

CLOSING STATEMENT

I have been asked by the International Council to present a final impression of this Congress, on the theme, "Our Future: Justice, Peace and Care of Creation". In due course we will all have a copy of the resolutions proposed by the various Commissions and adopted by the voting assembly. Here, let us look at some questions that our time here will help us to answer.

1. *What were the objectives of the Congress?*

- to experience fraternity across nations and across cultures through our direct daily contact and interaction;
- to find space for silence and for personal prayer: this was achieved by the possibility of Adoration every morning in the chapel, before the Blessed Sacrament;
- to foster, not uniformity, but unity: we are very different in so many ways, but we are one in our being Dominicans.

2. *What positive aspects, in particular, emerged?*

- the presence of many friars, including a number of members of the Curia Generalizia: the Master of the Order, finding a space for us despite being currently involved in the Synod on Youth; his Vicar, Br Miguel Ángel Del Río; the Socius for the Apostolic Life, Br Orlando Rueda Acevedo; the Socius for Fraternal Life and Formation, Br Vivian Boland; and many more. There were also many Promoters from various Provinces around the world, who never dominated our discussions nor imposed their points of view, but listened to us and were unfailingly supportive;
- the confirmation that communication, whether direct or digital, is fundamental to everything we do or hope to do;
- an increased awareness of our place as lay Dominicans in the Order of Preachers;
- fruitful, peaceful discussion in the Commissions: we may sometimes have disagreed, but always in a climate of fraternal exchange and collaboration.

3. *What new objectives have emerged?*

- the need for more regular and more open communication between fraternities, Provinces, countries and regions;
- the need for greater uniformity in formation: Hectór Marquéz, for example, told us that, on his visits within his own region, it became apparent that some have little or no formation while others are too rigid and too severe, and this is true worldwide;
- the need to find a balance between extreme, excessive clericalism in some countries and excessive secularism in others.

4. *What do we need to clarify?*

- the distinction between the Rule and "regulations", between the essential guidelines for all lay Dominicans and an exaggerated rigidity that is contrary to the spirit of St Dominic himself, who insisted that failure to observe the Rule is, yes, a flaw, but not a sin;
- the financial situation: Klaus Bronewasser, the ICLDF treasurer, tells us that if even one third of Provinces paid the fixed contribution regularly (€1.50 per person per annum), the Congress could be held free of charge for all delegates.

5. *What problems emerged?*

- above all, the “Tower of Babel” effect: we speak many languages, and what seems clear in one language may not be so in another; we did not have the anticipated full team of interpreters and several people stepped in to fill the gaps. And of course, there are “false friends”: words that resemble each other from one language to another, but in fact have different meanings. All this demands vigilance, and the collaboration of people whose language skills allow them to solve at least some of these problems.
6. *What about the immediate future?*
- in the next few weeks there will be an opportunity to participate in online, anonymous evaluation of this Congress;
 - there will also be a complete online list of participants: name and surname, country, gender, status (religious or lay), with email addresses and telephone numbers.
7. *And finally, our thanks:*
- to the Dominican Family in Portugal, and especially to Cristina Busto and Gabriel Silva, for doing so much to make everything run smoothly;
 - to the Sisters in Fátima;
 - to the hotel staff for their cordiality, patience and efficiency;
 - to the interpreters, those invisible angels;
 - to all those who animated the liturgy in various ways;
 - to the members of the ICLDF, Belen Tangco, Hectór Marquéz, Joe Komadina, Klaus Bornewasser, Felix Foko;
 - to the celebrants and preachers;
 - to the speakers – a special mention here to the only lay speaker, my fellow-Scot Duncan MacLaren;
 - to the many friars who took part;
 - to digital Superman Edoardo Mattei;
 - to the two former Promoters General who were with us, Br Jerry Stookey and Br David Kammler;
 - and of course to our current, greatly loved and respected Promoter General, Br Rui Carlos Antunes e Almeida Lopes, for his tireless work with us and for us.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

Ruth Anne Henderson OP