

International Congress of the Dominican Lay Fraternities

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A Dominican View of Integral Human Development: The Agenda for the Laity

1. Introduction

Thank you for the invitation to the Congress. I must admit from the beginning that the group of Lay Dominicans which I belong to and which I co-founded over thirty years ago, is not a fraternity but is placed directly under the Master of the Order. Bro. Bruno mentioned the specialised lay Dominican groups in his address. The co-founders of our group were relatively young people then who wanted to come together as a group which expressed the charism of the Order as lived by laypeople, but also with an emphasis on justice and peace. We also thought that, as lay people, our lives could change rapidly and we might have to devote ourselves to babies, elderly parents or anything else life could throw at us. That discernment led us to decide to renew our commitment every three years rather than for life. That has enabled us to be active members while in the group because, for us, what was most important was the solid commitment to prayer, study, discernment and action to “transform the world” - or at least a little bit of it

The Problem

Let me start with what I regard as the problem of indifference or even animosity towards justice and peace as a concept within the Order. As a member of the International Dominican Justice and Peace Commission, I represent the laity with my colleagues, Teresita and Dimitri from Argentina and Guatemala respectively, with Dimitri representing the IDYM. At my first meeting in 2015, I was surprised at the reports from the friars and sisters in Europe, North America and Australasia - that they had difficulties finding promoters and that many young friars and sisters thought justice and peace old fashioned and dismissed the concept as a fad of the Sixties and Seventies. It was different in Africa, parts of Asia and Latin America. My fear is that it may be the same for the laity. Trying to elicit information about justice and peace activities from Lay Fraternities has proven very difficult for my contacts throughout the world and for me, partly because there is no reliable database of the lay groups involved in justice and peace and maybe partly because it seems too political - or old fashioned. I am grateful to those who did reply but, with some activities, I wonder where the justice element is.

The Catechism states, “Charity [by which is meant ‘love’] is the greatest social commandment. It respects others and their rights. It requires the practice of justice, and it alone makes us

capable of it”.¹ Note that the word ‘charity’ is linked inextricably with justice in the teaching, not with being nice, kind or pious, even generous, but being just. And the Church, through Catholic Social Teaching, offers a system which “proposes principles for reflection; it provides criteria for judgment; it gives guidelines for action”, summed up in the Cardijn dialectic as ‘see, judge, act’.² They are guidelines for action, not dogma as theory. You can’t be dogmatic about the pains of the world. So, in terms of justice and peace, the Church has very clearly indicated what our mission should be – to transform the world by promoting justice and to save it by promoting peace.

In this presentation, I want to make four points. The *first* is how justice and peace thought and action is central to the Gospel and the lay Dominican charism of preaching it. The *second* is to suggest what this implies in general terms for Lay Dominicans domestically. The *third* is to explain the new term “Integral Human Development” since Pope Francis changed the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace into the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. What is it and what does Pope Francis call us lay people to do? The *fourth* is to suggest some practical initiatives we can undertake to be more effective in the call to act on issues of integral human development. Bro. Bruno in his letter to the Congress reminds Lay Dominicans what their mission is in the words of *Lumen Gentium* – to be “sharers in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ...and [who] play their part in carrying out the mission of whole Christian people in the church and the world”.³

I, however, don’t want you to be passive listeners for an hour but active participants. I would like you to talk to your neighbours after the presentation and give us your opinion about the points made and the justice and peace actions which you feel your fraternity should undertake domestically and internationally.

2. Point One: Justice and Peace is central to the Gospel and the Dominican charism to preach it

Let’s start by reminding ourselves of the three central tenets of the Catholic faith, that is, the principles which we, as Catholic Christians, hold are true:-

Kerygma – (a Greek word meaning ‘proclamation’ - Word) preaching the word of God, not just in Sunday homilies or sermons but with our lives. The great Flemish Dominican theologian, Edward Schillebeeckx OP, said we write a fifth Gospel with our lives. We preach a faith based on the Reign of God which begins here on Earth among the messiness of our lives and our societies, national and international. That means preaching on the homeless on our streets; pointing out that when hurricanes take lives, they take more in so-called developing countries than they do in the so-called developed whose lifestyle caused the increase in crazy weather in the first place; denouncing economic experiments such as structural adjustment programmes in the past which may help bankers in the West but cost lives and misery in the

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994) par. 1889.

² Ibid. par. 2423.

³ Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) in Austin Flannery OP, *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents*, Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1996) 1-95, par. 31.

poorest nations. As Dominicans, we are called to denounce what is wrong with the world; we are called to action which takes the sides of the poorest; and in that way we witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Leitourgia – (Greek for ‘public service’ - Worship) worship and it’s obviously where we derive our term ‘liturgy’ from. Worship is important. The sacraments and prayer take us beyond ourselves so that we can love others, not just ourselves. Timothy Radcliffe, the former Master of the Order, wrote “I discover what love is when I let her be the centre of the world and not myself”.⁴ When we are no longer the centre of our world but other people *are*, then we ‘put on’, as St Dominic said, not just truth but the mantle of solidarity. Solidarity isn’t, as Saint John Paul II wrote, “a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people”. No, “it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all”.⁵ The common good has been characterised by our South African brother, Albert Nolan OP, as “whatever is best for the whole human family, or the whole community of living beings or the whole universe in its grand unfolding”.⁶

And the last tenet of our faith is *diakonia*,

Diakonia – (Greek word for ministering - World) the ministry of serving society, human dignity and human rights. Ministering to the world is not on the margins of the faith (as often can seem the case) but central and this is where justice and peace as a concept prefiguring the Reign of God is brought together, not just as ‘projects’ but as a life choice. As Pope Francis says in *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), quoting the Latin American bishops, “the mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ has a universal destination. Its mandate of charity encompasses all dimensions of existence, all individuals, all areas of community life, and all peoples. Nothing human can be alien to it”.⁷ Equally, *Gaudium et Spes* taught us to be more positive towards the world where the laity above all have to read the signs of the times and act to transform the world.

Though *diakonia* specifically has a focus on building a just society, the other two central tenets, as I have tried to illustrate, are also radically social because the Gospel is radically social. It is permeated with stories about transforming ourselves to serve others and transforming our society to be more just.

As for the Order, if we ask whether Dominic was a justice and peace activist from the beginning of his mission, the answer is probably ‘no’. He preached God’s mercy towards sinners, calling them back to the Catholic faith. But St Dominic, as the Glasgow Lay Dominican constitution states, was also so moved by the terrible poverty he saw around him that he sold his beloved books to feed the people, saying “I could not bear to prize dead skins when living skins were starving and in want”. And it is St Thomas Aquinas who tells us to embrace justice and peace as legitimate Dominican issues in his discussion of justice in the *Summa* as being

⁴ Timothy Radcliffe OP, *I Call You Friends*, (London: Continuum, 2001) 50.

⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987), par. 38.

⁶ Albert Nolan OP, *Jesus Today: A Spirituality of Radical Freedom*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006) 188.

⁷ Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium*, (London: CTS, 2013), par.181.

“a particular virtue disposing us to give others their due as God’s creatures and our neighbours”.⁸

To conclude on this point about the centrality of justice and peace to our faith and our charism as Dominicans, it is clear that justice and peace is not just part of *diakonia* but is central to *kerygma* and *leitourgia* also yet it is so often sidelined in parish life. You know the situation - the *real* Catholics attend the prayer groups while the others form justice and peace groups, and there is little dialogue between the two. We need to go on a rosary procession as we did the other night here in Fatima to pray for ourselves, the Church and the world – and go on a march for peace in the world. We need to do both, as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI indicates in *Caritas in Veritate*. For our faith to be lived authentically, we need all three tenets of the faith to come together in an integrated whole in our lives, as individuals and as members of Dominican fraternities and other lay groups, and in our living out of our faith in the world.

Let me turn to point two.

3. Point Two: If Justice and Peace is central to the preaching of the Gospel, how should Lay Dominicans act in a domestic context?

Let me give you my take on this question. First, we have to be most concerned about the world where people made in the divine image live, especially the most marginalised. The injustices they suffer constitute the agenda which the mission of the Church calls us to transform. Solidarity demands that we look at the injustice through the eyes of those suffering the injustice. As Timothy Radcliffe said in his letter to the Order, ‘Vowed to Mission’ (1994), “you get a different view of the world depending if you’re looking at it from the seat of a Mercedes or the seat of a bicycle”⁹ so we have to take the option for the poor seriously.

For that reason, I would suggest that the modern manifestation of St Dominic’s selling his books to feed people is to work to change the economic, social and political structures that cause such poverty and marginalisation in the first place. Today’s Good Samaritan is a political lobbyist for justice.

Various General Chapters of the Order have indicated what preaching justice should look like. Oakland said that actions for justice and peace must meet three criteria:- they must be communal, specifically integrated into local, provincial and regional projects; they must be well thought out and based on a serious analysis of the social reality and be rooted in strong Biblical and theological foundations; they must ensure the support of brothers, sisters and the laity to participate actively - even to the point of risking their lives - in associations and movements for the promotion of human dignity.

⁸ From Richard Finn OP, “Early Voices for Justice” in John Orme Mills OP (ed.), *Justice, Peace and Dominicans 1216-2001*, (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2001) 19-30, 23.

⁹ Timothy Radcliffe OP, “Vowed to Mission” in (no editor) *To Praise, to Bless, to Preach: Words of Grace and Truth*, (Dominican Publications: Dublin, 2004) 327-347, 342.

Bro. Bruno in his letter to this Congress¹⁰ mentions groups of people and areas which should be at the centre of our concern as Lay Dominicans in link with the Order as a whole. He mentions, first, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and stateless people, human beings among the 66 million forced to leave their homes, countries and citizenship through war, conflict, dehumanising poverty or oppression. The Master of the Order talks about families, interestingly, particularly those which are dysfunctional, rather than the rather romantic view held by the official Catholic imagination. Allied to that, he mentions how we should be active in welcoming and integrating those in so-called “irregular” relationships since, as Pope Francis says, “No-one can be condemned for ever because that is not the logic of the Gospel”.¹¹ Bro. Bruno mentions human rights in all its forms as a site for our action and compassion and we have the reports of the Congress in Salamanca of 2016 as outstanding resources for us. Lastly, the Master mentions participation in interreligious dialogue and ecumenism with our fellow Christians, both in terms of understanding one another and working together with them on all the other issues.

We also have a distinct, Gospel-based methodology - an extension of ‘see, judge, act’ called the pastoral spiral. We should first observe the injustice through experience and human encounter; second, we should analyse the causes and consequences of the injustice to the dignity of human lives; third, we should theologially reflect on the result of this analysis to discern our response in the light of the Gospel and Church social teaching; and, finally, we must act based on the first three steps to plan, set goals, determine strategies and share tasks; and then, before beginning again with a new subject, evaluate what we have done.

Let me give two examples of what this methodology can lead to. When I met members of a Lay Fraternity in a town in Cameroun, they told me that through their discernment to assist the poorest, they decided to focus on that part of their population living with HIV/AIDs, and found themselves not only accompanying the people, but also in trying to persuade the community to get rid of the stigma and embrace their suffering brothers and sisters. This, too, is a modern instance of St Dominic’s selling his books for the poor except for our Cameroonian brothers and sisters what they are giving is their time and loving presence, resulting in increased self-esteem for the most marginalised Other.

In my own city of Glasgow, the Lay Dominicans discerned that we should work with young drug addicts from our deprived areas. We stayed overnight with youngsters at a house halfway between the prison they had just left and the professional drug rehabilitation centre they were going to. Our task was to be welcoming, make them at ease and listen to them talk about their experiences – chat which often went on till dawn. We Dominicans brought our concern, loving presence and listening skills as well as humour to kids some of whom felt they had ruined their lives at 17 years old.

¹⁰ Bruno Cadoré OP, *Letter to the Laity of the Order of Preachers*, 25th January 2018. Retrieved from http://archive.fraternitiesop.com/810_17_73_ICLDF_English_01.25.18.pdf.

¹¹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)*, (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2016) par. 297.

In both examples, we agreed that, in the way of the Gospel, the poor changed us, took us to the depths of our compassion and strengthened our commitment to the preferential option for the poor, and to advocate to change the perception of people towards those living with HIV and AIDs and drug users in two very different scenarios. In Bruno's list or in your own social analysis of your town, village or area, you'll be able to discern what you can do as Dominicans to bring justice and the love of Christ to others. Remember the Congress on Human Rights in Salamanca in 2016 where we committed ourselves to "embrace as an integral part of our Dominican charism, the mission of justice and peace as constitutive to the preaching of the Gospel".¹² Let us as Lay Dominicans strengthen that commitment at this Congress.

4. Point Three: From Justice and Peace to Integral Human Development

Pope Francis is adept at, as we say in colloquial English, "throwing a spanner in the works", that is, changing our perspectives about matters to draw us further into the heart of the Gospel and away from our complacencies about the faith. When he announced he was not only changing the name of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in the Vatican but putting the dicasteries (the Vatican equivalent of ministries in a Government) for charitable works, health, migration and the care of creation into the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, there was a sharp intake of breath in the corridors of the Curia. What was coming now from this prophetic Pope?

Maybe he changed the name of the dicastery because he thought the phrase 'justice and peace' had run its course. Maybe he thought that the new name, with its origins in Blessed Pope Paul VI's 1967 encyclical on development, *Populorum Progressio* ("The Progress of Peoples"), emphasised the human at the centre of a development which had to cover not just economics but all life, including the transcendent; that it had to be understood in the light of the Gospel; and had to be aimed at maintaining the dignity of the human person in all circumstances.

I suspect he also thought that 'justice and peace' had become a process whereby the poor were becoming the object of someone else's idea of how they should be developed rather than that they should be the subjects of their own development, incorporating their cultural and religious values and allowing them to be, the agents of their own destiny.

In his address¹³ at the fiftieth celebration of *Populorum Progressio* in April 2017, Pope Francis explained what he meant by integral human development: that this type of development is about integrating the peoples of the Earth by ensuring that the gap between the rich and the poor lessens; about offering practical models of social integration, ensuring no-one is

¹² Final Statement of the Salamanca Congress on Human Rights, 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.op.org/en/content/final-statement-salamanca-congress-human-right-2016>.

¹³ Pope Francis, "Address on the 50th Anniversary of the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*", 4th April 2017. Retrieved from <https://zenit.org/articles/popos-address-to-vatican-conference-on-50th-anniversary-of-populorum-progressio/>.

excluded; about integrating the individual and communal dimensions, and shunning selfish individualism, as can be seen in parts of the Western world by the rise of the new right in politics which wants to bar distant strangers fleeing violence, oppression and poverty or which seeks to build walls between people rather than bringing them down; that this development model is about integrating body and soul, taking into account the transcendent aspect of people's lives, and integrating Catholic Social Teaching into our thoughts and actions on the social and political aspects of living in our present world. The term does not supplant 'justice and peace' but makes it, in my view, more concrete in our context and makes the faith element much more visible.

And so we come to our last point

5. Point Four: Acting as Lay Dominicans on Integral Human Development Issues Beyond our Shores

John Orme Mills OP has a chapter in *The Grace and Task of Preaching* in which he says that we should remind people that "our lives as Christians are bound up not only with our inner hopes, fears and temptations, and not only with the people around us but also with those huge global issues".¹⁴ We must show how those big issues of integral human development, being an interdependent world, are intimately linked to the way we live, vote and build up society, and that we are co-responsible for the social sins that beset our planet. We should not just relegate them to the prayers of the faithful.

These big issues can seem daunting. Under the leadership of Margaret Mayce OP at the UN in New York and Mike Deeb OP at the UN in Geneva, we have the information, agendas and networks which will enable us to tackle these issues at the international level as the Dominican family. The UN may not be perfect but it is the only international secular moral voice we have to act for justice and peace in our world. What they lack is hearing the voice of the poorest from the grassroots and that is what we can provide along with other congregations (as well as Caritas) who live and suffer with the poorest.

In Caritas, Archbishop Odama of Gulu in the north of Uganda pleaded with Caritas Uganda to tell the world about the brutal civil war where children were abducted, brutalised and forced by the ironically named Lord's Resistance Army to kill their families and friends. They contacted us in Caritas Internationalis in Rome and we alerted our delegate in the UN in New York and the Archbishop was invited to address the Security Council. Six months later, there was a fragile ceasefire because Archbishop Odama could talk of named people whose children had been taken from them and describe what happened to them. Not all politicians in the UN have hearts of stone, and even those who do might be persuaded by such witness to change their mind.

¹⁴ John Orme Mills OP, "Preaching on the Wider World" in Michael Monschau O.P. (ed.) *The Grace and Task of Preaching*, (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2006) 314-328, 314-315.

The Dominican Order is international, found at the grassroots and has active networks which can make the voices of those who have no voice heard all the louder so that a bit more justice may enter our world. All it takes from us is passion to start, passion to analyse and discern, and passion to act.

Let me give you two concrete possibilities for collective action. The Order has already adopted the month of December as the “Dominican Month for Peace”, when we are urged to pray for peace in a designated part of the world, offer solidarity to a particular ‘project’ and highlight the plight of the people. Last year, it was Colombia, and this year the focus will be the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where the Church has been on the streets supporting the people in their thirst for democracy in a country which is rich in resources and has some of the worst poverty and appalling conflict in the world. Information will be sent out soon to the Order and it is beholden on us after this Congress to undertake whatever solidarity actions are asked of us to accompany and assist the suffering people of DRC.

The second possibility is that, just as in the past the Order launched a Dominican Family project for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), so it is likely the Commission will recommend to the Master and his advisors that all branches of the Order should work together to campaign on the MDGs’ successor, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They are an agenda of seventeen universal goals to improve our world from 2016 to 2030, and are directed to all countries, not just the so-called ‘developing’ countries. The National Director of Caritas Kenya, Stephen Kituku, said of the Goals, that he hoped they would differ from the MDGs which were created through a top-down, closed-door process that did not engage people living in poverty. In other words, the very opposite of an integral human development approach. Stephen stated, “This is our generational chance to make it right”.¹⁵ It is a wonderful opportunity for the Dominican Family internally to cooperate together on a project that, if successful, will rid our world of dehumanising poverty, improve the situation of women and children especially, and bring climate change, as Pope Francis suggests in *Laudato Si’*, into the centre of our actions to save the planet.

Let me conclude. I started by pointing out our problem about justice and peace in the Order. Hopefully I have outlined how it is central to Church teaching as well as having been practice in the Order since our beginnings. I have mentioned how I think we can act – and, indeed, have been acting for many centuries – to this Gospel call for action about saving our planet and ridding our world of dehumanising poverty; and how we have a distinct methodology for serving humanity and making sure our promises of positive change become true. I have tried to express why Pope Francis now prefers the term ‘Integral Human Development’ in which justice and peace find their place by narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor, the included and the excluded; by putting community before individualism as seen in the principle of the common good; by integrating body and soul by ensuring that all belief systems and

¹⁵ For details of what all the members of Caritas Internationalis are doing about the SDGs, see the website www.caritas.org.

culture find their central place in any development process; where the poor and marginalised are empowered and participate in deciding how they and their community should spearhead their own idea of what 'being developed' means as opposed to the western model so tainted by neo-liberal capitalism; and that we can all learn from the example of the empowered poor. I ended with two examples of how we can work together with the other branches of the Order as the Dominican Family on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Dominican month for peace in DRC.

As we all sadly know, our Church has, in the past decade, lost a great deal of credibility through the sexual scandals which continue to blight us. We are in crisis but a crisis presents us also with an opportunity. An opportunity to put the integration of our intellect, spirituality and praxis to work for humanity. We can no longer say that we are perfect – but we never were; we can no longer claim to be saints – but only very few of us were. We can claim, however, to listen, to contemplate and to share the actions arising out of our contemplation with those in, as the soon-to-be Blessed Pierre Laverie OP said, the 'fractures' of a broken world. That is what being involved in integral human development means, and that is the truth that we can bring. As our sister, St Catherine of Siena, said, "Preach the Truth as if you have a million voices. It is silence that kills the world". Let us, in the tradition of our Order, raise our voices for peace and justice in Cameroon, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and anywhere else where humanity suffers at the hands of evil. In the Congress, we have talked a lot about faith *in* Christ but let us now also follow the faith *of* Christ, and bring mercy and compassion to others and help transform our world to be just so that everyone, but especially the poorest, may flourish.

Thank you.

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