



THE DOMINICANS

Winter 2024/25

The Magazine of the Dominican Friars of the English Province



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Preachers who Listen

Recently I had the joy of being in the north of England, giving a weekend retreat to lay Dominicans and laity from the north-west, and from as far as Cambridge and London, speaking about the prayer of St Dominic and Dominican prayer, particularly the Rosary. This gave me an opportunity to re-visit the 'Nine Ways of Prayer of St Dominic', a beautiful and moving little treatise which tells us that St Dominic prayed passionately, with tears and repeated gestures, audibly engaging with the Scriptures, visibly conversing with God, and his bodily gestures and postures disposed him for prayer, and his silent prayer, in turn, would 'burst out into bodily effects', as Fr Simon Tugwell put it; St Dominic prayed with his whole being, body and soul. But at the heart of his prayer was humble listening, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a desire to hear what the Lord has to say to him. And so he would 'hold his hands out before his breast, like an open book... Then, in his prayer, he would appear to be pondering the words of God... At other times he lifted his hands to his shoulders, like the priest at Mass, as if he wanted to fix his ears more attentively... you would have thought you saw a prophet conversing with an angel or with God himself, now talking, now listening, now thinking quietly...'

This portrait of St Dominic at prayer matches that well-known fresco by Fra Angelico, which shows St Dominic reading, meditating with a book, his fingers



under his chin in a gesture of thoughtful engagement, and his left ear prominent as he listens attentively. This was our experience when Fr Gerard Timoner, current Successor of St Dominic, came to visit our Province recently: he came to listen, to observe our life together and our ministries, and to engage thoughtfully; but as he said in his homily preached in the Rosary Shrine, 'we cannot speak unless we have heard', and we must first 'listen in attentive obedience to His Word'.

This attentive listening is an invitation to daily prayer and to meditation on the Scriptures, not least through the Rosary of course, but it is also an invitation, crucially, to listen to one another, as Fr Timothy Radcliffe, another Successor of St Dominic, explains: 'The art of holiness is to hear well, not so as to reply but so as to learn.' But if our so-called discourse on social media shows anything, it is that we talk and opine a lot but we don't really listen, and what we say isn't really being

heard. As Christians, therefore, we do well to follow St Dominic's example of listening, pondering, hearing well. Pope Francis's latest encyclical *Dilexit Nos* also warned that if we become too distracted by technology, 'lacking in the patience needed to engage in the processes that an interior life by its very nature requires', then we and our society become 'heartless' and 'no longer capable of healthy relationships. As a result, we also become incapable of openness to God.' Hence, we turn again to St Dominic's prayer, his openness to God, his listening to God, and to the brethren, and to the cries of his contemporaries, for whose sake he wept and prayed and did penance every night.

This radical mercy of St Dominic which moved him to listen to the needs of his time inspired a conference in Edinburgh, which Dr Sara Parvis recounts. It also motivates our world-wide service of teaching, as Fr David Goodill writes, and our pastoral ministry, as Br John Church describes it in Jamaica for example. Both friars speak of listening as the basis for our Dominican preaching mission, of handing on what we have first received. For as the Master asks: 'How could we speak rightly if we have not heard correctly?' Thus St Dominic would also hear what was said to him, and so in his prayer he would go 'from reading to prayer, from prayer to meditation, from meditation to contemplation.'

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.

- **Anna Baidoun** (Blackfriars Priory, Oxford)
- **Elizabeth Barry** (Blackfriars Priory, Oxford)
- **Margaret Howell** (Blackfriars Priory, Oxford)
- **Wasył Lapinskyj** (Holy Cross Priory, Leicester)
- **Lia Correia Raitt** (Blackfriars Priory, Oxford)

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

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Understanding Synodality

Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe OP discusses his participation in the recent Synod on Synodality, and what is meant by this term.

1. Can you describe the experience of being at the Synod on Synodality in 2023 and 2024? How did this differ from other synods?

This was my fourth Synod. When I attended synods as Master of the Order, in the plenary assemblies, members read out eight-minute interventions prepared beforehand. There was no discussion. Pope Benedict introduced more free debate. Pope Francis has developed this even more. They are also much more prayerful occasions, with regular pauses for silence so that we could meditate on what had been said. Before, the members sat in rows facing the Pope. This time they sat at round tables with ten or eleven other people: cardinals, bishops, priests, religious and lay people, and engaged in what were called ‘conversations in the Spirit’, each speaking in turn without interruption.

Last year’s Assembly was tenser and less friendly than this time. In part because this year we knew each other and barriers were falling. People who previously regarded each other with suspicion even began to be friends.

2. How would you define synodality?

Literally it means ‘being on the journey together’. Synods have always been a regular part of the life of the Church, especially when the way forward has not been clear and when we need to listen together to ‘what the Spirit is saying to the Churches’ (Revelation 2:17). Arguably, the first Synod was the Council of Jerusalem in AD 50, when the issue was how to welcome Gentiles into the Church.

3. Why is synodality so important for us today, and are we re-discovering it, or is this something new?

Yves Congar OP maintained that they are the typical Catholic form of government. Trent ordained that every diocese should hold regular synods. It was only in the nineteenth century that they became less frequently celebrated. They are especially important today because the Christian life is essentially relational, a participation in the life of the Triune God. This goes against the grain of our Western deeply individualistic culture. In our society to be in a ‘relationship’ has been reduced to having sex with someone. For a Christian, it is to be alive. As it is said in Africa, ‘I am because we are’. It is above all in the West that people struggle to understand synodality. For more traditional cultures, its nature is more evident.

4. Does our Dominican religious life help us to understand synodality?

Our communitarian form of government, as the Constitutions call it, is profoundly synodal. We take decisions together by listening to each other, open – in theory anyway! – to the truth and wisdom of each brother.

5. How would synodality work in a parish context especially when some parishioners are excluded by the more vocal or active or eloquent members of a parish?

I have little experience of ministering in parishes! I imagine that one of the tasks of the parish priest is to discern the gifts that each person can bring to the life of the parish community, and make sure that those who hesitate to speak are heard and valued. Synodality also means that the priest should share with the people the challenges of the parish’s life and mission, and hear their advice. Indeed, the final document of the Synod urges that this accountability should be mandatory.

6. Some people think that synodality is a process for bringing in change. For some, they fear that this change will threaten the moral commitments of the Christian faith and pander to secularisation; for

others, they fear that there will be no change or not enough. Is synodality meant to bring about change? If not, what is the point of the process?

Many people wanted the Synod to make changes of doctrine, or to champion various causes such as the ordination of women to the diaconate. But the change envisaged by this Synod is far more radical. It is a conversion of our hearts and minds. We began with a deeply moving penitential service. Conversion leads to conversation, as we turn to each other. In the early Church there was a profound awareness that our deepest identity is relational, rooted in the mutuality of the divine life. But the Church has been influenced, unsurprisingly, by what Charles Taylor calls 'the culture of control'. The government of the Church is often seen more in terms of administration. We need to recover a sense that all roles within the Church are relational. As St Cyprian said in the third century, the bishop is in the Church not above it.

7. Is synodality just an ecclesiastical term for democracy and freedom of speech? If so, do you think that the vast majority of Catholics today are sufficiently catechised and familiar with the Scriptures in order to engage meaningfully in this process in the way that manifests the 'sensus Fidelium'?

This was a Synod of Bishops, and the great majority of the participants were bishops. There were also religious men and women and lay people. Mostly these were not theological experts, but they do have what the International Theological Commission called a 'connatural knowledge' of the faith through baptism. 'This is a knowledge, in other words, of a different order than objective knowledge, which proceeds by way of conceptualisation and reasoning. It is a knowledge by empathy, or a knowledge of the heart' (*Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church*, para 50, 2014).

So this Synod was not a place to debate complex matters of faith or doctrine, which is why such issues were given to specialised study groups. But all of the members have that instinctual knowledge of what chimes with the gospel and what

does not, and so are able to shed light on the demands of the gospel, because they are baptised into the life of the Trinity. The document quotes St John: 'You have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge', 'the anointing that you received from [Christ] abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you', 'his anointing teaches you about all things' (1 John 2:20, 27).

This is why the magisterium must pay careful attention to the reception of its teaching by the faithful. If a teaching is not received by the People of God, the magisterium needs to ask why. Was it well stated and explained?

8. Many have felt disquiet about the marginalisation of Catholics – many with young families – who have found spiritual solace and strength from the pre-Vatican II forms of worship. In the pastoral experience of many, such families seek to be faithful, and love the unity of the Church centred around the Holy Father, and they want

simply to hand on the Faith to their children in an increasingly secular age that is often toxic for the Faith. Can "traditionalist" Catholics be pastorally provided for in a synodal Church, and how might we engage with their needs?

This is a very important question. Every Catholic should love and treasure the tradition. St Paul says to the Corinthians, 'I hand on to you what I also received'. (1 Corinthians 11:23). We are all links in the transmission of the faith which goes back to the apostles. Our faith is apostolic. But this is a living tradition, the flourishing vine of the Church's teaching which never is frozen or dead. If, to use your word, a 'traditionalist' Catholic feels the tradition is betrayed, then we must listen with attention and care. They too have received the Holy Spirit. Maybe we have veered too much in one direction. Everyone should be heard. The art of holiness is to hear well, not so as to reply but so as to learn. This is what synodality is about.

Professed in 2024

Congratulations to Br Dominik Eynaud, simply professed, and to Br Jerome Johnson, solemnly professed, earlier this year. They both continue their ministerial studies in Blackfriars Studium, Oxford, alongside other Dominicans and members of other religious orders.

Pray for them and for vocations to the Dominicans!



*Blessed
are those
who
hear the
word of
God and
observe it*



The Province of England was pleased to welcome the Master of the Order of Preachers, Fr Gerard Timoner OP, on an official visitation in October. There follows his homily given at St Dominic's, London.

We are gathered around the table of the Eucharist, the table of thanksgiving, to thank the Lord for the manifold blessings we have received from Him. We thank the Lord for the gift of being part of the Dominican family and for the mission to preach the Gospel to all the world. We pray for the growth of the Dominican presence and preaching here in the United Kingdom. Thomas and I are happy to celebrate this Eucharist with you.

'Happy the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!' But Jesus replied, 'Still happier those who hear the word of God and obey it!' In this short Gospel passage, we see how the Blessed Mother is twice blessed. First, she is blessed to be chosen to be the Mother of Jesus. The Angel spoke to Mary and

the Word became flesh in her womb. Second, she is the first disciple, she heard the Word of God and pondered it in her heart. And that Word incarnated in her womb and contemplated in her heart, she shares with others: 'Do whatever my Son tells you.'

Yesterday, in this beautiful shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary, our prior, Matthew reminded us of the beautiful devotion of the Rosary. But, someone might ask: *if prayer is dialogue with God, how can the repetition of 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary' be dialogical? Is the Rosary nothing but a mindless and monotonous monologue?* But we must realise that praying the Holy Rosary is entering into a dialogue with God. The Lord's Prayer and the first part of the Hail Mary are part of the Gospel, the word of God. Praying them allows us to listen, to ponder God's Word in our hearts. The first words of the Lord's Prayer invite us to acknowledge the grace of being God's children, that we are brothers and sisters to one another. Each petition in the Lord's Prayer reveals a loving God who nourishes us, forgives

us, delivers us from evil. The words of the Angel Gabriel, 'the Lord is with you', are words addressed to Mary, and to us, because God is Emmanuel. The words of the angel proclaim God's nearness to us. After listening to God's word, we also address Mary: 'Holy Mary, pray for us...'. Then we glorify the Triune God: 'Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit'. The Rosary is an invitation for us to enter into a deeper dialogue with God. It invites us to participate, to join Mary in her dialogue with God.

Mary of Nazareth became part of our lives because of three short but important 'dialogues'. The first is a dialogue with the angel Gabriel: 'Do not be afraid, Mary. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.' And Mary said: 'May it be done to me according to your word' (Luke 1:26-37). This 'dialogue' made Mary the Mother of God. The second dialogue took place at the wedding at Cana: 'My son, they have no more wine'. Jesus seemed to hesitate: 'My hour has not yet come'; but eventually granted the request of his

mother who told the waiters: ‘Do whatever my Son tells you’ (John 2:1–11). This ‘dialogue’ clearly shows Mary as our intercessor who urges us to obey God, to be His disciples. The third dialogue is at the foot of the cross: ‘Woman, behold, your son’ (John 19:26–27). It seems less of a dialogue than a monologue, for there was no audible response from a grieving mother. But in the silence of her anguished heart, Mary must have repeated her response to the angel: ‘Let it be done according to your word’. In this ‘dialogue’ at the foot of the cross, Jesus gave Mary to us, to be ‘our’ Mother.

Dialogue changes us, opens our horizon of understanding. When old friends who turn into foes enter into sincere dialogue, they open the possibility for a restored and renewed friendship. When persons with different persuasions and beliefs enter into authentic dialogue, they open the path to understanding each other’s point of view. When strangers welcome each other in dialogue, they begin to realize that the other is not so different after all.

‘Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.’ If we are to be preachers and teachers of God’s Word, we first need to realise that we cannot speak unless we have heard. In fact, most mute people cannot speak not because something is wrong with their tongues but because they are deaf. One cannot produce a meaningful sound without hearing any. I witnessed some years ago, in the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, hundreds of hearing-impaired patients who were given free hearing aids. I personally witnessed how the innocent faces of deaf children lighted up in amazement as they entered the world of sound! Then they are taught to produce their first syllables: ‘Ma-ma, Pa-pa’. Their capacity to speak words depends largely on their capacity to listen to words. As preachers of God’s word, we ought to speak in God’s name. But we can only speak in His name if we first listen in attentive obedience to His Word. For how could we speak rightly if we have not heard correctly? Sadly, there are some who claim they speak on behalf of the Church when they do not even listen to what the Church teaches. Some claim to speak about God or in the name of God when they do not even listen to God in prayer, or in the contemplation

of Scriptures.

‘Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.’ From a Dominican perspective, is this not what St. Thomas wrote: ‘To contemplate and to share the fruits of one’s contemplation’? When we think of this passage from the *Summa*, we often think of teachers and preachers who contemplate the Word of God and preach it. But Martin de Porres, Margaret of Castello, Giorgio Frassati are also members of the Dominican Family who contemplated and shared the fruits of their contemplation by their works of charity. Pope Francis reminds us that adoration of the Eucharist, the Body of Christ, should lead to the service of the members of the Mystical Body of Christ. Pope Benedict, referring to Martin de Porres and Mother Teresa, said that ‘those who recognise Jesus in the sacred Host, recognise him in their suffering brother or sister, in those who hunger and thirst, who are strangers, naked, sick or in prison.’ C.S. Lewis in *The Weight of Glory* asks: ‘When you enter a Catholic Church, next to the Blessed Sacrament (tabernacle), what is the holiest thing you can find?’ The altar, the crucifix, the images of saints? He answers: ‘Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses.’ So next to the tabernacle, the holy thing you can find is your seat-mate and yourself! We are ‘temples of the Holy Spirit’, says St Paul. I had a Dominican professor who weighed over 250 pounds. He told us: ‘I am not a temple of the Holy Spirit, I am a cathedral of the Holy Spirit!’ The important question in Christology is ‘who is Jesus?’ The important question in missiology and pastoral theology is ‘where is Jesus?’



In the Gospel of John we hear the plea of the people: ‘We want to see Jesus’. This is the implicit desire of people of every place and time, including our own. By our apostolic life and work (*vita apostolica*) - we strive, as the apostles did, to accompany these people to encounter the Lord, that they too may be blessed. ‘Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.’

A report on the Visitation with photos can be found at www.english.op.org/latest-news/



Building outwards from St Dominic

In the Winter 2023 edition of *The Dominicans*, the sculptor Kenny Hunter wrote about the statue of St Dominic which he created for the garden of St Albert's, 23–24 George Square, Edinburgh. He mentioned the concentric circles that Dominic's tonsure (which the community had insisted on!) inspired: the statue's circular base (with 'You are the light of the world; you are the salt of the earth' and a sycamore seed on it); the circular pavement, and the circular seating. 'These concentric circles', he wrote, 'build outwards, like Dominic's legacy'.

The community of St Albert's are still building outwards from the statue in many different ways. Fr Dermot Morrin planted Stations of the Cross with symbolic plants and flowers in the garden behind the statue, and he and Fr Thomas Mannion and some parishioners (Miriam Reynolds, Sara Parvis, and Lee and Jenny Patterson) wrote meditations to accompany them which are available via QR code at each Station. Fr Matthew Jarvis wrote a beautiful, Oscar Wilde-esque story about three sycamore seeds, evoking those on the plinth, the chapel door and the new tabernacle lamp, as the sermon for the blessing of the statue. The community commissioned a film about the making of the statue from Graham Pritz-Bennett. And Fr Dermot organised two conferences (so far!) on St Dominic and the Dominicans: last year's 'St Dominic and his Preachers of Grace' conference, and this year's 'God's Mercy and Yours'.

Last year's conference (23–24 June 2023) featured Fr Richard Finn speaking on the history of Dominicans in Scotland, a 50-minute video of Fr Fergus Kerr on the Province's intellectual history (see below), and Fr Timothy Radcliffe and many other members of the Dominican family giving their visions of the Order past, present and future. Among the other speakers were Margaret Doyle, President of the Lay Dominicans, Martin Ganeri, Nick Crowe, John Church and Reginald Herbert from among the friars, and sisters from three congregations: the Stone sisters, the Crawley sisters and the Nashville sisters. This year's conference (28–29 June) featured the new film, keynote addresses by Fr Paul Murray OP and Fr Philippe Denis OP, and shorter talks by Lay Dominicans Catherine Wallis-Hughes and Duncan MacLaren, and by Sr Terry Billington of the Stone sisters and Sr Karen d'Artois of the Bushey sisters. Both conferences took place in the Assembly Hall of the Church of Scotland, the home of the Edinburgh 1910 Missionary Conference and the first home of the modern Scottish Parliament and of the annual General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. We warmly acknowledge the Church of Scotland's generosity in letting us use the Hall for the conference.

The film, *Becoming Dominic*, showcases the Edinburgh Dominican community as it was in early 2023, when the sculpture of St Dominic was made. Each of the friars, myself as President of the Edinburgh Lay Dominicans, and Timothy Radcliffe as

St Dominic's successor, speaks of what becoming St Dominic might mean in our lives. An hour of footage taken for the film of Fr Fergus Kerr talking about his experience of the Studium, of Blackfriars, and of the friars who taught philosophy and theology in the 1950s and 60s, has already been edited separately, and was shown at the 2023 conference. A shorter section of this, focused on meaning being created between people and not inside our heads, is included in the final cut of the film. A beautiful and moving interview with Fr Aelred Connelly, taken in the Chapel, focuses on giving and receiving grace from the experience of ministry. Fr Dermot's interview was filmed in St Monan's, the only pre-reformation church owned by the Dominicans to survive in Scotland; this is cut with touching footage of his prison ministry, as he speaks of our core identity being not what others say about us but what God, who made us, says about us. Fr Albert Robertson speaks of becoming more oneself in becoming a Dominican; Fr Matthew speaks of becoming 'stupefyingly free'. All this is interspersed with footage of Kenny Hunter talking about his hopes for the work, the casting of the mould, and the pouring of the molten bronze. The film finishes with the blessing of the statue by Archbishop Cushley in the presence of parishioners of all ages, the delighted faces of the children crouching around it, young Fergus Fraser playing the bagpipes, and everyone dancing the Orcadian Strip the Willow round

the statue and up the newly-widened garden path afterwards, scapulars flying.

Catherine Wallis-Hughes began the Saturday programme of this year's conference with a sharp, accessible paper on 'Mercy in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas' – how it relates to charity, and why you can't be merciful to God, and so must instead be merciful to other people in thanksgiving for the boundless mercy God has shown to you. Duncan MacLaren KSCG spoke on 'Mercy and the Importance of Human Rights in the Dominican Tradition', explaining how Dominicans had come to be involved in providing the theological underpinning for human rights at the UN, because of the Order's role in the development of natural law. Philippe Denis, out of his extensive knowledge of the historical context of both conflicts, then spoke of how questions of mercy in the context of justice and reconciliation have played out in post-Apartheid South Africa and post-genocide Rwanda. Sr Karen took his account forward in the context of the Dominican Sisters of Newcastle, Natal (the 'Bushey sisters'); speaking of the experience of black sisters in the



congregation, and also of current sisters joining the congregation from Vietnam. Sr Terry, meanwhile, spoke of the care and education of disabled children by the Stone congregation in St Rose's School, Stroud. Finally, Fr Paul Murray spoke on Mercy and Truth, Mercy and Joy, and

Mercy and the Cross. Mercy and Truth involved telling the truth in love for a redemptive purpose; Mercy and Joy evoked God's loving, healing laughter at us; and Mercy and the Cross borrowed from St Catherine of Siena to present a God so mad with love for his creatures that he became incarnate and died for us to bring us eternal salvation.

Mass and First Vespers of Sts Peter and Paul rounded it all off: since the solemnity was transferred to the Sunday, we were able to celebrate it all over again at St Albert's the following morning. One of the few sunny intervals of the Scottish summer so far allowed the conference-goers to mix with parishioners they had seen on the film for coffee in the garden after all three Masses in the presence of the statue and four happy St Albert's friars. Divine mercy in action.

– *Dr Sara Parvis*



An Itinera

Fr David Goodill explains how he and other friars of this province provide a service of teaching to the wider Order and to the global Church.

Dominican friars often wear several hats (or cappas) and when not carrying out my duties as Provincial Bursar, my other occupation is to teach moral theology. I taught my first courses in moral theology almost 20 years ago to the seminarians of St Mary's College, Oscott. The then Dean of Studies (now Bishop Philip Egan of Portsmouth) extended an invitation from Cardinal Vincent Nichols (then Archbishop of Birmingham) to teach courses on Fundamental Moral Theology and Catholic Social Teaching. This launched me on a path to teach moral theology, and through Oscott I was able to study for a licence in theology at the Catholic University of Leuven. I was fortunate to teach for over 10 years at Oscott and am immensely grateful to all the staff and students.

The English Province is in the very fortunate position of running its own house of studies, Blackfriars Studium, in Oxford, and over the last 18 years I have been involved in the Studium as both a teacher and an administrator. Here we prepare men and women for ministry in the Church by providing an STB



nt Teacher

(*sacrae theologiae baccalaureus*) course which is validated by the Angelicum, the Dominican University in Rome. We are the smallest Province in the world to run its own Studium. This is a major commitment for the Province, but one that we see as essential to our mission. We are able to provide a strong core of Dominican teachers (both friars and sisters) supported by excellent lay teachers and other religious.

Throughout the world, the majority of Dominican student brothers are not studying at Dominican institutions, but attend local seminaries and Catholic Universities. The challenge is to provide these students with a grounding in the Order's theological traditions.

In 2020 I was invited to teach a course in Moral theology at the University of St Joseph in Macau, where many of the Dominican student brothers from the Rosary Province study for ordination. The ordination course is run through St Joseph's seminary under the direction of Bishop Lee of Macau and the rector of the University, Rev Dr Stephen Morgan, who is a permanent deacon in the Portsmouth diocese. The Rosary Province has around 30 student brothers in Macau attending the seminary and there are also around 15 Dominican sisters completing 4 years of philosophy and theology. This makes the Dominican students the majority group studying philosophy and theology,

joined by other religious, diocesan priests and lay people.

For the first three years I taught online, starting at 6:30 am, but last year I was fortunate to spend 6 weeks in Macau living with the Dominican community and teaching classes. I immediately felt at home in the community and the brethren were very kind in helping me to adjust to life in Macau. They are a multi-national community with brothers from several countries including Myanmar, East Timor, Korea, Malaysia, Spain, China and Singapore. The two largest contingents of student brothers are from Myanmar and East Timor, and the refectory is filled with laughter during meal times.

The day begins in the chapel with 5 decades of the Rosary, followed by Lauds and Mass. The seminary is 25 minutes' walk from the priory (15–20 minutes by bus), so during the day the student brothers are out at classes, returning for lunch and heading home after afternoon classes for meditation, Office of Readings and Vespers. After spending many years in Blackfriars, Oxford, I was very much at home with the routine, including a Saturday night film down in the basement (in Oxford the Saturday night film is up in the tower!).

My most recent teaching has been at Parkminster Abbey, for the Carthusians. The Carthusians are hermits living in community. They spend most of their time alone in their own cell (a small house) and come together three times a

day for prayer (including two hours in the Church after midnight). They rarely leave the monastery and on occasion ask teachers to come into the cloister to instruct them in theology. Fr Dominic Ryan OP and Fr Richard Ounsworth OP have also given classes recently, so they are receiving a good Dominican education! The Prior told me that many years ago when he was at the Grande Chartreuse in France (the original Carthusian monastery and still the model for all other communities), the Dominican moral theologian Fr Servais Pinckaers OP spent a week with the community giving conferences and classes. It is good to know that we are following in the footsteps of such a venerable Dominican.

There have been many moments of grace and joy in my teaching life and I have been fortunate to teach students who have engaged both intellectually and spiritually. I have also been fortunate to teach a wide variety of students both in regards to their academic abilities and their backgrounds. The Dominican life is to pass on the fruits of contemplation and I see my role as a teacher as passing on to others what I have received. In this I have been blessed with some wonderful models of Dominican teaching, including my novice master, Fr Richard Conrad, my first teacher of moral theology, Fr Robert Ombres, and many others who taught and helped to form me in the Dominican tradition.

I am writing this article from St Albert's Priory in Oakland, California, where I am spending a few weeks on sabbatical before returning to teaching and the Provincial Bursary. St Albert's is the Studium for the Western Province USA and shares many features in common with Blackfriars, Oxford. One thing common to all Dominican communities is prayer for vocations, and this is particularly important in houses of study. The English Province has been blessed with wonderful young men over the last few years, but we need more if we are to continue our preaching and teaching mission.

Please continue to pray for vocations, and that the work of teaching may continue to flourish, both in our Studium in Oxford and also at the wider service of the Order and the Church.



Diaconal Duty in Jamaica

As a newly ordained deacon, Br John Church spent July and August working in our parishes in Jamaica, and here shares some of his memories from the summer.

Forty-eight hours after I was ordained a deacon by the Archbishop of Birmingham, I was on my way to Jamaica, there to spend the next two months learning the pastoral ropes and supporting our work in the Caribbean. Our Kingston set-up is perfectly suited to a Dominican mission, and there was plenty for me to get stuck into right away. We live in a house on the site of the Diocesan seminary, there is a major hospital and university across the road, and our two parish churches are a short drive away, one (Aquinas) 2 minutes up the road, and the other (Christ the King), 5 minutes down the road.

The first responsibility I had, beginning the day after I arrived, was to preach at Mass every day. It was a great learning experience among a very encouraging and appreciative congregation, aided by voluble responses and the spontaneous completion of scripture-quotes. Fr Clifton is the superior and parish priest, and I learnt a huge amount from his tireless ministry. Much of his time is spent driving round Kingston, responding to

the various needs of his parishioners, whether home visits, deliveries, bread runs, or transporting case loads of frozen vegetables. It is said that the work of a parish priest is to hatch, match, and dispatch, and I was certainly given plenty of exposure to these typical, and some other atypical, parish duties. I prepared a couple for marriage, I preached at funerals and led prayers for the dead in funeral homes, and my summer came to a wonderful conclusion when I baptised five babies during my final Sunday Mass.

Each of our parishes has its own character, and both were incredibly kind and welcoming to me. The first evening I was at Mass at Aquinas I was given a huge hug by one of the children after he received a blessing at communion, and that set the tone for the next two months. Aquinas was originally set up by the Jesuits as a parish for the university and hospital, and much of our congregation works at one or the other in some capacity. The parish has a very active SVP that does lots of important work in the neighbourhood, and a devoted prayer group, to whom I gave talk on the Rosary midway through my stay. Next door to Aquinas is a mission called Mary's Child, a home for teenage mothers and one of a number of projects set up by a local charity. The mothers all attend Sunday Mass at the parish, and I had a wonderful time running some catechism

classes with a group of them who had asked for their babies to be baptised.

Our other parish, Christ the King, is in August Town, a rougher part of Kingston that still has a military presence put in place to combat the dominance of the gangs. The parish has a 'Basic School' nearby (2–5 years old) and Fr Clifton organises a distribution of bread round the parish each week, aided by some of the teenagers. The congregation there enjoys longer homilies and has a vibrant music ministry. Shortly after arriving, my 25-minute Sunday homily was followed by another 25 minutes of electric praise and worship (correlation is not causation!) It felt wonderfully spontaneous, the music accompanied by plenty of dancing down the aisle, and all led by Peggy, the parish cantor and headteacher at the Basic School.

A noticeable reality in both parishes is the lack of young people. Although secularisation feels quite distant in such a faith-filled culture, fewer and fewer actually practise their faith, and with a small Catholic population (1–2% of the country), young adults ministry is an especially important one. In this context one of the most enjoyable and rewarding parts of the summer was a young adults retreat we organised for both parishes. Together with Fr Bede, who had arrived halfway through my stay to begin his

first assignation, we gathered around 30 teenagers and young adults at a retreat centre situated on the grounds of one of Kingston's major Catholic schools. There was an encouraging enthusiasm from those who participated, particularly from the older group. It is an event we hope to repeat, and it served as a launch pad for more regular young adult work in the parishes.

By the end of two months driving around Kingston and beyond, I felt I had got to know the city pretty well, and almost felt comfortable driving myself. The first piece of advice Fr Peter gave me on arriving was 'assume cars with a red number plate (taxi drivers) want to kill you'. It's an important instinct to develop on Kingston's roads, along with the assumption that there will always be a pothole just in front of you. The road signs provide helpful reminders too, such as 'the undertaker loves careless overtakers'. On a few occasions we got out of Kingston, whether driving up to the edge of the Blue Mountains for stunning views over the city and the sea, or making a day trip to Montego Bay on the north coast for a swim. We ate very well too, treated to great Jamaican food in the house by Miss Dawn, our cook. Miss Dawn was a source of plenty of Jamaican wisdom and Clifton often sent me off with a grin on his face to quiz her about Jamaican culture. Miss Dawn's preferred radio station, on all day in the kitchen, is Radio Jamaica, which has a lunchtime discussion show with a very Dominican tagline: *Radio Jamaica, where truth comes to live and lies come to die.*

Among the most moving of my pastoral experiences was a visit to a woman named Theresa, who was in a coma at a local hospital. Her family had asked Fr Clifton to anoint her, and we made our way there after the Sunday morning Masses at Aquinas. The two of us were left alone in her room when we visited. I remember the beep of a hospital machine chiming in rhythm with our recitation of the litany of saints as we commended her soul to God. There was something especially powerful about the depth and



simplicity of the rite, a faithful Christian soul sent forth from this world. Theresa died later that night. It was clear from that visit that what we brought was not ourselves, but the prayers of the Church. The only reason we were there was to represent Christ.

I had the same thing in mind towards the end of my stay when I was asked to attend a small gathering for a recently deceased parishioner of Christ the King, Mr Roy. The women of the parish had arranged to visit his widow, Mrs Roy, and hold a prayer service in her home. We met

up at around 8pm, and walked through the lively streets of August Town towards Mrs Roy's house. I was certainly grateful for the company of Peggy, Sandra, Donna, and the rest of the group as we walked through a rowdy 5-a-side football tournament on our way there. When we arrived, Peggy led us in praise and worship, interspersing her beautiful singing with prayers and words of comfort, and during that time I gave a short reflection. We had some food afterwards on the street outside, some chicken foot soup, whilst the men were playing dominoes nearby. It felt like an immense privilege to be there, welcomed into the heart of this community as a group of women gathered and sang and prayed to comfort their mourning sister. The only reason I was there was as some kind of representative of Christ.

The end of the two months came around rather too quickly. I headed back to the UK for my final year of studies greatly enriched by all that I had received in Kingston. There were so many encounters to treasure, whether with the faithful group of daily Mass-goers, hope-filled young adults, or dancing Archbishops. The brothers are doing an enormous amount of good in Jamaica, and it was a great joy to share in their work for a couple of months.



To donate in support of our friars' work in the Caribbean, or to see the latest video updates from them, please visit:

www.english.op.org/missions

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Version: LIT-5

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Data Controller: English Province of the Order of Preachers, Blackfriars, St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LY.
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Development Update

It was a special pleasure for us to meet with the Master of the Order in October, who strongly affirmed the importance of benefactors in supporting the friars' mission, and encouraged us to persevere in fundraising! Here are some tidbits of good news that I hope will be of encouragement to you.

A Healthy Year

Our financial year ended in September, and we have been pleased to see solid results: there was a record number of gifts of £5,000 or more, as well as an increase in the total raised from smaller gifts, making the total funds raised in the year £1.87m, up on the previous year. Your generosity gave a boost to our friars in the Caribbean (over £62,000 raised!) and ensured the swift completion of the underfloor heating project at St Dominic's, London. Thank you!

Blackfriars Hall

Progress in our café / dining hall project was slow over the summer as we dug into the tendering process, but this has given us the opportunity to have more time for fundraising. As Development Director, I have been not just encouraging supporters to donate, but also working with the architects to ensure value for money. With nearly £100k raised, we still have some way to go, but we expect works will begin in early 2025.



We also continue to have interest in funding scholarships for students at Blackfriars, which are a great way to support men and women to do their postgraduate study in our warm and welcoming Dominican community inside Oxford University. Scholarships can be fully funded within specific subject areas in which donors have an interest.

Thanks again for your support for the friars and their work! I encourage you to contact me if you wish to discuss ways to support, or if you would just like a chat.

– Mr Richard Brown, Development Director
development.director@english.op.org

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My gift is for

- General work of the Dominican Friars
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