

Introduction

This year marks the eight hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Order of Preachers, the community founded by Dominic Guzman and confirmed by Pope Honorius III on December 22, 1216, in the papal bull titled “Religious Life.” Ten years before this event, Dominic had established a community of women who aided him in preaching the Gospel to the Cathars of Languedoc in southern France. Dominican life is impelled by a commitment to *Veritas*, the Truth found in the person and event of Jesus the incarnate Word of God. Effective preaching and teaching, in turn, requires a profound appropriation of scripture and the Christian tradition. Thus, from their earliest years Dominican friars could be found in the theological schools of the great universities of Europe—Bologna, Oxford, Paris.

Over the past eight hundred years, Dominican women and men have had a profound effect on the Church and the world. Teachers, scholars, and saints from Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great, Catherine of Siena, Bartolomé de las Casas, and Francisco de Vitoria to Yves Congar, Dominique Chenu, and Edward Schillebeeckx have shaped the Church and the Church’s encounter with the world. Whether in Jerusalem, Cairo, Paris, Chicago, Providence, Manila, Ibadan, or other centers around the globe, Dominican women and men continue to educate new generations of young people who will become the leaders of tomorrow. As well, Dominicans embrace the work of justice and peace as constitutive of their mission to be authentic bearers of the Word of God to those who suffer from violence and war, poverty and exclusion, and human rights abuses.

Dominican men and women have had a profound effect on the complexion of Catholic higher education in the United States. The nineteen Dominican colleges and universities in this country and Puerto Rico embody the four pillars that Saint Dominic believed were necessary for living a holy and whole life worthy of the Gospel. A quick review of the mission statements at Dominican institutions reveals that themes of study, prayer, community, and service—the Dominican charisms—permeate the life and work at these diverse colleges and universities.

The intellectual life and the search for truth at Dominican institutions are grounded in the belief that the world is intelligible, and that

by employing all the disciplines of the arts and sciences we can arrive at a better understanding of ourselves and the world. These colleges and universities share the conviction that their students are inclined toward what is true; thus staff, administrators, and faculty exemplify a commitment to accompany their students in the transformation of minds and hearts. This approach to learning is dialogical, using Dominic as the exemplar of “intellectual hospitality.”¹

Saint Dominic was observed to embody nine different ways of praying, using various postures and gestures such as bowing and holding one’s hands outstretched or held tightly together. At times he gave himself over to deep meditation and solitude, and when completely withdrawn in prayer and contemplation, Dominic would be filled with the love of God which strengthened him for his mission. Contemplation, also at the core of the Dominican tradition, encompasses a loving look at the real, or as Meister Eckhart would suggest, “seeing God in all things and seeing all things in God.”² While contemplation, understood in the classical tradition, does not produce anything, Aquinas and Eckhart recognized that contemplation was essential as a preparation for the mission of preaching. In a world permeated with busyness, distractions, and any number of electronic devices vying for our attention, Dominican higher education encourages students to develop a contemplative spirit that prepares them for a life well-lived, a life that is thoughtful, a life that strives for the truth, a life that seeks justice and reconciliation among all God’s people.

With the Rule of Augustine as a foundation, Saint Dominic developed a particular way of life for his brothers and sisters in community. Dominicans strive to live a harmonious life as a community of persons, one in mind and heart, acknowledging their interdependence and strengthened by the wisdom of others. In higher education, Dominican women and men share their vision of community, bearing witness to their deeply held values in encounters with students, staff, and faculty at their institutions. Thus, Dominican institutions strive to provide a culture of learning oriented to building relationships in an atmosphere of trust and respect, with an enduring commitment to diversity.

¹ Aurelie A. Hagstrom, “The Dominican Charism and Higher Education: A Personal Reflection from the Field,” *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* 29(1), 2010, 80.

² In chapter xix of his “Talks of Instruction,” Eckhart tells his novices that one does not need to go to the desert or the cathedral or monastery chapel to discover God, for God is to be found in the present moment in the inner desert. See Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works*, third edition, trans. by Maurice O’C Walshe (NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2010).

Dominican spirituality also finds its fruits in a life of compassion and mercy, recognizing that working for justice and peace is an integral part of their charism. Sisters, friars, and lay associates are “people who, in season and out of season, remind the world of the primacy of the Word of God, the Word who desires salvation for all people and who draws himself close to those who are excluded or despised.”³ At Dominican colleges and universities this commitment to educating and inspiring students to become responsible global citizens finds expression in academic programs such as Global Studies, Public and Community Service Studies, as well as other service learning courses and myriad opportunities for service locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Students engage in collaborative efforts to foster deeper relationships with others, particularly those disposed and on the margins who endure injustice, poverty, violence, and discrimination. All of these embody the spiritual, religious, and ethical values at the heart of Dominican life.

The articles in this issue reflect a variety of ways in which the Dominican charism comes alive at colleges and universities in the United States and at the Dominican Institute in Ibadan, Nigeria. Gregory Heille reflects on the dual celebrations in 2016 of the eight hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Dominicans and the Jubilee of Mercy, finding in both these celebrations the call and challenge for Dominican institutions to prepare students for a life of compassion, communicating the truth of Gospel life with mercy, justice, and love. Following this, Patricia Walter argues that study and contemplation at Dominican institutions are closely connected with metaphors for sight—study and contemplation result in clear vision, grasping the whole, illumination and enlightenment. The goal of a Dominican education is to help students see clearly and act virtuously in accordance with wisdom and insight.

Gary Eberle discusses the challenge for Dominican institutions to provide a “value-added” education grounded in the Catholic and Dominican tradition of the liberal arts. The author claims that these colleges and universities are especially equipped to offer a “values-based liberal arts education that produces graduates who engage the contemporary world with a unique set of integrated skills and values.” Scott Smith and Roxanne Davies then demonstrate how their institution, over a ten-year period, was able to develop a lasting and effective approach to mission-centered leadership development among students,

³ Order of Preachers, “Justice and Peace,” <http://www.op.org/en/content/justice-peace>, accessed May 20, 2016.

faculty, and staff. The result of these efforts has been to imbed mission education informed by the Dominican charism as a strategic priority.

Like other colleges and universities across the country, Dominican institutions continue to develop new opportunities for students to focus their interests and passions on specific areas of study. Tara Tuttle shows how the establishment and fostering of Women's and Gender Studies programs fits well with specific aspects of the Dominican charism. The author discusses several points of convergence, including "a respect for multiple truths, a concern for the Other, an emphasis on building inclusive learning communities, and a commitment to providing a socially useful curriculum."

Dominican institutions also thrive in far-flung places of the globe. Our last two articles examine Dominican education at the Dominican Institute in Idaban, Nigeria. Iheanyi M. Enwerem discusses how Catholic educational institutions, and particularly the Dominican Institute, can be a positive and corrective force in a country's educational system. Several innovative aspects stand out for the author: (1) an openness to originality and creativity; (2) a research-oriented pedagogical approach; (3) an outreach program, and (4) the study of Aquinas in a "robust dialogue with contemporary ideas." Saint Dominic's primary interest was the formation of women and men who could preach the Gospel effectively to others. Thus the training of preachers remains a key element of Dominican education. Bro. Jean-Paul Tagheu explores three integrative approaches to preaching and the formation of women and men who are called to proclaim the Word of God to the world.

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