

THE DOMINICANS

Advent & Christmas 2018

The Magazine of the Dominican Friars in England & Scotland



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Welcome to our Advent issue

Our usual editor, Fr Richard Finn, has been unwell in the last couple of months, so it falls to me to introduce this Advent issue. We wish Fr Richard well and pray for his recovery.

In this issue, we bring news of ordinations in the Netherlands, encouragement in the midst of devastation in Iraq, a window into working with the poor in France, and offer some reflections on mercy, science and faith, and the question of Dominican formation.

We wish you all a very blessed Christmas and New Year.

– Fr Robert Gay OP, Guest Editor

You can send any comments or feedback to me via magazine@english.op.org

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Dutch–English Collaboration bears good fruit

RECENT YEARS have seen the Dutch and English provinces of the Order working closely together to assist with the formation of new Dutch brothers in both our novitiate house in Cambridge and Blackfriars Studium in Oxford.

In November, brothers from the English Province travelled to Rotterdam for the ordinations of Dutch brothers **Richard Steenvoorde** to the priesthood and **Stefan Mangnus** to the diaconate. Both Fr Richard and Br Stefan completed some of their formation in Oxford: Fr Richard completed his STB in the Studium before embarking on an Oxford University MPhil as a student of Blackfriars Hall.

The weekend was a great time for the student brothers to meet up with their Dutch brothers, many of whom they had lived with in Cambridge.



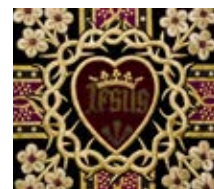
Please pray for Fr Richard as he begins his priestly ministry and embarks on doctoral study, and for Br Stefan as he begins his ministry as a deacon and prepares for priestly ordination next year.

Requiescant in Pace

We remember with affection and gratitude the recently departed who made bequests to the Friars. *May they and all the faithful departed rest in peace.*

- Anon. (St Dominic's Parish, London)
- John O'Neil (St Dominic's Priory, London)
- John Blythe (Province of England)
- Margaret Mary Attlee (St Dominic's Parish, London)
- Mary Blenkinsopp (Province of England)

Legacies have always been vital to our mission. A leaflet on legacy giving is available from our priories or Development Office (see back page).





Miracle in Iraq

A DOMINICAN SISTER held a central-London audience spellbound as she spoke about her congregation's work in the rebuilding of the Christian communities of Iraq, following the devastation wrought by ISIS. The meeting was held on 11th October by **Aid to the Church in Need**, which had organised a UK tour by the Dominican sister and others from the suffering Church.

Sr Luma Khuder OP of the Dominican Sisters of St Catherine of Siena told the meeting at Notre Dame University's base in Westminster that Christian refugees from her region had been living in container homes for three years. Most of the refugees had found safety in the Kurdish autonomous region. Here the sisters had established schools, helped traumatised families and organised catechising of the young. Within three years one of the pre-fab schools that they had established was recognised as one of the best in Erbil, the Kurdish capital.

Solace from Scripture

'To make sense of what had happened to us we turned to the Bible,' she said. 'We found that the psalms of exile, with their

bitterness and lament, spoke to us. We also found ourselves asking the question of Ezekiel 37: *Can these dry bones live?* But the faith of the people remained strong.'

Devastation

When the Christian towns like Qaraqosh were liberated in 2017 and the



Timothy Radcliffe OP, former Master of the Order, visited the sisters in Dec. 2017 and reported in our Lent 2018 issue on their efforts to rebuild shattered communities.

Read the report at www.english.op.org/iraq-2018

refugees returned, they were, she said, totally shocked. 'Everything had been destroyed, with particular care taken to smash altars and crucifixes.' 15,000 homes had been destroyed in the region. Now in Qaraqosh you can hear the sound of hammers and tools everywhere as people rebuild. However, many of the people are now dispersed in other countries. So far 42% of the pre-war population has returned.

Charity and Cooperation

Sr Luma paid particular tribute to the work of NGOs. 'Without the worldwide Church we would not have survived one month', she said. 'When their help came it was like a miracle.'

The challenge of rebuilding has brought the churches closer together to plan and work co-operatively. In March 2017, the Syriac Catholic Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Chaldean Catholic Church formally established a body, the Nineveh Reconstruction Committee (NRC), whose task is to oversee and plan the repair and rebuilding of almost 13,000 family homes. Over the Nineveh plains as a whole there are 363 Church properties that were attacked by so-called Islamic State which now need to be repaired or rebuilt. Of these 34 were totally destroyed, 132 were set on fire, and 197 were partly damaged. In one village alone, Teleskuf, there were 1104 private homes and 21 Church properties that were damaged by ISIS.

After the meeting **Fr Terry Tastard** presented Sr Luma with a donation of £750 for the work of the sisters in Iraq (*main picture*). The money had been donated by the **Priestly Fraternity of Our Lady of the Rosary**, a tertiary fellowship of diocesan priests to which he belongs, affiliated to the Dominican Order in Britain. The fraternity had been moved by the report on the work of the sisters given by **Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP**, former Master of the Order, following his visit to Iraq (*see inset*).
– Fr Terry Tastard

For more information about the reconstruction programme and to donate, visit <https://www.nrciraq.org/we-want-to-rebuild-our-convent-and-return-home/>



My conversion among the poor

Fr Benoît Ente OP of the Province of France reflects on how he and his preaching have changed since he joined a small Dominican community in a deprived area of Lille. This is an abridged version of a paper delivered to the Order's European Promoters of Justice and Peace at their assembly at Lille in June 2018, after they had visited this community.

I WOULD LIKE to share with you an experience 'on the ground', of living among the poor of Lille Moulins in a small Dominican community, the 'Maison du 60', and how what I have seen has impacted on my preaching and changed me.

Financial poverty is real (€500 / month) but it is not the worst form of poverty. Here there is a minimum sum guaranteed for everyone who wishes to live with dignity. That would be true for me. Others with much higher incomes live in a greater poverty. In my view, in France, the greatest poverties are cultural, psychological, relational, and spiritual.

Cultural Poverty

The most obvious manifestation of cultural poverty is a difficulty in self-expression, a weakness in verbal or written expression. It is not unusual to have people in the community who can neither read nor write. For example, when preparing one woman for confirmation, we had to rely on spoken text messages, audio versions of the Gospel. To prepare Ludivine for baptism we used films, and the website www.theobule.org.

Such poverty may lead to verbal or physical violence. Sometimes a person knows how to express himself or herself, but believes he or she has nothing to say. A friend of mine complained that she had no ability for conversation. Nothing to say. She knew nothing about history or art; she'd never travelled to other countries, and so on. All this, despite being a woman of great intelligence – practical intelligence: she had taught herself to sew.

In a deeper way, cultural poverty affects one's capacity for rational reasoning, which never develops beyond simplistic argumentation or superficial opinions. People are excluded from a shared cultural resource and background. It makes it very hard

for people to distinguish between judgements and opinions. This poverty arises from one's education, but not necessarily from the educational system, but rather from a lack of stimulation at home in the family. Such children are the first victims of the hyper-consumerist society. They are slow to learn to talk, for example, because parents glued to their screens talk less (if at all) to their children. I also think that the media are a negative influence. They do not play the role of educator, of humanising people, like a school does. On the contrary, they foster a sub-culture. Their aim is to direct human attention towards consumer behaviour: products, videos, music, etc. So, this cultural poverty can be found in what people consume and in what they eat.

Psychological Poverty

When I was a prison chaplain, I realised that the majority of people locked up in prisons had experienced violence in their childhood. I make the same observation here in Lille-Moulins. How many childhoods have we seen slaughtered – by violence, rape, alcoholism perpetrated by their parents, and sometimes also by the children themselves. This gives rise to

hypersensitive psychological states – not merely thin-skinned but as though the person were being flayed alive. Others show strongly depressive tendencies and are dependent on medication. And sometimes people are prone to being manipulative when their family environment has been a manipulative one. This psychological poverty can make it difficult for them to have relationships with others and causes family breakdown and a progressive isolation.

Spiritual Poverty

On the one hand we have a hyper-secular society which tends to want to remove from the public space all religious references and to restrict the spiritual quest to the private sphere. One Head Teacher was heard to say, 'Leave your religion on the coat rack as you enter'. On the other hand, we have a somewhat depressed and depressing Church whose way of speaking on spiritual matters is academic, patronising, often disembodied, and abstract. Remote from people's daily problems, it fails to address them. The liturgy can seem to be for insiders only (a priest on YouTube blogs or vlogs about whether it is necessary to kneel or receive communion on the tongue). This moral discourse is remote from the realities on the ground. Those who are seeking after meaning, after the absolute, can no longer find the nourishment they need. There are no more dreams, no hope lights on the horizon, no Kingdom of God appears within reach. People despair. These three forms of poverty create a breeding ground for superficial, simplistic discourse in the realms of both politics (populism) and religion (fundamentalism).

Preaching

My time with the people of Lille-Moulins has made me change the way I preach. It's a sign of my own ongoing conversion. We are all in the process of conversion. For us as Dominicans, since it is this preaching which saves us, our conversion shows itself first and foremost in our preaching.

An evolution in the way we look, the way we think, of course precedes any change in our preaching. I certainly no longer watch films in the same way.

My experience with the local film club included discussions following the films. A seven-year old who has responsibility for her family had experienced the worst sort of violence from her mother, grown up with no experience of a happy family, of loving relationships, attentive parents, moments of family happiness. In adult life, every romantic movie which portrayed childhood happiness uncovered the wound, pointed out what she was missing. Now, when I watch a film, I hear within me her voice and the voice of others. There are other people who are watching this film and their voices, their thoughts, make themselves heard. How is childhood portrayed? A little too romantically? Could we not speak about happiness with modesty and tact, and make room for those who have never known it?

This is true also for the Gospels as much as for the movies. I read them in a different way now. I see, in the careful way the evangelists refer to the childhood of Jesus, a certain sensitivity towards those who have never known love as children. And of course this impacts on our preaching. One of our regular Wednesday-night Masses was also the funeral of Francine. This bore witness to the love which she had for her daughter Séverine. Jean-Pierre who was presiding went on to add a word for those who had not had the fortune to be loved, so that they should not feel left out. To put a label on what this means: inclusive preaching.

Another thing that has changed within me: sensitivity to injustice. No longer the sort of indignation that comes from reading a newspaper article, but rather the sort that comes from seeing people right in front of us who are having to live with it. Something surges from deep within us when we are confronted by such a situation, a real-life story: 'This is an injustice!' I think of one woman whose child is being taken into care. Injustice prompts us to search creatively for a solution. It changes how we pray. The psalms become filled with familiar faces. It also changes the way we engage with others. We feel a burning desire to engage with other people, to try to tackle injustices. I'm not sure that such indignation colours the content of our preaching, but it does colour the way we preach.

Responses to poverty

The Word of God which we preach can bridge the communication gap, that lack of cultural knowledge. The Word of God speaks of our common humanity and our common desire for love. Everyone has something to say here. Sometimes this needs to be taught through workshops on personal expression or writing.

Poverty of social capital – a lack of relationships – requires community building: welcoming those who come, we offer the opportunity to share a meal, a weekend, a retreat. People learn how to live together. Ours is a broad community, with a leadership team at its heart. There have to be clear rules about gossip. Nothing said within the leadership team must be spoken of elsewhere. We have also sought to address the culture deficit: introducing people to Caravaggio's *The Calling of St Matthew*; offering a guided tour of the neighbourhood.

Faced by the steamroller of consumerism, we try to foster critical thinking, a sort of school for consumers. As *Laudato Si'* indicates, we are all more or less in thrall to the idea of efficiency, doing the most in the least amount of time. So, we offer people time away with us, a group holiday.

Spiritual poverty requires us to make space for the questions we have inside of us; and we can be deeply moved by people's search for meaning in their lives.

At the heart of the community is the celebration of the Eucharist, making Jesus Christ present in the sacraments; but we also offer spiritual weekends, where we strive to use accessible language and images drawn from daily life. We use peoples' experiences as a starting point for arriving at an understanding of God. When faced by simplistic arguments, the first task is to listen to them. But we can also offer strong, radical spiritual experiences: a visit to a monastery, personal contact with actual migrants.

Conclusion

Pope Francis has called for us to be evangelised by the poor and we must ask what this means. I hope that what I have just shared with you throws some light on it.



Twin brothers Peter and Isidore Clarke joined the Order of Preachers together in 1950 and, despite their geographical separation (Leicester and Grenada), for many years shared a popular online preaching ministry at mywaygodsway.blogspot.com

Following Peter's death earlier this year, their reflections on the Works of Mercy were gathered into a book. Here we offer two extracts from it.

Fourth Corporal Work of Mercy: Sheltering the Homeless

'Behold, I stand at the door and knock' (Rev 3:20)

THESE WORDS, taken from the Book of Revelation, are rightly understood to refer to Jesus knocking at the door of our lives, waiting patiently for us to open and make Him welcome. We're warned against ignoring His knock or deliberately shutting Him out.

But our lives may be too rowdy and busy for us to hear Him, or we may deliberately ignore His knock. We fear He would be too demanding and would be an inconvenient embarrassment. We've all heard sermons on these lines. Some of us have preached them. Afterwards we've probably resolved to make Jesus more welcome in our daily lives.

But let us remember that Jesus has made it very clear that He identifies with those in any kind of need. In other words, Jesus Himself identifies with the thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers desperately fleeing their homeland, the runaway child, the tramp sleeping on the park bench. In them Jesus knocks on the doors of our lives, the doors of our affluent countries. In them Jesus begs for a home. In them Jesus begs to be made welcome. They need not just a roof over their heads, to protect them against the elements; they want the security of a place of their own, a place where they feel they belong, somewhere for them to have a decent quality of life. Most of us take all of this for granted for ourselves.

But now put yourself in the shoes of the person knocking at our doors. To be deaf to their plea for shelter, is to be deaf

to these 'other Christs', longing, needing to make their homes with us. In them we react to the same Jesus, who prayed that we would abide in Him and He in us. If we shut Him out from our lives He will shut us out from His. That's the clear, dire warning He gives at the end of chapter 25 of St Matthew's Gospel.

In His own life on earth Jesus knew what it meant not to have a roof over His head. When there was no room at the inn He was born in a stable. Shortly afterwards, the Holy Family became refugees; they had to flee Herod's persecution and seek sanctuary in Egypt. In this they identified with all refugees. Speaking of His ministry as a wandering preacher Jesus said, 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head' (Lk 9:58).

That is the lot of so many thousands of homeless people today. Jesus identifies with each one of them. In each one of them He knocks and waits. Will we open up and give them a home? Will we make Jesus-in-them welcome?

As individuals, we can't solve the heart-breaking problem of so many rootless, homeless people. But we can urge our national and local government to act to provide them with homes. We can support and perhaps work with the various housing agencies and charities. But ideally, their homelands need to become sufficiently safe and prosperous, so that they can return, or better still, never need to leave.

But underlying our approach to the homeless must be the conviction that Jesus identifies with them in their need.

Our attitude to them reflects our attitude to Him. If we shut them out, we shut Him out. In them Jesus appeals for our compassion. That should make us very uncomfortable!

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, the world is horrified by the number of homeless refugees and asylum-seekers. Armed conflict, economic hardship and starvation have forced them to leave their homeland, their loved ones and all their possessions. They've been forced to risk their very lives in an attempt to survive.

In their destitution they cry to You for help; they appeal to us in the prosperous developed world. If they are overwhelmed by their plight, so are we. And yet deep down we know we can't simply brush them aside and say, 'Not my problem.' We know that as fellow human beings, and as our brothers and sisters in Christ, their problem is our problem.

We pray for Your guidance in finding the best way to help the homeless. May we find ways to overcome the causes of their flight, so that they don't feel the need to leave their homelands. Or if they have done so, may they be helped to return and rebuild what has been destroyed. In the meantime may we respond to their immediate needs, and provide them with the shelter and security they desperately require. Inspire us, as individuals and as nations, to be prepared to make the demanding sacrifice necessary for us to be of real assistance.

We ask this through Your Son, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who identified with the homeless in their need.

Fifth Spiritual Work: Forgiving Offences Willingly

I REALLY PUT my foot in it when I gave a talk to a group of middle-aged women. I dared to criticise the cult film 'Love Story', which many of them had seen in their youth. I'd presumed to accuse their heroine of talking sentimental rubbish. Her crime? – to say, 'Love means never having to say "sorry".'

That can only be true of God, who never has to apologise. As for the rest of us, we're all sinners and sometimes hurt each other. Real love then means being able to apologise when we've harmed someone, and forgiving him when he's hurt us. If love is to last it must have the resilience to heal the pain we inflict on each other. Without mercy, love would be so brittle that it could not last. Our love for each other must reflect God's steadfast love for us, which is always eager to forgive the repentant sinner. Jesus expressed that most powerfully in the parable of the Prodigal Son. There the loving Father eagerly welcomed back his repentant, wayward son (Lk 15).

But to forgive is hard enough; to do so willingly – that's really difficult! Yet that's what the Fifth Spiritual Work of Mercy expects of us. Forgiving those who hurt us is the most God-like of the Works of Mercy. Mercy is the very Face of the God in whose image we have been made. That means we must be as merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful (cf. Lk 6:36).

But that goes against our natural instinct. We fear that that will be taken as a sign of weakness. If we don't stop him he will continue his violence. But we know only too well that if we retaliate the situation will escalate. The innocent person will become as aggressive as the one who started the violence. Nothing will be solved, and we may say and do things which we later regret.

So Jesus takes a different, two-pronged approach, aimed at defusing a hostile situation. Firstly, we should correct the offender (Third Spiritual Work of Mercy). Next, we should forgive him or her. That's the present, Fifth Spiritual Work of Mercy.

So what does forgiveness mean? Certainly not denying that someone has harmed us. That would be dishonest. It would also be cruel to prevent him apologising and finding forgiveness.

Only through apologising and forgiving can wounds be healed and peace restored. To say, 'Forgive and forget', is asking too much, even the impossible. We can't wipe our memories clean, like a whiteboard. Instead, we have to learn to come to terms with past injuries, put them behind us and together make a fresh start.

To help us, Jesus urges us not only to love our enemies, instead of hating them, but also to pray for them. That's not a pious after-thought, but an essential part in healing a dysfunctional relationship. As we pray for our enemies our attitude towards them changes. We cease to wish them harm and want only their good. That gradually heals our bitterness, anger and desire for vengeance. As we pray for those who are hostile to us, we ask God to heal their aggression. Only when hatred has been removed from both the aggressor and the victim can there be real peace. Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* puts this very well, 'The quality of mercy is not strained... IT BLESSETH HIM THAT GIVES AND HIM THAT TAKES' (*Merchant of Venice*, Act 4 Scene 1). Both parties benefit from the merciful removal of hostility and tension.

But let's face it, forgiveness can be very difficult when we've been badly hurt. We really want to forgive, but unwanted anger and resentment can suddenly flare up, sometimes long after the injury. We then wonder whether our forgiveness was genuine. It was. Such unwanted resentment simply means that the wounds we suffered are still raw. We don't need forgiveness, but inner healing. Since the same may well be true for someone we've hurt, we will both need to be patient and pray. That links up with the previous Spiritual Work of Mercy – 'to bear wrongs patiently'.

Jesus has given us the supreme example of what forgiving willingly means. He not only preached a Gospel of forgiveness, but lived it, above all, on the cross. As He prayed for the forgiveness of those responsible for His death He showed us what it means, in practice, to forgive our enemies. He has shown us the way to be true sons and daughters of our heavenly Father.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, God full of mercy and compassion, we turn to you in our need for forgiveness. Your Son taught us that your mercy is dependent on our readiness to forgive those who have harmed us.

But when we've been harmed we find it so difficult to overcome our anger, bitterness and resentment. We feel hurt and humiliated. Instinctively we want to fight back; we fear that if we don't, the aggressor will continue to repeat his violence. We know that one way or another he must be stopped. But your Son has taught us that retaliation is not the answer. Like Him, we must love and forgive our enemies. Like Him, we must be peacemakers, not warmongers.

Father, since such God-like generosity of spirit is so difficult we beg you to help us. Help us to overcome our instinct to retaliate; heal the wounds of resentment and anger which can still flare up long after we were first hurt.

Father, we know that, if there is to be true peace, the aggressor must be healed of the violence within him. And so we pray that he may find inner peace through loving and respecting the dignity and rights of other people.

May we all find peace through sharing your Son's healing ministry of reconciliation. We ask this through Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord. Amen.

The 76-page book is available for just £3.00 either from www.lulu.com/spotlight/worksofmercy or from Holy Cross Leicester and other Dominican priories.





Aquinas and Evolution – and Other Exciting Research

Fr Richard Conrad OP, Director of the Aquinas Institute, explains some of the research it currently promotes – aiming to contribute to the conversation between Faith and Science, and commend the Christian concept of human dignity.

SOME CHRISTIANS are anxious that the Theory of Evolution offers an alternative to God's providential design. But Aquinas helps us see that all factors involved in evolution are what they are, and do what they do, under God's providence. For he explained that God the Creator holds all things in being, all the time. And 'all things' include all causal relationships, and all chance events.

Darwin's theory has seemed to imply that the boundaries between species are 'fuzzy'. This would make it difficult to defend the distinction between humans and other animals. But in the last few decades big advances have been made in understanding the mechanisms of evolution. Aquinas has interesting ideas on how the human body 'supports' the rational soul, and on the weaknesses inherent to unaided human nature. We want to bring these ideas into conversation with the latest science. Aquinas may help us explore important questions:

- What factors made fully human life possible? How did these factors come together during human evolution?

- How to defend the teaching that God directly creates each human soul?
- What about the 'evolutionary hangovers' that cause us problems?

To explore such issues, the Aquinas Institute will collaborate with the **Thomistic Evolution Project** set up by Dominican scholars in the USA.

In tandem, I am working on a book on Original Sin and Human Dignity, to review the development of the doctrine of Original Sin. I shall draw on Aquinas, and on magisterial documents that are often neglected. I shall make connections with other doctrines, and use the best recent theology. I hope to clarify and commend the authentic doctrine. I will argue that our psychological and moral 'neediness' is a sign of our unique and precious place in the cosmos as much as a sign of fallenness. I shall suggest why God permitted the 'happy fault' that called for the Redeemer. I want to ask afresh whether we are born as enemies of God or as guilty of Adam's sin. I will argue against the idea that sexual intercourse causes offspring to be flawed because it is marred by lust. I hope to explore how the revealed doctrine might mesh with different scenarios of human evolution – this question will then be taken further in collaboration with the Thomistic Evolution Project.

Humans vs Animals

The Institute's seminar series continues to unpack Aquinas' teaching that human

beings are rational in an animal way, and animal in a rational way, and to explore how this fits with discoveries in animal and human psychology. Our 2019 colloquium will examine Aquinas' suggestion that human law should develop, as it applies the Natural Law to changing circumstances, and tries to match it more faithfully. Conscientious objection has become a thorny issue, and a joint workshop of the Aquinas, Las Casas, and other Institutes will seek to move the debate on. Instead of merely tolerating people's consciences, can social institutions nurture mature, responsible, moral decision-making?

Other members and visiting scholars of the Aquinas Institute are researching the role of Christ in the Beatific Vision; the history of the concept of free will; the relationship between law and reason; Aquinas' theory of the emotions; and causal powers, hylomorphism and quantum mechanics.

Securing our Future

All this has been made possible by a small number of donations, for which we are very grateful. Further donations would put us on a more secure financial basis, and enable us in due course to support valuable research by doctoral students and post-doctoral scholars.

Visit the Aquinas Institute at www.bfriars.ox.ac.uk/aquinas with videos and papers at www.bfriars.ox.ac.uk/aquinas-resources



Formation for Dominican Life Today

For brothers being formed in the Dominican life, the primary location of their initial formation after the novitiate is in a Dominican house of studies or 'Studium' such as that at Blackfriars, Oxford. Here a former Student Master, now responsible for formation in the international Order of Preachers, explains the different ingredients of the process and how it relates to Dominican life.

What does formation mean?

FORMATION IS the term used in the Church for the initiation, training, instruction and overall education offered to seminarians and to members of religious orders. It is not normally used elsewhere in the same sense. The normal uses of the English word 'formation' refer to objects being shaped or to processes of production rather than to the education or development of human beings. The English term is used in place of the Latin *institutio*, used already by Cicero to refer to education or instruction, but which would give us even uglier English equivalents for what we have in mind when we talk about formation.

Formation: human, spiritual, intellectual & pastoral

Since at least 1992 it has been customary to speak about four areas of formation

where the education and training of priests and religious are concerned. Pope Saint John Paul II seems to have started this, using this fourfold distinction in the apostolic exhortation he published after the synod of bishops dedicated to priestly formation. That exhortation, called *Pastores Dabo Vobis* speaks of human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation. More recently the Church's new *ratio* or directory for the formation of priests was published, in which these four areas, now called 'dimensions of formation', continue to structure thinking about the formation of seminarians (*The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, promulgated on 8 December 2016).

Intellectual & Pastoral

What intellectual formation and pastoral formation involve seems fairly clear. There are fields of knowledge to be mastered, and skills to be acquired, if a person is to be effective as a preacher, a priest, or a consecrated religious. Clearly these are fields and skills that many other people acquire and practise, especially people particularly interested in theology or philosophy, or those engaged in analogous professions such as counsellors, community workers and chaplains.

The motivation of the seminarian or the consecrated religious is particular to their vocation, and this casts a new light on the areas of intellectual and pastoral formation. Academic study is contained

within a deeper concern, which is that of 'faith seeking understanding'. Pastoral training is within a particular perspective, which is that of sharing in the pastoral charity of Jesus, his way of being with people, his way of responding to their needs, and the resources out of which he responded to their needs.

Spiritual

This brings us to spiritual formation. The resources out of which Jesus responded to the needs of people were his relationship with the Father and his anointing in the Holy Spirit. All Christians are called to enter into this way of living, to participate in this network of relationships which unites the Father, the Son and the Spirit in a communion of mutual knowledge and love. Participation in the life of the Blessed Trinity is the deepest source of any Christian living and the school in which we are permanently being formed for the vocation we have received.

Seminarians and young religious are invited to see their formation as the articulation, for their particular vocations, of the realities that give form and substance to any living out of the Christian life. All Christians are called to discipleship and to become configured to Christ but *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation* gives the seminarian's discipleship and configuration to Christ the particular characteristics that make him a priest-disciple within the Church. Likewise the consecrated religious, initiated into the values and practices of a particular charismatic tradition within the Church, will be a disciple and be configured to Christ in a way that is informed by that tradition, a style which is recognisable as Franciscan, Benedictine, Dominican, or whatever.

Human

The human level or dimension of formation was regarded by John Paul II as 'the basis of all priestly formation' (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n.43). It seeks to ensure that the well-formed priest or religious will be physically, psychologically, socially and morally mature.

The Dominican constitutions speak of the maturity aimed at in the formation of its new members as physical,

psychological and moral maturity seen in a stable personality, the ability to make weighty decisions, and the acceptance of personal responsibility (*Book of Constitutions and Ordinations*, n. 216.1). The Order's own *ratio* or directory of formation, published on 22 December 2016, develops this as follows:

[This maturity] means a good sense of personal autonomy combined with a sense of the other person and the interests of the community, the ability to find balance in a lifestyle that makes varied demands, freedom from addictive and compulsive behaviour, the ability to live with tensions and to deal with conflicts, being at ease with people no matter what their race, age, gender, or social position (*Ratio Formationis Generalis OP*, n.34).

Without a doubt recent experiences in the Church concerning sexual and other forms of abuse make it urgent that this human dimension of formation should receive sufficient attention through the years in which priests and religious are being formed. Those experiences

have also sharpened awareness of the need for permanent formation (also often called on-going or continuing formation). There are positive reasons for accepting that formation continues through the whole of a person's life. As people move through the different stages of life and encounter different experiences there is need for further reflection, understanding and integration. This acceptance of formation as permanent has been strengthened by the need to respond to the serious moral and psychological immaturity revealed in priests and religious in different parts of the world. It would be too simple to blame everything on initial formation, or to blame everything on the requirement of celibacy. But it is certainly true that well-informed thinking and clear understanding about these issues is one of the most pressing challenges for the Church.

Relating human and spiritual formation is a contemporary form of a perennial question, that of the relationship between nature and grace. On the one hand we believe God's grace is healing and merciful, enabling human nature to reach beyond its own capacities. On the other hand we know that grace is not a kind of magic

and that the wounds of human nature, psychological and moral, require explicit attention and remedy. In fact the most obvious effect of grace in our lives is that it enables us to face the work we have to do each day, meaning also the work on ourselves that perseverance in the quest for truth demands.



Fr Vivian Boland OP is a friar of the Irish Province who was Student Master in Oxford and is now Socius for Fraternal Life and Formation in the Dominican Order.

St Thomas Aquinas Study Weekends

TWO OR THREE times a year, St Dominic's Convent, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 8EN, hosts a St Thomas Aquinas Study Weekend.

These weekends focus on an aspect of our Catholic Faith, on what it means to be human, for example; or on the Passion of Our Lord, or the faith of Our Lady. The topics are studied under the guidance of St Thomas Aquinas, who in his *Summa Theologiae* (Summary of Theology) has left us both rich material and a helpful method of approach. His teaching method is based on his understanding of how we learn: how we build new material into or onto our current grasp of the subject being considered. It is a slow method, but designed to develop understanding, rather than relying on memory.

There are talks, usually given by a Dominican friar, and discussions.

CEPHAS philosophy

Dr George Corbett: 'The posing of questions, discussion, and turning to the riches of the Catholic intellectual tradition (whether in modern encyclicals or the works of Aquinas) is, for us, the purpose (and joy) of CEPHAS, which Sr Valery and I set up in 2012.

'Due to the support and generosity of the Dominican sisters, we have held long-weekend courses in Stone Convent, Staffordshire, over the past seven years. A community of friends (seven of them lay Dominicans this year!) has built up at CEPHAS, although we always welcome new participants.'

As a participant commented, 'The sense of community was wonderful – very welcoming and a supportive atmosphere in which to voice thoughts and pose questions'.

Programme for 2019

8–10 Feb The Incarnation. What is it? Why is it? With Fr Dominic Ryan OP.

29–31 Mar Christ's Priesthood in the Old Testament. With Fr Richard Ounsworth OP.

27–30 Jun CEPHAS philosophy. With Dr George Corbett.

For information about upcoming courses, please visit www.cephas.org.uk

Contact: Sr Valery Walker OP
valeryewalker@yahoo.co.uk

Dates for your Diary

Province

4–6 Jan Dominican Seminar 2019, 'Christ in Our Times'. Hinsley Hall. Dominican family only. Cost: £200 (day delegate £85). Booking: Nick Baggio nickbaggio@aol.com by 1 Dec.

29 Jul–2 Aug Pilgrimage in the footsteps of Bl Pier Giorgio Frassati. Turin & Oropa. 18–35s only. £390 all-in. frassati2019@english.op.org

The Rosary Shrine

At St Dominic's Priory, Southampton Road, London NW5 4LB
www.rosaryshrine.co.uk

8 Dec Advent Recollection with Mass at 10am. Preached by Fr John Farrell OP, followed by Adoration and procession.

12 Dec Annual Guadalupe Mass followed by a reception. 7:30pm.

15–23 Dec Novena of Simbang Gabi Masses every night at 7:30pm followed by 'fiesta' of traditional Filipino food and celebrations.

19 Jan Santo Niño Mass with the Filipino choir. 6pm.

28 Jan Mass for St Thomas Aquinas, followed by enrolment ceremony for the Angelic Warfare Confraternity. 10am.

30 Mar Conference on 'Being Human'.

Thomistic Institute

Free public lectures, Oxford & London.
thomisticinstitute.org/england-events/

5 Dec George Weigel, 'Democracy and Its Discontents: Catholicism and Public Life in Turbulent Times'. St Dominic's, Southampton Road, London NW5 4LB. 7.30pm.

16 Jan Prof Edward Feser, 'Classical Theism and the Nature of God'. Blackfriars, Oxford. 7.30pm.

Las Casas Institute

At Blackfriars, Oxford, unless otherwise indicated. Bookings & info: lascasas@bfriars.ox.ac.uk

7 Mar Kenneth Parker, 'Finding Christ in Prison: A Theologian's Reflections on Higher Education as a Social Justice Imperative for American Catholic Universities'. **Time TBA.**

18 Mar Second Conference of the Future of the Humanities Project: 'The Relevance of Art History', Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.

4–6 Apr Economics as a Moral Science Symposium: 'Emergence and Complexity'.

8 May Seminar on Migration (postponed from 25 Oct 2018)

Aquinas Institute

At Blackfriars, Oxford, unless otherwise indicated. Bookings & info: aquinas@bfriars.ox.ac.uk

23 Jan Annual Lecture, Prof William Desmond. 5pm.

28 Feb Prof William Carroll, 'The Condemnations of 1277 and the Origins of Modern Science'. Co-sponsored by Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion. 5pm.

2 Mar Annual Aquinas Colloquium: 'Aquinas on the Development of Law'. Confirmed speakers: Prof Jay Budziszewski (Texas), Prof Ryan Meade (Loyola), and Dr Jonathan Price (Oxford). £10 (concessions £5); lunch provided. 9.30am–5pm.

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Version: LIT-2

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Data Controller: English Province of the Order of Preachers, Blackfriars, St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LY. Charity registered in England and Wales (231192) and in Scotland (SC039062).

New Blackfriars website ready for 800th anniversary

IN 2021, the Dominican Friars at Blackfriars, Oxford, will be celebrating 800 years since their first arrival in Oxford.

This significant anniversary reminds of the great influence the friars had on the early development of Oxford University, and it will be an occasion to publicise their current wide-ranging mission.

In October, Blackfriars launched a new website to showcase this mission, displaying its identity as a religious house, an Oxford University private hall, a centre for training clergy, and a popular place of worship. The website's new features include a **visual tour** and an **online resource library** with an extensive selection of videos. Funding for the site was generously provided by Buckfast Abbey.



The Prior, **Fr Robert Gay OP**, said,

‘This new website helps introduce our life and our mission in Oxford in a way which is both attractive

and sensitive to the needs of the user. It is an ideal way to showcase the life of the Priory, Hall and Studium as we work towards celebrating the 800th anniversary of our arrival in the city.’

The Regent, **Fr Simon Francis Gaine OP**, also commented:

‘Our new website gives us the opportunity to display to full effect the intellectual mission and work of Blackfriars, as well as the contribution made by our Institutes, including to matters of public debate. Users can also benefit from the many talks and lectures on the website’s online resources library.’

Visit the Blackfriars website at www.bfriars.ox.ac.uk

Cover: Detail from a window in Covington Cathedral, KY. © Laurence Lew OP, 2014.

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