Introduction

The lay Dominican is called to holiness by living within – yet apart from – the secular world. This is no small call to action. A member of the Fraternities of St. Dominic might be tempted, at first, to look longingly at the cloister, removed from life's distraction, but this is not our vocation. Within the world is where we are, so from within, we must answer the call "*Duc in altum*" (Go into the deep). We do this as "those sent on a mission" through the apostolate. The apostolate brings together in harmonious balance the Dominican charisms of prayer, study, contemplation and community, transforming what could be participation in prayer groups, study circles, or communal associations into a true vocational commitment.

A Call to the Deep

Going forth two by two, or chapter by chapter, Dominican fraternity members answer Christ's call to go and be fishers of men. Dominican apostolates are modeled after the Church itself. In *Redemptoris missio* 20 Pope John Paul II describes how the Church:

"contributes to humankind's pilgrimage of conversion to God's plan through her witness and through such activities as dialogue, human promotion, commitment to justice and peace, education and the care of the sick, and aid to the poor and to children. In carrying on these activities, however, she never loses sight of the priority of the transcendent and spiritual realities…"

The Apostolate of the Laity

As well as on the Dominican tradition, the lay Dominican's apostolate is founded on the call to the laity to be an integral part of the Church's mission to evangelize the world. The hierarchy has the mission to evangelize through the sacraments and preaching, but it is the laity who are to bear witness to what they have received to the world.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* bases it's teaching on the apostolate, for both hierarchy and laity, on the Creed: "We believe in on holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church." It states:

"The whole Church is apostolic, in that she remains, through the successors of St. Peter and the other apostles, in communion of faith and life with her origin: and in that she is 'sent out' into the whole world. All members of the Church share in its mission, though in various ways." (CCC 863)

It further defines the role of the laity in this endeavor: "Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth." (CCC 900)

Apostolates in the Dominican Tradition

According to the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas, mercy flows from charity and is a special virtue in its own right. Mercy's motive is the removal of misery, which one discerns in another, particularly in so far as this condition is deemed involuntary. Obviously the condition to be addressed can be either of body or soul. The proper responses are the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Historically, Dominican apostolates have addressed first the spiritual works, which the *Catechism* lists as instructing, advising, consoling, comforting, forgiving, bearing wrongs patiently and praying for the living and the dead. From these flow the corporal works which address the evils of our world, chiefly those that result from a loss of the belief in the dignity of each redeemed human person.

Spiritual/Corporal Works as Apostolates

The call to perform spiritual works of mercy requires special tact and prudence, particularly in the discharge of fraternal correction. Likewise to instruct, counsel, reprove and console may not always be within the competency of every member of the Fraternities of St. Dominic. Individuals with special graces and talent in these areas would undertake these apostolates. The dehumanization of the person in today's society offers many opportunities for lay Dominican apostolates based on the corporal works of mercy. Christian witness is needed in fields as diverse as communications, medical and business ethics, and social justice to simply preparing meals for the homeless or job training for the working poor.

Supernatural Motive

No matter which apostolates are chosen, all must approach their service with the right motive. An apostolate demands more than a humanitarian basis. The proper motive must always be a supernatural one as described by John Paul II in *Christifideles Laici* 15:

"The Church, in fact, lives in the world, even if she is not of the world (Jn 17:16). She is sent to continue the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, which by its very nature concerns the salvation of humanity and also involves the renewal of the whole temporal order."

Lectors, ushers, and greeters are worthy roles for the good of the Church. They are not, however, apostolic in nature as they do not fulfill the call to "go out"– they are not *duc in altum* activities. It is the mission of the Church to evangelize. An apostolate builds on mission. Our mission through our apostolate is to go out to bear witness to what the Church, who is sending us, believes.

A True Apostolate

What then is a true apostolate? True apostolates are marked both by their origins in Christ and by their scope of activity, which extends beyond the normal duties required of every Catholic. They follow His command to love neighbor as self. As Our Lord explains to St. Catherine of Siena in *The Dialogue*: "You cannot give me the kind of love I ask of you. This is why I have put you among your neighbors; so that you can do for them what you cannot do for me – that is, love them without any concern for thanks and without looking for any profit for yourself." Or, more simply from another section of *The Dialogue*: "I am One who is pleased by few words and many works."

True apostolates begin and end in Christ and his grace, moving souls that are close to him to build up the Mystical Body of Christ. Christ assures us: "Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do" (Jn 14:12-14). And again he reminds us: "Whatever you do for them, I will consider it done for me" (Mt 25:40). The work done may vary, but all true apostolates will be marked by a lay Dominican's devout service to God's will for his people.

Individual vs. Chapter Apostolates

Apostolates can be undertaken by individual Dominicans. Under the best of circumstances they should be undertaken by the entire chapter working together. St. Thomas describes man as made for community, a social animal, so a chapter apostolate appropriately reflects this aspect of human nature (Nichols).

A chapter apostolate offers all members regardless of age, education, or particular circumstances, the opportunity to participate in the work of the Church by supporting "duc in altum" in some manner. For example, while some may not be able to visit a prison or teach a catechism class, they can make copies of study materials, assemble them, and archive resources for future lessons. In most cases, by choosing a chapter apostolate, collective competence can be achieved.

Challenge of Duc in Altum

In his conversations with St. Catherine of Siena in *The Dialogue*, God prepares a Dominican fraternity member for the challenge ahead as he or she goes into the deep:

"This is the reason why the wicked of the world do not change their ways: they do not believe in truth, by the light of living faith, that I see them."

To counter this bleak condition of mankind, lay Dominicans must arm themselves for the assignment. Wisely, along with big hearts, they bring to their apostolates God's grace; ceaseless prayer; study; contemplation; the support of Our Lady, St. Dominic and many Dominican saints; and a Dominican vision–a firm belief that Christ came to save all men. As G.K. Chesterton describes in his essay *The Thing*:

"For Catholics it is a fundamental dogma of the faith that all human beings, without any exception whatever, are specially made, were specially shaped and pointed like shining arrows, for the end of hitting the mark of Beatitude (superhuman goodness)."

What Is Not an Apostolate

It is instructive to add a clarification concerning what an apostolate IS NOT. There can be some confusion distinguishing ministry, mission and apostolate. Ministry is the service of an official for a religious body; it is formal ecclesial service. There are ministers of sacraments, ministers of music, ministers of the Word, and ministers of hospitality. While serving in any of these ministries is to be encouraged, these are not apostolates. For apostolates go out beyond the borders of official Church service, as such, to bring Christ to a world through an action requiring unwavering commitment to Christ, fidelity to the mind of the Church, grace-filled and disciplined preparation, a realistic and Christ-focused self-knowledge culminating in the selection and execution of work appropriate to our God-given talents.

PREPARING FOR AN APOSTOLATE

Self-Knowledge

Lay Dominicans must first prepare themselves spiritually (self-knowledge in Christ). The pace of spiritual growth may vary for individuals, but over time, with prayer, all will progress. The critical phases of spiritual preparation include a need to humble oneself, a call to increased and improved prayer, and proper understanding of what constitutes study and contemplation, with the ultimate goal for each to emerge with heart, mind, and will aligned with God's will. The process of humbling the soul requires a replacement of spiritual arrogance with true humility, a prerequisite to acquiring true self-knowledge. Members of Fraternities of St. Dominic must seek to see themselves as God sees them. Pertinent to this task, St. Catherine of Siena in *The Dialogue* offers this guidance: "A humble and unschooled person with a

holy and upright conscience is preferable to God over a well-read but proud scholar with great knowledge."

As well as spiritual self-knowledge, the Dominican fraternity member makes a critical assessment of key physical, emotional and educational requirements needed for each apostolate under consideration. One might conclude that their experience in a particular field is especially valuable, but one might also be willing to undergo arduous training in a field entirely new because there is a critical unmet need.

Prayer

The need for increased prayer is equally as important. The lay member of St. Dominic's Order is called to approach God with a pure heart, to avoid the greatest treason of doing the right thing for the wrong reason. In a *Treatise on the Spiritual Life*, St. Vincent Ferrer, OP, again quotes St. Bernard advising us that if self-will is found even in our day of fasting, the fast is not pleasing to Christ.

A member's prayer life must increase in both quality and quantity. By building a tabernacle within the soul, he or she learns how to pray always and never lose heart. In a *Treatise*, St. Vincent describes how one's prayer life should change. He claims that over time affection towards God develops into ardent love with a sense of God's scale (holy fear of the Lord), a desire to give him the honor and respect due, a zeal to find a way to best serve him, a desire to often thank and praise him, an ability to discern his will and obey it, and, ultimately, an ability to relish Divine sweetness and Christ's peace in our souls. This prayer life must be marked by perseverance – both in prayers for self, for others, and for the apostolate.

Study

A better understanding of study as it relates to the apostolate is needed both in the preparatory stage and as the apostolate develops. A member of the Fraternities of St. Dominic knows that God loves a probing faith, an intellect that tries to understand him and his Truth to the very limits of the ability to comprehend such mysteries. So he or she savors the study for his or her own sake as a way to grow closer to the God. But in doing so, the Dominican becomes compelled to share this deeper understanding with others. The fraternity member also tries to anticipate the future needs of his or her apostolate, collects, and pores over reliable Church documents, seeks guidance related to possible areas of service to Christ, and learns to read the signs of the time. All study then, rather than being simply a self-indulgent exercise, should bear fruit in the apostolate.

A member should be intimately familiar with the document *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Second Vatican Council's *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, released in 1965. The call to action in this document is an exhortation:

"The true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, whether to unbelievers to draw them towards the faith, or to the faithful to instruct them, strengthen them, and incite them to a more fervent life. Scripture reminds us that "Christ urges us on" (2 Cor 5:14), and in the hearts of all should the apostles words echo, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel (1 Cor 9:16)" (no. 6).

Study should also be made of the more recent apostolic constitutions, exhortations, letters and encyclicals of Pope John Paul II on the mission of the Church in the world and the call to evangelization. Especially important is the apostolic exhortation on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and the World (*Christifideles laici*).

Contemplation

A better grasp of contemplation is a prerequisite for an apostolate. Contemplation will enable the lay Dominican to balance the demands or duties of daily life and of the apostolate with the solace of an interior life, the retreat to the tabernacle of the soul. Contemplation is spiritual percolating, a drawing of many thoughts and prayers to one's interior where a profound silence can be maintained to wait for Our Lord. It is the ability to leave man-time and enter God-timelessness. As Fr. LaGrange, OP, describes in The *Three Conversions in the Spiritual Life*, the Dominican talent for contemplation enables one to weep with true sorrow for how he or she has failed God in the past, to resolve to reenter the world as a disciplined agent against all vice – personal and that of others. Contemplation energizes the Dominican with vigilance against future weakness in mind and body, and replaces extremes with "moderation in all things."

In contemplation, members of Dominican fraternities can move away from self-focus and eventually builds a strong interior life resting there thinking only of God. Like children filled with wonder in the loving arms of parents, members are able to enter the tabernacles within, desiring to be in God's company for his own sake.

Before Final Profession

A commitment to the apostolate is integral to Dominican life. It is essential that there be a clear understanding that participation in the apostolate is not optional for a member of the Fraternities of St. Dominic. With spiritual growth progressing and a proper understanding of Christ's call to the deep, a member must make a choice of how he or she will serve Christ in an apostolate. Preparative prayer, fasting and growth in the ability to truly contemplate will all work together at this juncture, guiding each chapter member toward a constructive Dominican role. Some may bring to their vocation a skill in Biblical study, or training in Church histo-

ry or philosophy. Still others may have secular training in communications, advocacy for special interests, Web design, conflict resolution, psychology or counseling. As Christ sees fit, he will move these talents to his Church and spread his Truth to all men.

Time for Action

To help guide selection of an apostolate, it is useful to reflect on the most prevalent and serious evils in the world. List what countermeasures might begin to make a dent against some of these evils. Assess what personal or chapter talents and/or resources might be effective in establishing new countermeasures. Check with other chapters about their apostolates. This should provide synergy for good projects under way and identify gaps that could be filled by newly forming apostolates. Finally, the chosen apostolate must be converted to concrete plans with clearly stated tasks and assigned participants.

Mindset for the Deep

Once work begins, it is key for all to adopt the mindset of Dominican preachers. The success or failure of an apostolate cannot be measured in secular terms. To bring souls to Christ is not commissioned sales. There is a high likelihood that the work will not reap visible rewards right away. By accepting that changes in souls will happen in God's time, lay Dominicans learn quickly to do all they can, then move on and try again, often without knowing the spiritual outcomes. Similarly, when confronted with failure, fraternity members do not become discouraged. They know that work offered to God in love can never be a failure.

Conclusion: Everyone Gains

As apostolates mature, so should prayer, work, study, and contemplation in the life of a member of the Fraternities of St. Dominic. A plateau is a step backward. Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, quoting St. Augustine, teaches in *The Three Conversions in the Spiritual Life* that the work of an apostolate is not zero-sum economics, where one must lose for another to gain. On the contrary, the more souls lay Dominicans bring to enjoy the spiritual treasure of Christ and his Truth, the more completely do they also possess this treasure.

As Fr. Lagrange, OP, so clearly describes:

"The same truth, the same virtue, the same God, can belong to us all in like manner…such are the inexhaustible riches of the spirit…only then do we possess a truth completely when we teach it to others, when we make others share our contemplation…Give money away or spend it and it is no longer yours. But give God to others, and you possess him more fully for yourself."

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Discussion Questions

1. How do you view your role as a lay person in the continuing mission of the Church to evangelize the world?
2. What is your understanding of the terms mission, ministry, and apostolate? Has it changed in view or scope by this module?
3. Did you know of the required commitment to the apostolate before beginning your formation? Does the required commitment to the apostolate have an effect on your desire to become a professed member of the Fraternities of St. Dominic? If so, in what way?
4. Can you think of some fitting apostolates for you or your chapter?

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