



Pope calls on Dominicans to be at forefront of renewed proclamation of the Gospel

On the 800th anniversary of St Dominic's death, Pope Francis says the founder of the Order of Preachers can serve as an inspiration to all Christians to be missionary disciples.

By Christopher Wells

Even today, Pope Francis says, St Dominic can “serve as an inspiration to all the baptized, who are called, as missionary disciples, to reach every ‘periphery’ of our world with the light of the Gospel and the merciful love of Christ.”

In a letter to the Master General of the Dominican Order on the 800th anniversary of their founder's death, Pope Francis emphasizes that St Dominic embraced a “renewed and vibrant preaching of the Gospel” and offered a “convincing witness to its summons to holiness” in the communion of the Church.

St Dominic’s great call, he says, “was to preach the Gospel of God’s merciful love in all its saving truth and redemptive power,” showing the “inseparability of faith and charity.”

This union of truth and love can be seen in the examples of great Dominicans such as Francisco de Vitoria, Antonio de Montesinos, and Bartolomé de las Casas, in the Americas; and Domingo de Salazar, the first Bishop of Manila, in Asia, who made “heroic efforts... to defend the dignity and rights of native peoples.”

In his letter, Pope Francis says, “The Gospel message of our inalienable human dignity as children of God and members of the one human family challenges the Church in our own day.” And he calls on Dominicans to be “at the forefront of a renewed proclamation of the Gospel.”

The Pope praises Dominic’s insight in establishing a “synodal” form of government for his order, built on the ideal of fraternity, which has enabled the Dominicans to adapt to “changing historical contexts while maintaining fraternal communion.”

Dominic’s understanding of the importance of “building up the entire ecclesial community in fraternal unity and missionary discipleship,” says Pope Francis has allowed the Dominican charism of preaching to “overflow” in the various branches of the Dominican family. He points to the wide variety of Dominican saints and blessed, including Catherine of Siena, Fra Angelico, Rose of Lima, John Macias, Margaret of Castello, and the many martyrs of the Dominican order; as well as “the countless men and women who, imitating the simplicity and compassion of Saint Martin de Porres, have brought the joy of the Gospel to the peripheries of societies and our world.”

Pope Francis also expresses his special gratitude to the Dominicans “for the outstanding contribution they have made to the preaching of the Gospel through the theological exploration of the mysteries of the faith.” Dominic recognised the importance of “sound and solid theological formation” in order to engage in dialogue with the world “in the service of God’s revelation in Christ,” the Pope writes.

Finally, Pope Francis recalls his visit to the tomb of St Dominic, where he prayed for “the grace of perseverance in fidelity to their founding charism and the splendid tradition to which they are heirs”... and for “a considerable increase of priestly and religious vocations.”

May 24, 2021