



Reflections on Priesthood in the Dominican Order

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Some years ago I was speaking to a candidate in the RCIA programme who thought, like many already-Catholics think, that all priests are in vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. I explained that most priests were not in fact religious. She responded: “So you don’t need to be particularly religious to be a priest?” What to say...¹

The Dominican *Constitutions* provide that novices are to be instructed about priesthood (*LCO* 187.1) while students are to prepare for their priestly ministry by integrating it with their religious life (*LCO* 223).² Novices and students often debate which comes first: religious life or ministerial priesthood? Often this is in reaction to an older notion of religious priests as diocesan priests in habit – or at least with a habit in the closet. Also in the background may have been a Thomist metaphysic, according to which episcopacy and religious life were not ontological states, were not inscribed upon one’s soul the way sacramental characters are, could presumably be dispensed, and would not carry forward into the afterlife. But priesthood, like baptism and confirmation, brought about an *ontological* change: priests are priests forever. Some regarded formation as a thing to be endured patiently for a few years only – however much Regents, chapters and documents might pay lip-service to ‘ongoing formation’. Clothing in the habit, simple profession and solemn profession were stages along the way to the great liberation: priestly ordination. Dominican priests, especially if appointed to a parish or some external academic institution, were largely free of their community and superiors – except when it was convenient to plead the

¹ This paper was given at a colloquium for the ‘Year for Priests’ of the Irish Province of the Order of Preachers, St Mary’s Priory, Tallaght, 14 June 2010. My thanks to John Harris OP, Anthony Walsh OP and Paul Rowse OP for their assistance. The writings of Simon Tugwell OP, Benedict Ashley OP and Paul Murray OP have been especially formative of my views here. Also useful are: Thomas Acklin, *The Unchanging Heart of the Priesthood* (Steubenville OH: Emmaus Publishing, 2006); Charles Connor, *Meditations on the Catholic Priesthood* (New York: St Pauls Publications, 2005); Avery Dulles, *The Priestly Office: A Theological Reflection* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997); Donald Goergen and Ann Garrido (eds), *The Theology of Priesthood* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2000).

² ‘LCO’ refers to the *Book of Constitutions and Ordinations of the Order of Friars Preachers*.

Dominican thing against external authority. A symbol of all this that my own Australian province inherited from its Irish founders was the progression from long white socks to black trousers under the habit and the raising of the habitual hemline to ensure the presbyteral pantaloons were on display. In the United States I also met friars rarely if ever seen in the habit who sported the most elegant of diocesan clerical attire. Presbytery trumped priory.

In the post-Conciliar Dominican Order, as elsewhere in the Church and culture, there was a desire for a less authoritarian, flatter, more egalitarian approach – to live out what the Order's *Constitutions* called being 'equal in profession' and what the Council called 'the common priesthood of all the baptised'.³ No longer afraid of Protestantism's emphasis on Word over Sacrament, the Council recovered the centrality of proclamation in the lives of priests and laity – a matter to which I will return. Many felt this freed up Dominicans to be more truly themselves, preachers rather than 'sacrament factories'. Some now dispensed themselves from all the trappings of the clerical life. Ironically, as the number of co-operator brothers declined to near-zero in many parts of the Order, everyone started using the title and the few remaining brothers were press-ganged into higher education or leadership. (In my view the sad demise of the brother's vocation partly reflects the increasing middle-classification of the Order, Church and society.) In various post-conciliar *Acta* of general and provincial chapters, letters from the Masters of the Order and treatments of Dominican spirituality, *priesthood* has rarely rated a mention. In the rivalry between presbytery and priory, many proudly proclaimed that they were Dominican first and priests only incidentally.

As the pendulum swings again we can expect the next generation of Dominicans to re-emphasize the priestly and hierarchical aspects of our lives. Presbyteral pantaloons may yet make a comeback. . .

Strange Dichotomy

Whether they thought of themselves as religious clerics or clerical religious, many have presumed that rivalry between these two aspects of Dominican priesthood is unavoidable and that you must, from time to time or perhaps for life, pick your sides.⁴ Yet this is a

³ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (1964) 10, after *1 Pet* 2:9.

⁴ For examples of writers on the rivalry between 'cultic' and 'prophetic' models of priesthood, or between 'cultic priesthood' and 'prophetic religious life', see: Michael Buckley SJ, "Jesuit Priesthood: Its meaning and commitments," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 8 (1976), 150–182 and Thomas Rausch SJ, "What is Dominican priesthood?" *Spirituality Today* 42(4) (1990), 323–39.

strange thing, historically speaking. From very early in the Church some priests were religious as were some lay people. St Jerome was a priest who went off to live as a hermit in a cave with a lion and a bible. Monasteries ordained some of their own to serve their communities as priests and few thought this opposed to the 'project' of the monastery. St Dominic de Guzman served as a Cathedral canon in Osma, exercising the priesthood in the life of the Cathedral, whilst living under a religious rule; he went on to found a new order that he insisted was both religious *and* clerical.⁵ No-one thought he was suffering from a multiple personality disorder.

Reflecting that ancient reality the present-day *Fundamental Constitution* of the Order provides that "The Order's nature as a religious society derives from its mission and its fraternal communion. Since the ministry of the word and of the sacraments of faith is a priestly function, ours is a clerical Order, in whose mission the co-operator brothers too share in many ways, exercising the common priesthood in a manner specific to them." (*LCO* 1.VI). Again, in this ancient and modern view, priesthood and religious life are comfortably integrated in a friar.

The new congregations of the Counter-Reformation saw a change, however, in the way religious who were priests lived out that reality. It was, due to circumstance and planning, a more individualistic undertaking where a man was equipped precisely to go out and work on his own, for extended periods of time, all the time exercising his ministerial priesthood while the religious life was, to a certain extent, pushed to the background. St Ignatius of Loyola famously forbade his troops to pray the Divine Office in common: their charism included spiritual self-sufficiency. In the centuries that followed, especially the nineteenth, this model of clerical religious life predominated. In my own province and its mission territory many small houses were established with no likelihood of ever having a genuine conventual life but from which many good priestly works would be done.

Vatican II

In *Lumen Gentium* the Fathers of Vatican II distinguished between the common priesthood of the baptised and the ministerial priesthood, but only after insisting on the prior dignity of the baptismal vocation. Christians share in Christ's one priesthood in two interdependent ways. Religious Life was placed at the end of the document with Mary. No Council can cover everything, and clearly Vatican II wanted to balance and complete the work of Vatican I by articulating a much

⁵ On Dominic's inspiration and world see Guy Bedouelle OP, *Saint Dominic: The Grace of the Word* (Trans. M. T. Noble, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987).

fuller theology of the episcopacy, and respond to the spirit of the age by promoting the vocation of the laity in the world. With the focus on those two classes of the Church's members, it was unsurprising that clergy and religious were slotted in mostly in terms of their relationships to bishops and lay people. Paul M^cPartlan argues that the Council's preference for the word 'presbyter' over 'priest' reflected not only the recovery of the priestly aspect of the baptismal vocation but also of a notion of priests not as cultic figures but more as members of the bishop's council of elders.⁶

Few would deny that the Conciliar documents on the priesthood⁷ and on religious life⁸ were thinner and less inspiring than the 'hinge' documents of the Council with their rich teaching on bishops and laity. This left the Church ill-armed for the vocational apocalypse after the Council. A related deficiency in those two documents was that *Presbyterorum ordinis* proceeds as if all priests were diocesan clergy⁹ and *Perfectæ caritatis* almost as if all religious were consecrated laity. When clerical religious sought to rediscover their charisms and reinvent their *Constitutions* in response to such documents it is unsurprising that this renewal often downplayed the sacerdotal aspect of their vocation.

An order of bishops?

St Thomas and his followers thought episcopacy or religious life (especially Dominican religious life) were not ontological states, but rather the two 'states of perfection'.¹⁰ Thomas did not say what happened if you were both Dominican and bishop, as was his mentor Albert: do these two states add, subtract, multiply or divide each other's perfection? But he successfully evaded all attempts to

⁶ Paul M^cPartlan, "Priesthood, priestliness and priests," in Ronald Witherup *et al.*, *Ministerial Priesthood in the Third Millennium: Faithfulness of Christ, Faithfulness of Priests* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2009), ch 4.

⁷ Vatican Council II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis: Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (1965). A recent study is Maryanne Confoy, *Religious Life and Priesthood: Perfectæ Caritatis, Optatam Totius, Presbyterorum Ordinis* (New York: Paulist Press, 2008).

⁸ Vatican Council II, *Perfectæ caritatis: Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life* (1965).

⁹ John O'Malley, "Priesthood, ministry, and religious life: Some historical and historiographical considerations," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988), pp. 223–257 pointed out that *Presbyterorum Ordinis* assumes that all priests are presiding over local communities of the faithful and exercising a primarily sacramental ministry, in hierarchical union with the bishops; the model chosen as paradigmatic of priesthood is that of the diocesan clergy. Thomas Rausch, a Jesuit, (*art. cit.*) suggested that Dominican priesthood can offer a different paradigm also rooted in the tradition but also, as I will suggest below, supported by *Presbyterorum Ordinis*.

¹⁰ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IIa IIæ, 184, 5.

episcopate him and may well have been in agreement with Blessed Humbert of Romans' declaration on hearing of Albert's nomination: "I would rather you were dead than a bishop... Why ruin your reputation and that of the Order by letting yourself be taken away from poverty and preaching? However troublesome you find the brethren, don't imagine things will be better once you have secular clergy and powers to deal with... Better to lie in a coffin than sit in a bishop's chair!"¹¹ Clearly Humbert thought the episcopal state of perfection would subtract from the religious – with no remainder.

It took quite a while for us to settle into our identity as Dominicans and for others to accept and appreciate it. By 1255 Paris was in uproar.¹² The friars had been too successful, not just in converting big crowds by their preaching, but also in 'poaching' the laity – and their collections – from the parishes, vocations from the dioceses, and students and professors from the universities. They had been too successful, also, in gaining various privileges, such as the general preaching mission granted by Honorius III in 1217 and the general mission to hear confessions extended in 1221. Trouble had been brewing for a long time. Some scoffed at the very notion of an order of preachers: after all, everyone knew that bishops were the only ordinary preachers in the Church; priests, when they preached, were to the Word what extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are today to the Eucharist.¹³

If the friars would be preachers within and without the Liturgy, Dominic thought they would need the best of educations. They soon infiltrated the universities, helping them develop, but creating new tensions with the local clergy who had been the intellectuals to date. The preaching and the studies meant a radically new form of religious life that included the old monastic practices but also provision for compressing or even dispensing from them. Penances, liturgical hours, charitable works, administration of the sacraments, presence in community: all could be waived for a just cause. To many that seemed altogether too secular, as if religious were aping the diocesan clergy. Matthew of Paris wrote that the Cistercians were the *real*

¹¹ H. C. Scheeben, *Albert der Grosse. Zur Chronologie seines Lebens* (Vechta, 1931), pp. 154ff. On the background to this emotional letter and its retention and transmission, see Rudolf Schieffer, "Albertus Magnus: Mendicancy and theology in conflict with episcopacy," (trans. Thomas O'Meara), www.nd.edu/~tomeara/schieffer.html#64.

¹² On the history of this dispute see Jean-Pierre Torrell OP, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Vol. 1: *The Person and his Work* (Trans. R. Royal, Washington DC: CUA Press, 1996), ch 5. He follows especially M.-M. Dufeil, *Guillaume de Saint-Amour et la polemique universitaire parisienne 1250–1259* (Paris, 1972).

¹³ Simon Tugwell OP in his Introduction to *Early Dominicans* (New York: Paulist, 1982), p. 14, relays a story told in the Order of Pope Innocent III wondering to himself why Dominic wanted to found an order consisting entirely of bishops. The pope was confused because it was still assumed that bishops were the only ordinary preachers.

religious: they lived decent, orderly lives, pleasing to God and the Church; they stayed in their cloisters, worked hard, prayed hard and obeyed their superiors. The friars, on the other hand, wandered about the countryside, getting up to who knows what, their superiors not even knowing where they were – little has changed.¹⁴

To many this seemed triply absurd: priests who preach, religious who are learned and monks who leave their monasteries. The friars were not backward in defending their new form of life. Stephen of Bourbon records that a Dominican novice was being taunted by some monks. He responded by asking them whether Our Lord's was not the most excellent pattern of life. When they said it was, he retorted that "when I read that the Lord Jesus Christ was not white monk nor black monk, but a poor preacher, I know I've joined right bunch!"¹⁵ But such witty reposts rarely convert people: the monks, I guess, just thought the novice a 'smart-arse'.

Now William of St-Amour and his allies wanted all the friars' privileges and ministries removed, including their rights to preach, teach and absolve.¹⁶ He wrote furious pamphlets against the friars as 'spawn of the Anti-Christ'. At first the popes defended the Orders, but in November 1254 Innocent IV revoked the friars' privileges, took them out of the universities and subjected them to the local clergy. By the autumn of 1255 feeling against the friars was at fever-pitch: St Jacques was virtually under siege; mud and stones, garbage and insults were rained upon any friar who dared venture outside; and the university would not give its star pupil, Thomas Aquinas, his Masters degree.

Nothing serves better to unite and energize the friars than a common foe. St Thomas and the blackfriars joined St Bonaventure and the greyfriars in tag-team wrestling with the secular clergy. The Master of the Order directed that litanies be recited day and night, and within two weeks the pope was dead. His successor, Alexander IV, as much influenced by fear of the friars' prayers as by the arguments for their privileges, revoked Innocent's bulls, banished St-Amour and his lieutenants and, as a final humiliation of the seculars, required the university not only to graduate the friars but to give professors' chairs to the under-aged Aquinas and Bonaventure.

Things took a while to settle down, but despite periodic hostilities the friars were eventually regarded by most as a benefit or at least no threat. Nowadays similar suspicions and energies are directed in some places to the new ecclesial movements, who are, I would suggest,

¹⁴ Simon Tugwell OP, *The Way of the Preacher* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979), p. 13.

¹⁵ 'Miscellaneous stories,' in Tugwell, *Early Dominicans*, p. 139.

¹⁶ Torrell OP, *St Thomas Aquinas*, follows especially M.-M. Dufeuil, *Guillaume de Saint-Amour et la polemique universitaire parisienne 1250–1259* (Paris, 1972).

at a similar stage of settling their identity, finding their place in the Church's ordinary life and being appreciated for the gifts they bring. In the thirteenth century the Dominicans (and other friars) were the 'neocats' and 'opies' of the day and met similar resentment: they did not fit the established patterns for priests and religious.

All priests are preachers

One way the seculars had of getting their own back on the friars for stealing the best of the seminarians, priests and academics, was to appoint them as bishops and thereby effectively draw them back into the diocesan ambit. When Albert the Great came to Rome to argue the case for the friars he was Provincial of Germany; when he left he was Bishop of Ratisbon, a diocese requiring a major clean up. Three years were enough for him before he quit and returned to priory and laboratory. But this new-fangled Dominican 'order of bishops' had to learn, one way or another, to relate to the diocesan clergy and to integrate their own priesthood into their identity and life as friars. In the process they helped change the Church's understanding of priesthood, so that preaching came to be seen as an ordinary part of priestly work.

Few, however, embraced Humbert of Romans' somewhat extreme position, repeated by Stephen's novice, that Christ was a friar preacher rather than a praying monk or a sacrament-dispensing diocesan priest.¹⁷ Along came the Reformation and some took fright of the Protestant concern for preaching. The Council of Trent, following Aquinas here as elsewhere, defined priesthood in terms of *that which only priests could do*, and so seemed to reduce priesthood to confecting the Eucharist and absolving the penitent.¹⁸ This suited well the Counter-Reformation determination to distinguish a Catholic sacerdotal priesthood from the 'Bible-bashers' across the road.

Vatican II reasserted the centrality of the kerygmatic role for all priests, not just Dominicans. Thus *Presbyterorum Ordinis* describes Christ first as Prophet, then as Priest and then King,¹⁹ teaches that

¹⁷ Bld Humbert of Romans OP, *Treatise on Formation of Preachers* III, 21: "When Christ was in this world, he celebrated Mass only once, on Mandy Thursday. We do not read of him ever hearing confessions. He administered few sacraments and those infrequently. He did not often assist at any canonical divine worship... Once he started preaching... he devoted his whole life to preaching, even more than to prayer." On and around this theme see Tugwell *The Way of the Preacher*, ch 3 and Paul Murray OP, "What is Dominican spirituality?" in *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality: A Drink Called Happiness* (London: Burns & Oates, 2006), ch 1.

¹⁸ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* IV 74 & 75; Trent, Session XXIII, *Decree on the Institution of the Priesthood of the New Law*, ch I and *Canons on the Sacrament of Order* can I.

¹⁹ *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 1.

priests share in this three-fold office in which *preaching* has a certain priority over *sanctifying* and *leading*, and describes priests first as ‘apostolic heralds’²⁰ and ‘Ministers of the Word’:

The People of God is formed into one in the first place by the Word of the living God (*1 Pet* 1:23; *Acts* 6:7; 12:24), which is quite rightly sought from the mouth of priests (*Mal* 2:7; *1 Tim* 4:11–13; *2 Tim* 4:5; *Tit* 1:9). For since nobody can be saved who has not first believed (*Mk* 16:16), it is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishops to preach the Gospel of God to all men (*2 Cor* 11:7). In this way they carry out the Lord’s command “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (*Mk* 16:15) and thus set up and increase the People of God. . . Priests owe it to everybody to share with them the truth of the Gospel (*Gal* 2:5). . .²¹

Charles Connor, in his recent meditations on the Catholic priesthood, traces this recovery of the preaching side of priesthood through the writings of Benedict XV, Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger, Paul VI and his successors.²² Paul VI’s *Evangelii nuntiandi* and John Paul II’s oft-repeated call to a new evangelization marked the realization that formerly Christian but increasingly secularized countries were the new mission field.²³ This new-found emphasis on the Word, rebalancing rather than displacing Trent’s emphasis on the sacramental role of the priest, should be very comfortable for Dominican priests and receives encouragement from Benedict XVI’s recent apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini*.²⁴

Where to with the question of Dominican priesthood?

If the documents of the Church are short on teaching on the ‘mixed’ vocation of priest and religious, they are positively extravagant on that subject compared to the quantity of teaching on the ‘mixed-up’ vocation of bishop and religious. But there is enough common ground between these vocations to be able to map a life of both without having to sunder ourselves into two rival identities or suppress one for the sake of the other. Here I would suggest six points of convergence.

²⁰ *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2.

²¹ *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4.

²² Connor, *Meditations*, ch 8.

²³ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi: Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World* (1975) and John Paul II, in many places, e.g. *Redemptoris Missio: Encyclical Letter on the Church’s Missionary Mandate* (1990) and *Novo Millennio Ineunte: Apostolic Letter at the Close of the Great Jubilee* (2000).

²⁴ Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church* (2010) 59–60, 78–83, 90–98.

1. Dominican priesthood is *Christological*

First, the clerical, religious and lay vocations are fundamentally *Christological* vocations: they are similar but different ways of participation in, imitation of, and identification with Jesus Christ. Baptism has a certain chronological, logical and ontological priority: it is the *sine qua non* of faith, membership of the Church, all other sacraments and professions, and the promise of eternal life.²⁵ To the extent that our religious profession is simply a reflection and magnification of our baptismal equality, fraternity and apostolic calling, you might say that Dominicans are friars before they are priests.²⁶ On the other hand, as *Lumen Gentium* makes clear, both the common and ministerial priesthoods are ordered to each other: the baptized exercise their royal priesthood above all by participating in that Eucharistic sacrifice which can only be effected by a ministerial priest.²⁷ To the extent that being a baptized Christian, being a professed Dominican and being an ordained priest draw me closer to Christ, and give me specifically Christic inspirations and arenas of activity, they will be integrated *in Him*.

2. Dominican priesthood is *Eucharistic*

Some commentators have, in my view, overdrawn the rivalry between the cultic and prophetic aspects of priesthood or between cultic priesthood and prophetic religious life. We might as well ask whether Christ was most truly Himself when he was out teaching, or when he was breaking bread with his intimates; when he was proclaiming the kingdom of God or dying upon the altar of the cross? Despite Humbert's polemic it would be absurd to choose either, for both are essential to Christ as we know him. McPartlan points out that: "Everything that Christ did, all of his teaching and service included, was done out of love for his Father and was taken up into the priestly offering of himself that was made to his Father on our behalf."²⁸ For priests, religious and laity, all our evangelisation, catechesis, prayer, witness, penance, charity, and pastoral guidance "flow into and out of what happens at the altar; we offer it in the sacrifice of Christ himself and pray that the Lord will make it fruitful." If it is in Christ that we find the integration of the various facets of our

²⁵ I here leave aside the question of if and how the unbaptized can receive these benefits too.

²⁶ Once again, secular priests such as Gustavo Guterrez can become friars, so there are exceptions.

²⁷ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* 10.

²⁸ McPartlan, *art.cit.*, p. 83.

vocation, it is in His *Eucharistic* body that we feed that unity and direction.²⁹

3. Dominican priesthood is *Ecclesial*

Thirdly, the clergy live and serve *in medio ecclesiae*. The lay vocation, on the other hand, is principally lived out ‘in the world’. This is not to say that the laity are excluded from the sanctuary or the clergy properly quarantined within it: all are, in Pope Benedict’s word, ‘co-responsible’ for the apostolic mission of the Church to the world. Friars, you might say, are bridges between both worlds. When Dominicans are ‘in church’ it is to prepare them to take the Church to the world; and when they are ‘in the world’ it is always with a view to bringing the world into the Church. St Dominic’s weeping over heresy and schism and zeal to bring people back to the Church was borne of his passion to bring God to men and men to God and the only sure meeting place he knew of was the Church.

4. Dominican priesthood is *Kerygmatic*

Fourthly, if I might be permitted a little Dominican chauvinism, Vatican II might be said to have allowed the Church to adopt a more *Dominican* paradigm of priesthood. By this, I mean, one in which the preaching role of priests is given its rightful prominence. I have said enough about how that was lost and found in the wider Church. But if that proclamation is to be truly apostolic, it too must be rooted in Christ, in his Body that is the Eucharist, and so especially in liturgical preaching, and in his body that is the Church, and so in sacred teaching informed by the magisterium. For all the talk of a *gratia praedicationis*,³⁰ the fact is that Dominicans get their authority to preach (and hear the confessions of those whom their preaching has converted) from the Church and this was why Dominic, unlike Francis, chose to make his Order a clerical one. Thus the *Fundamental Constitution* provides that “Having been made co-operators with the episcopal order by priestly ordination, we have as our special function a prophetic task, which is to proclaim everywhere by word and example the Gospel of Jesus Christ. . .” (LCO 1.V).

St Thomas taught that Christian priests are only trustees or stewards:³¹ they hold the faith and sacraments on trust, not for their own

²⁹ Of many good treatments of the Eucharist and the Priesthood, I recommend Connor, *Meditations*, ch 6.

³⁰ E.g. in Tugwell, *The Way of the Preacher*, ch 5.

³¹ *Summa theologiae* IIaIIæ 86, 2; IIIa 22, 1; 63,6.

aggrandizement, but from and on behalf of Christ to be dispensed to the People of God. They are conduits, mediators, telephone wires. *Aliis tradere*: priests pass on to others God and the things of God. And if we are called to be conduits of the mysteries, we must be careful not to allow blockages in that pipe: blockages like pride and self-glorification, possessiveness and exclusivism, using and abusing. If we are called to be conduits of the mysteries, we must not adulterate them for the sake of popularity or the delight in hearing our own opinions.

Too often when people juxtapose the prophetic or charismatic with the cultic or hierarchical, what they mean is that they want to do their own thing free of interference from the tradition and its institutional guardians. I recently heard a (non-Dominican) religious leader declare that her institute's constitutions situated her sisters at the heart of the Church but that they didn't much like the way that heart was beating these days. So they had become prophetesses instead, preaching from and to the margins. Sadly, her congregation is dying. Dominicans, even when they preach on the frontiers, speak from the heart of the Church, where the Gospel is, where the living tradition is. No ecclesial heart transplants for them. Dominicans are *the Church's* preachers.

5. Dominican priesthood is *Learned*

In his Letter to the Order of 1260 Blessed Humbert of Romans bragged shamelessly that "We [Dominican friars] teach the people, we teach the prelates, we teach the wise and the unwise, religious and seculars, clerics and laymen, nobles and peasants, lowly and great."³² The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) rightly identified the catechetical poverty of the people, the educational deficiencies of their clergy and the lack of apostolic zeal amongst religious as principal causes of the dualist crisis. The Council's proposed solutions, however – such as requiring that a master of theology be appointed to each metropolitan church and cathedral school so as to educate the diocesan clergy – proved illusory. But God in His providence placed Dominic de Guzman at the Council as peritus to the Bishop of Toulouse, and it was there that he conceived the goal and features of his priest friars. Only such creatures could answer the needs identified by the Council. And study would be essential to this new form of life and mission.

Some clergy talk of seminary studies as something they endured so as to get to do what really matters: pastoral work. I have heard seminarians brag proudly that they'll never again open a book after

³² *Monum. Ord. Præd. Historia*, V, 53.

their ordination day, let alone undertake a course of study. Hopefully they speak in jest or eventually discover their mind needs feeding. But no true Dominican could say such a thing. Dominican priesthood is a scholarly priesthood, centred on the Gospel and the received tradition of Catholic truth, contemplated in the company of other life-long students and teachers, cultivated with the aid of faith and reason and articulated with the best of rhetoric and piety. Dominican learning, rather than being worn on sleeves or being the subject of vainglory, should be at the heart of our distinctive way of being priests. Unlike the post-Lateran cathedrals, the Dominicans did manage to insist, for a very long time, on a doctor of theology in every convent. As well they had such peculiar creatures as Regents and *studia generalia*, high quality initial and ongoing academic formation, loads of scholars and *summæ*, and, as their only permitted vice, the accumulation of many books.

6. Dominican priesthood is *Creative*

Against the view that the part-contemplative, part-active religious life was impossible or at best inferior to a pure, unadulterated, contemplative life, Thomas dared propose that his Order had the best of both worlds.³³ This ‘mixed’ life is sometimes a hard balance to strike. Individuals commonly favour one or the other ingredient, or oscillate between the two. Different balances have sometimes threatened to tear the Order apart, as when the ‘Observants’ and ‘Conventuals’ each insisted theirs was the only acceptable cocktail. But somehow the Order managed to stay united in the struggle to unite *contemplare* and *aliis tradere*.

By analogy I have suggested in this paper that Dominicans can be and often have been a uniquely successful cocktail of priesthood and religious life. A Dominican worships God in his cell with his beads as much as in the celebration of a High Mass at the altar. He studies both at his desk chair and in his choir stall. He evangelises the gentiles and then baptises the converts. He exhorts sinners and then absolves them. He preaches in the sacred Liturgy and then offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. Being friar and priest are genuinely complementary in him.

Yet when there is tension between these two names for him, or when it is unclear which should be noun and which adjective, the tension can be *corrective*, indeed *creative*. Were the friar in us focused only on his own religious life and community he might neglect the needs of the wider Church; were the priest in us centred only upon his parish or diocese he might ignore those needing evangelisation.

³³ *Summa theologiae* IIa IIæ, 182.

By giving ourselves in profession and ordination to serve Christ and his Eucharistic and ecclesial body, especially through preaching the Catholic faith, Dominican priests offer the Church a special way of being priests and religious. It might be more demanding in some ways than being priest or religious *simpliciter*, but the two can also support and enrich each other. I love being a priest. I love being a friar. I give thanks be to God and holy Mother Church I can be both, in Dominic's Order of Preachers.

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