



C.L. 1/2022

**"Blessed unanimity that gives the same soul,
which makes unanimity grow [...] consecrating oneself unanimously to the Word of God,
preaching the faith unanimously...
All these unanimities are unanimities in God and of God"
(Humbert de Romans)**

My dear sisters and dear laity,

A little more than 5 months ago we celebrated the IV General Chapter of our Family together, some in Rome and others in their own communities, but all expectant and open to the Breath of the Spirit of the Lord who continually renews and sends us out. Today I want to invite you all to re-unite around the luminous and distinctive figure of our Father Dominic, to thank God who has called us to be part of his Family, so that the person of Dominic may continue to speak to us and light up our Today through which we are passing together with many brothers and sisters, and which will help us to build a Common Home for all.

I propose and suggest for our contemplation, some simple but significant traits of Dominic's personality which we certainly know by heart; these speak to us of the small and, at the same time, immense gestures, attitudes and choices which become for us epiphanies of the face of God and of his logic.

To be a brother

Jordan of Saxony¹ tells us that when Dominic - in full accord with the inspiration of his bishop, Diego Azevedo, began the new experience of preaching in imitation of the Apostles' way of life, he decided to abandon the title of sub-prior of the cathedral of Osma: *from that moment he would be called simply Brother Dominic.*

His great life project began with this decision: to be a brother.

Dominic wanted to be everybody's brother; this teaches us a lot about his style of life, his spirituality, his dream for the Church and for what would become his Religious Family. It opens us to the vast horizon of universal fraternity as children of the same father, and prepares us from the very beginning a profound and evangelical way of being and living with a style that is synodal.

¹ *Libellus*, 21

Seeing from the other's side²

We have surely heard that we Dominican men and women were born from a conversation (the one between Dominic and the innkeeper), not from a conversation in the lounge, with a cup of tea or a glass of wine in our hands but from truthful exchange about those reasons which sustain our very lives. The result of this conversation was conversion! Conversion for both of them! Let us try to imagine what was able to die and what was able to be born from the consternation and fascination that this man, that an entire region, that this attachment to the Gospel at the same time sincere and deviant, aroused in Dominic. Dominic was doubly touched by this meeting, moved and wounded at the same time. He opens himself to the other, welcomes him into the "holy of holies" of his compassion: the other, not invaded or possessed by deception but met and confronted by an irresistible cordiality and by the conviction that truth is always sought together, that the other person sees and experiences reality from another angle, another side from ours.

It is a pleasure to *see from another perspective*. Of enculturating, we might say. For us, it is almost like a fourth vow! Each one of us, individually and together is called to desire and to maintain ourselves in a state of conversation, of conversation-conversion: with reality, with the other, in reading books and on the road, in prayer and in apostolic labours.

Part of a whole

Simon Tugwell³ reflects: if we want to find Dominic, we must not seek him on our own. His story is part of other people's stories. His essential greatness consisted in being *part of a whole that was greater than he was*. In the concrete, that means that almost all the fundamental decisions that moulded his life and influenced his role in the world and in the Church were taken by other persons (his parents, his uncle, Diego, Falco, Innocent III, Honorius III).

Dominic had the rare talent of knowing how to fit in, how to adapt himself to circumstances, to other people and especially to the needs of his contemporaries, to the point of completely disappearing himself just to realise that call which is at the centre of his life: the proclamation of the Word in order to win souls for Christ. This alone counts.

If Dominic became the father of a completely new religious Order, it was not because he worked alone to create something new in the Church, but because, step by step he committed himself personally with absolute faithfulness and generosity to the designs of Providence. In every event and mediation, which often seemed to be obstacles to his deepest desires, Dominic was able to discover the "saving gaze" of God.

² Cf. *Dominique, hier et aujourd'hui*, Fr Dominique Motte

³ *St Dominic*, Ed. Du Signe p.2

Obedience to God made him free, free to do what he had to do without fuss or complaint, free to fulfil his vocation in a way that was unforeseeable and wholly original.

Together on the journey

Dear sisters and lay associates, even if we are still without clear organization in General Government, because the commitments of some of the Assistants and difficulty in for others in obtaining visas have not yet permitted us meet each other physically, we have tried to be attentive to movements of life in our Family, to accompany and encourage them; so we have begun to meet with the sisters or government of the different entities in person or via the Zoom platform, to implement and live new forms of relationship which will help us to cultivate **synodality**, as recommended by the General Chapter.

Our attention and discernment have from the start been turned to the Delegation of Nigeria, which required the appointment of a new Delegate, supplied in the person of Sr. M. Ijeoma Okoye; we then evaluated together with them the proposal to open a new community and a new work of education. Aware of the growth of the Delegation and the need for better organisation, we appointed Sr. M. Rita Nwafor as Delegation Secretary and Sr. M. Angela Asogwa as Delegation Bursar.

From 14 August to 11 September, Sr. M. Romina and I will visit the Delegation of Nigeria and the International Novitiate, participating in the Annual Assembly and the First Profession of two of our sisters.

As perhaps you know already through the social media, we have appointed Sr. M. Ebele Okoye as Secretary General; this sister will be accompanied in her first steps by Sr. M. Carla Bertaina, whom we thank most heartily for her dedication and generosity in these her numerous years of service.

As for the work of the Bursar General, we have re-appointed Sr. M. Laura Restelli as Bursar General, and are beginning to put into practice the General Chapter recommendation asking us to form a **stable economic team** for which, at the moment, we have taken on a professional laywoman; Sr. M. Ghazala Ayub will join the economic team after the Provincial Chapter of the “St Joseph” Province in Pakistan, which takes place in December 2023.

At Albi, the sisters have elected as their new prioress Sr. M. Elvira Bonacorsi, who has accepted this new service in a spirit of obedience and collaboration.

We thank all our sisters for their willingness and generosity in placing their lives and talents at the service of the good of the Family, and we are supporting them with our nearness and our prayer.

A call, a request

Aware of the call to pass from the multiculturalism which characterises our Family, to **interculturality**, the true sign of the Reign of God (Line of action) the sisters of the General Government wish to form in via degli Artisti, Rome, a community composed of sisters from different cultures to be a true “laboratory of interculturality through fraternal life, study and reflection, prayer and mission.

And for this, I **invite and call** to the different entities of the Congregation and to each sister in particular to respond to this call. The pastoral project of the community, which initially will last three years, is orientated to the creation of a network with other organisations working in favour of refugees, migrants and those who at the present time because of war and other types of poverty have need of support. If any sister feels that, through this request, the Lord is calling her to “put out into the deep, leaving her shore” to open herself to a new mission, I ask her to contact me or another sister of the General Council.

Dear sisters and lay associates, it is with a certain emotion that I again put these attitudes and choices before you, the attitudes and choices that the figure of our Father Dominic proposes for us too in our own day: **to be sisters, to see from the other side, to recognise ourselves to be part of a whole**. These are concrete, the clarification of the essential elements of our charism and of the three paths that are proposed to us: synodality, formation, interculturality. I see in them our gift, **our contribution** to this broken and divided world. I see in them a hope for humanity.

Happy Feast of St Dominic!! Let us entrust to his intercession our dreams and our projects, our searching's and our projects, that the Kingdom of God may come.

A fraternal embrace and the blessing of our God.

Rome, 6 August 2022, Transfiguration of the Lord



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