explained: 'There is a beautiful story that Our Lady begged from her Son the gift of an order that would teach, preach and correct error, and it was seen to be an act of divine mercy that such an order should exist. And for that reason, because Our Lord granted the prayers of Mary for this order to exist, the order came to be called the Order of Mary.'

'There are many other beautiful Marian stories connected to the order', he added. 'For example, the white scapular worn by Dominicans was given to the order by Our Lady. She also gave us the Rosary, which is the most precious gift that she entrusted to the order.'

Although Dominican tradition holds that the Rosary was given to St. Dominic in an apparition by the Virgin Mary in 1208, the tradition of praying with beads can be found in the earliest days of Christianity. Already in the third

century, Fr Lawrence explained, the Desert Fathers prayed with beads or knotted prayer ropes to count their praying of the 150 Psalms, but also of other prayers such as the Jesus prayer — 'Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me a sinner' — and the *Paternoster*, the Latin name for the Our Father.

Over the centuries, this prayer tradition slowly shifted, becoming more Marian. According to different sources, Benedictine monk St. Peter Damian supposedly first suggested praying Hail Marys on the beads instead of Our Fathers in the 11th century. In 1365, Carthusian monk Henry of Kalkar is said to have divided the 150 Hail Marys into 15 groups of 10, with an Our Father between each decade. The practice of meditation during the praying of the Hail Mary is attributed to another Carthusian monk, Dominic of Prussia (†1460), who tied each Hail Mary with a thought or phrase about Mary or Jesus.

But while the extent of St. Dominic's contribution to the development of the Rosary remains disputed, it can be said with certainty that he prayed and preached the Rosary to convert unbelievers. In fact, at least a dozen popes have mentioned St. Dominic's connection with the Rosary, and he is traditionally credited with spreading and popularizing the practice.

The Power of the Rosary

'As a Protestant convert, I initially said rather proudly that I didn't think I

needed Mary', Fr Lawrence recalled. 'All I thought I needed was our Lord Jesus Christ, as our Savior, and the Blessed Trinity. But no one really can live as a Christian without knowing the Mother of God, because God has willed that we should come to know and love Jesus through Mary.'

Reflecting upon Mary's undeniable role in the history of salvation and emphasizing how it was through Mary's 'Yes' that God became man, and that creation was renewed, the Dominican priest explained how fitting it is to pray the Rosary to honour Our Lady and her Son through her prayer.

'In a nutshell', Fr Lawrence explained, 'God has become man so that man can become God, as St Athanasius said. And I think that sums up what the Rosary is about: It is a presentation of the mysteries of our salvation, as the great Dominican teacher Garrigou-Lagrange noted. It is not so much the chronology of Christ's life that we are looking at, but the theological story of what he has done for us: Christ became man, died for our sins, and rose from the dead, that we might rise and be divinised with him.'

'When I preach the Rosary', Fr Lawrence added, 'I basically preach about how we can participate in the life of Christ, how his life divinises us and sanctifies us today.'

Recalling the worrying levels of social isolation, loneliness and emotional distress caused by the recent pandemic, Fr Lawrence noted that he observed 'a real

proliferation of Rosary prayer groups who prayed through Zoom and other means.’

‘Praying together brings people together’, Fr Lawrence said, ‘and I think that is the great power of the Rosary: It unites us, and it brings us right into the heart of the universal Church. We recognise that we are a communion of saints, and the Rosary is Mary’s gift to the entire Church.’

Promoting the Rosary

On Oct. 7, 2019, the feast day of the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary, Fr Lawrence was appointed as ‘General Promoter of the Rosary’ by the master of the Dominican Order, Fr Gerard Francisco Timoner III.

Throughout the world, the Dominican Order is divided up into regional provinces. ‘Every province has a local Rosary promoter’, Fr Lawrence explained. ‘As promoter general of the Rosary for the whole Dominican order, my main job is to try and help and coordinate the work of our local Rosary promoters.’

‘Here in Rome, I met with the General Curia of the Dominican Order to present my directory for the Rosary confraternity’, Fr Lawrence said, ‘which is one of the oldest confraternities in the Church and the largest spiritual network of people connected through the praying of the Rosary.’

Throughout the month of May, Fr Lawrence will also travel to the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Spain, to visit and support local Rosary confraternities. This summer, he will also attend the National Eucharistic Congress in the U.S. and travel to Taiwan at the end of the year to help establish a Rosary confraternity there.

While ‘Our Lady is the true and best promoter general of the Rosary’, Fr Lawrence said his work as a general promoter of the Rosary includes ‘preaching the Rosary’ through various retreats in parishes worldwide and by authoring books. In 2021, he wrote *Mysteries Made Visible*, a book featuring 20 of his photographs that illustrate the Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and Luminous Mysteries. Each photograph is paired with meditations and prayers inspired by the art ‘to help us meditate better, especially when our minds start to wander, on the mysteries of the Rosary with the help of sacred art.’

Offering a ‘Garland of Roses’ to Mary

‘The Rosary is the prayer that many of us will take with us throughout our Catholic life’, Fr Lawrence observed. ‘It is so beautiful that we turn to the Rosary when we are sad, when we are anxious, when something happens in our lives that causes us distress, but also in happy times and to celebrate.’

Reflecting on the fittingness of praying the Rosary during May, Fr Lawrence explained that the English word ‘rosary’ comes from the Latin *rosarium*, meaning a garden or garland of roses. Hence, in the most literal sense, the Rosary is ‘a beautiful garland of flowers that we offer to our Blessed Mother, as a spiritual bouquet of prayers.’

Since May is the month of spring, ‘when everything is in bloom’ and coming alive after winter, it is thus natural that ‘we are moved to remember Our Lady, the Mother of all the living’, and pray to her for her intercession.

‘We have a beautiful tradition in the Dominican Order,’ Fr Lawrence shared,

‘following the Latin word *ros*, which also means “dew”.’ According to tradition, ‘St Dominic was told that heresy would not be eradicated until prayers rose like dew from the ground. And so there is this beautiful idea that, as we pray, we are praying spiritual dewdrops that bring refreshment and new life to a parched world.’

The world becomes parched by sin, by violence, division and warfare. The Rosary, he continued, ‘is therefore all the more needed so that we can water the earth with the dewfall of God’s grace, the dewfall of the Holy Spirit.’

‘That is what the Rosary is: It is placing ourselves, like Mary, at the disposal of God’s grace to be obedient to God, to say “Yes” to God. It is striving to bring about a new creation, to bring about peace in the world.’

– *Bénédicte Cedergren*

Abridged with permission from an article in *National Catholic Register*, www.ncregister.com/interview/meet-father-lawrence-lew-dominican-priest-love-for-mary





Brothers United in St Dominic

Br Dominik, a novice of our Province, recently travelled to Caleruega for an important international gathering.

In the last week of May the Dominican novices of Europe gathered together for a week-long meeting at Caleruega, the birthplace of St Dominic. There were fifty-seven of us in total, including forty-one novices from fifteen provinces. It was a great opportunity to meet and get to know one another. In our week there, most of us took advantage of our free time to explore Caleruega together and to climb the nearby hill.

Each noviciate had the opportunity to give a presentation on a notable figure from their province. I gave my presentation on Fr Vincent McNabb OP, a notable preacher and ascetic. The novices also gave a presentation about their experiences in the noviciate and their provinces in general. The novices also had a private session with Fr Gerard Timoner III OP, the Master of the Order, while the novice masters met separately. The novices had many questions for the Master and we received very insightful answers.

On the solemnity of the Translation of Our Holy Father Dominic, we had Mass with Caleruega's cloistered Dominican nuns, whose convent we were able to visit later in the week. We also visited the

nearby Romanesque Benedictine monastery of San Domingo de Silos and joined its monks for vespers. On our way back we stopped off briefly to walk through the picturesque Desfiladero de La Yecla, a narrow limestone gorge with waterfalls below and vultures circling above.

On our fourth day in Spain we had a day trip to Valladolid, and had Mass in the beautiful Dominican priory church of San Pablo. We had lunch at the Colegio de San Ambrosio, and sang Vespers at the Porta Caeli monastery with its cloistered Dominican nuns and the Dominican sisters of Valladolid.

We also visited the Colegio de San Gregorio which was the site of the Valladolid debate. In the sixteenth century the Dominican theologian Bartolomé de las Casas argued for the

rights of the indigenous communities of the Americas. His efforts for the recognition of indigenous peoples as human beings with inalienable rights, led to the papal bull *Sublimis Deus* (1537) which declared the indigenous peoples were rational human beings who had rights. Casas' arguments, although controversial at the time, arguably laid the foundations for modern human rights.

We learnt about the Salamanca School, which was a renewal of theology in the sixteenth century as a result of the encounters Dominican missionaries had with the indigenous peoples of the Americas. We then looked at the Salamanca Process, which stems from the Salamanca School and is a dialogue between theology and the secular sciences, and originates from difficult pastoral encounters. It aims to understand the human condition more fully.

At the end of our time in Caleruega we were invited to reflect upon a list of questions about the future of the Order in Europe. Our reflections and answers to these questions are going to be presented at the next General Chapter of the Order.



Please pray for Dominik and all those with a vocation to the Dominicans. Your donations to the friars' Training Fund assist with the costs of their formation.



Breaking Bread Together

It happens every day, yet we may give little thought to its importance: we sit down together, as a family or a community; and as we eat, we share different perspectives and experiences, anecdotes of the past day and new ideas that intrigue us. In these moments we are building friendships, sharing thoughts, creating something greater than ourselves.

The tradition of communal dining runs deep in Oxford, and is an almost sacred tradition – note how the grandeur of college dining halls often echoes that of college chapels. As a member institution of Oxford University, the Dominicans' own Blackfriars Hall has been disadvantaged by the lack of a student dining hall, and

the time has now come to correct this.

Blackfriars is the least wealthy institution in Oxford, so we have had to think creatively. Several diverse needs have in fact been drawn together into this project: as well as student dining, there is the need to boost Blackfriars' financial position, to make Blackfriars more visible, and to find a way to cater more readily for regular and occasional catering needs.

Following an imaginary drum roll, we present the solution: the currently unused retail space in the ground floor of the Blackfriars Annexe is being converted into an elegant dining and events space with a dual identity. A public café by day, in the evenings this space will become

a place for student dining, and with the potential for other social functions including private dinners, drinks parties, society meetings, welcoming guests, and so on. The kitchen will also be able to supply catering to our main site as needed.

It is no exaggeration to say that we are excited by the possibilities that this new space offers Blackfriars, and the alumni we have spoken to echo this excitement. We are working now with both a specialist restaurant architect and an Oxford-based small business that runs local cafés, to create a very special experience. The visuals here capture something of that.

Continued on back page...

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Version: LIT-5

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Breaking Bread Together (cont.)

At the time of writing we are on track to open in 2024, however we do urgently need additional support from donors: the more help we get from donations now, the more immediate will be the financial benefit to Blackfriars, as there will be a reduction in the amounts we need to pay off over the coming years, and therefore more income from the café freed up to support Blackfriars' core work of research and education.

It is a time of great potential at Blackfriars, as we build stronger international links with Catholic institutions worldwide, and as we consolidate our reputation in the specialist areas of theology and philosophy, social sciences, and the humanities. However, we are very much aware that other Catholic Higher Education institutions have failed, and we are more determined than ever to strengthen Blackfriars and ensure it has a bright future.

– Richard Brown, Development Director

Please support this project if you can: we need gifts of all sizes, so your generosity will be appreciated.

Fuller details can be found at www.bfriars.ox.ac.uk/phase2 or email development@english.op.org if you would like to be sent a free brochure.



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