

Friars Preachers



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ORDER OF PREACHERS



AUTUMN 2015

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Lay Dominicans Assembly

THE 4th OF JULY, incidentally the feast day of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, a 20th-century Lay Dominican (see *article in Summer 2015, p.3*), saw the gathering of 70 or so Lay Dominicans at Holy Cross Priory, Leicester, for their annual Assembly. A dozen Fraternities and Fraternal Groups were represented, and people had travelled from as far afield as Edinburgh and Cornwall. There was also a good age range from a 22-year-old member to the lady who had recently celebrated her 90th birthday.

Timothy Radcliffe OP engaged with the meeting on two topics. The first was 'Responding to Albigensians today'. Fr Timothy drew parallels between the 13th century and today, pointing out that St Dominic celebrated the Body and preached the Word. A type of Albigensianism characterises our society as it plays down gender differences and over-emphasises the mind in a sort of dualism, yet our very bodies are a visible expression of Grace. We evolved so God could dwell in us. We have to be freed from self-hatred so the body can be a place of grace and holiness.

The second talk from Fr Timothy was on the Word of God, and the question was posed: 'Is there a particular

Dominican way of studying Scripture?' We engage with Scripture because it is true. The temptation is to use

Scripture as ammunition for a stand already taken. The Dominican approach is to be in the presence of Scripture and let it disconcert us. Reading Scripture means engaging in a transforming conversation which takes time but is exciting. There followed an exhilarating debate which continued over the usual convivial lunch.

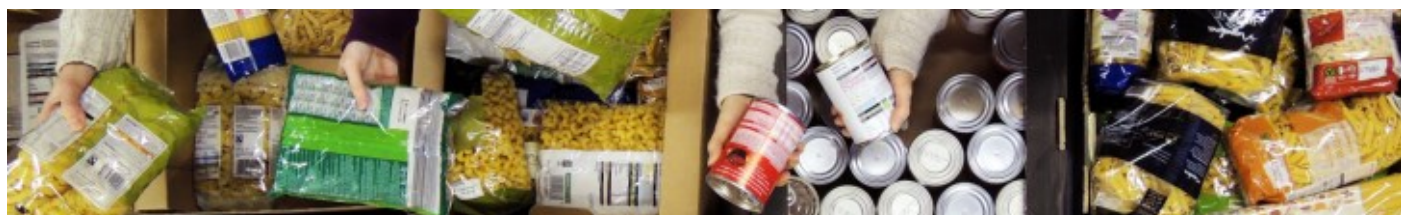
Lay Dominicans in the UK are flourishing, with newcomers joining all the various circles and new growth in unexpected places. A dozen or so

groups meet monthly for study, prayer and good fellowship, always with a concern to develop a sense of apostleship and play a discreet but very necessary, and enthusiastic, part in the mission of the Dominican Family. They can be found wherever there is a Priory as well as in several other places.

More information at www.laydominicans.org.uk, from the President, Peter Kilty, lizpeterkilty@tiscali.co.uk, or from Fr Bob Eccles OP at Blackfriars, Cambridge robert.eccles@english.op.org (and see p.6)



Blackfriars Poverty in Britain Group



MEMBERS OF THE 9.30 CONGREGATION at Blackfriars, Oxford, have recently set up the Blackfriars Poverty in Britain Group. The aim is to raise awareness of poverty and inequality in the UK and, specifically, in Oxford, among congregation members and the wider community, and encourage people to respond.

The Group organises one main event per term: speakers with experience of poverty-related issues in Oxford alternate with academics and other specialists who outline the context. So far these have included Jane Benyon, founder of Oxford's Community Emergency Foodbank; Anne Power, Professor of Social Policy and Head of Housing and Communities at the London School of Economics; and Lesley Dewhurst, Executive Director of Oxford Homeless

Pathways. This November, Danny Dorling, Professor of Geography at Oxford, will speak to the Group at a public meeting (see *back page* for details).

Complementing the speakers is a series of other initiatives, including a recent letter-writing campaign to candidates on the eve of the 2015 general election, and, coming up at the beginning of Lent in 2016, a practical session on the ways in which people can volunteer for Oxford organisations tackling poverty.

Visit the Group's website for summaries of past talks, events information, links to helpful resources, and volunteering opportunities: blackfriarspovertyinbritain.wordpress.com

To join their mailing list, contact the coordinator, Dr Leslie Topp, l.topp@bbk.ac.uk



Six novices clothed at Blackfriars, Cambridge



Novice Master, Fr Richard Finn OP, with the novices after their clothing.

ON THE EVE OF THE 800TH ANNIVERSARY in 2016 of the Order's foundation, six men were clothed on Sunday 13th September as Dominican novices at Blackfriars, Cambridge. Ranging in age from their early twenties to mid-forties, they come from diverse backgrounds. Three are joining the English Province after recently graduating in anthropology, music, and theology, from Oxford University and Heythrop. One is joining the Swiss Dominicans; two are entering the novitiate for the Netherlands. Over the next twelve months they will share classes on religious life, visit schools and parishes, and do their share of cooking and cleaning. An early engagement was to visit the chaplaincy and Catholic society at St Mary's University, Twickenham.

Boost to Training Fund

THE FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN has brought a generous response, and we are pleased to report that we have achieved **nearly 50% of our £1 million target!** Many thanks to all who sponsored Fr Bruno's ultra-marathon or have made donations.

We owe a special vote of thanks to the **Caritas Veritatis Foundation** in the USA, and to the **J. Paul Getty Jr. Charitable Trust**, which have both recently made large grants to this cause; and we also welcome the generous philanthropic support of several new donors who have made four- and five-figure gifts.

We still have a hill to climb to find the remaining £500,000, so all contributions are most welcome, and we pray for our benefactors every day.

Diaconal ordinations



CONGRATULATIONS to **Br Oliver** and **Br Matthew**, now ordained as Deacons. The ordinations by Bishop William Kenney took place on 11 July at the Oxford parish church of St Aloysius, home of the Oratorian fathers, as our Oxford Priory church was out of use due to the ongoing ceiling repairs (see p.5). After the Mass, a reception was held in the refectory back in the Priory.



Remembering Fr Francis Stephen Kenelm Foster OP

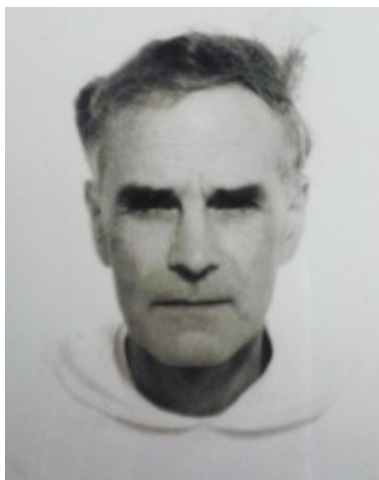
Fr Kenelm Foster OP (d. 6th February 1986, aged 75) spent 50 years in the Order of Preachers. He was Reader of Italian at Cambridge, where he authored several books and taught, among other things, Dante to young, bright and apprehensive female students. Here two of his former students remember him fondly.

AS OUR TERM BEGAN IN October 1960, we embarked on Part 2 of the Modern Languages Tripos. For our supervisions on the Dante course we had to find our way to Blackfriars, Cambridge – right across the other side from Newnham – in unknown territory near Kettles Yard. Getting in was the tricky part: we rang the bell, waiting until eventually a rather frightened-looking friar appeared. ‘We’ve come for a supervision with Fr Foster’, we said. The friar shut us carefully in the chapel.

It was some time before a slender, slightly stooped figure came to our rescue. And so began what was our most unexpected and privileged academic experience at Cambridge: learning Italian with the Dominican friar, Fr Kenelm Foster OP.

On a regular basis we would arrive to see Fr Foster, bearing our regulation essays. Maybe we read them out, maybe we left them with him, but what we do remember is his kindness towards us and at the same time the acuteness of his mind, the reach of his knowledge and the range of his thinking about Dante’s writing, which were beyond anything we could have conceived. We were aware of being in the presence of a mind which was far above ours, and yet of Fr Foster as someone who would take us with him as he talked. Occasionally he would say, ‘Let’s see what Aquinas has to say about that’, and he would disappear to the library on the floor above, where we could hear him pottering about. On one occasion he obviously forgot about us completely, so we had to let ourselves out and go home! When the weather was fine we’d find ourselves sitting in the rather ramshackle garden of Blackfriars, and be distracted by the sight of Fr Sebastian Bullough wandering backwards and forwards as he said his Office.

We also recall Fr Foster coming to the Sidgwick site (then brand new) to give what must have been called lectures but, because there were only three or four of us, these were more like classes. They were on Petrarch, and what we remember most clearly is that if Fr Foster began by talking about a particular sonnet, the class would be excellent, but if he came in and rattled off the numbers of a string of sonnets the class would be dire! He did, nevertheless, communicate to us his love of Petrarch, just as he did his deep passion for Dante.



We remember a quiet, unobtrusive, modest man, with beautiful eyes, and a delightful sense of humour. There was an unworldly quality about him; we sensed he was quite surprised to find himself teaching a couple of girls, competent in the language but who had hardly begun to grasp the outer edges of medieval religious and philosophical thought. To us he seemed old (though we realise now he was just fifty) but this made us feel protective towards him, and only increased our affection and respect for him.

In 2014 when we went to hear Prof John Took address the question ‘Why read Dante today?’ we told him of our good fortune in the teachers we had for Italian at Cambridge. As he heard the roll call, and especially Kenelm Foster’s name, he sighed, ‘You were there in the golden age of Italian studies and were very lucky’. Indeed we were.

Written by **Sarah Norman** (Barradell-Smith) and **Christabel Ames-Lewis** (Keith-Roach), Newnham College, Cambridge 1959–62.

If you have similar stories that you wish to share, please email development@english.op.org



Sarah Norman



Christabel Ames-Lewis

Rest in Peace

We remember with gratitude the following recently departed who made bequests. *May they rest in peace.*

- Rita Cummins (London parish)
- Derek Ballance (Oxford priory)

A **free leaflet on legacies** is available from our priories, or from the development office (contact details on back page).



Emergency ceiling repairs near completion



WHEN PART OF THE CHURCH CEILING FELL at Blackfriars Priory, Oxford, in May, it left the community facing months without a church and a large repairs bill of over £100,000.

Fortunately, the congregation has been very generous with donations, including sponsoring each of the 160 ceiling panels, and now less than £10,000 remains to be

raised. With the 'bird cage' scaffolding in place, work to strengthen the ceiling has continued through late summer and autumn, and is now drawing to a close – a reopening celebration is being planned!

If you would like to make a contribution, please use the form on the back page, ticking the box marked 'Oxford Priory Fabric Fund'.

Dominicans in the Middle Ages

ALMOST 90 SCHOLARS from across the world with a variety of expertises attended the three-day conference in Oxford in September on the Influence of the Dominicans in the Middle Ages. The wide-ranging papers covered Theology, Philosophy, Liturgy, Arts and Architecture, confirming the important role the Order played. The programme included a concert of Dominican chant and two walking tours of medieval Oxford. Many thanks to Dr Eleanor Giraud of Lincoln College for organising it, and to all who contributed.



Br Andrew Brookes in front of the only surviving section of wall from the medieval Dominican priory in Oxford

Summer 2015 newsletter – Apologies

We apologise to those who usually receive our newsletter by post: our mailing house let us down in June – the summer newsletter was not mailed and the mailing copies disappeared without trace.

If you would like us to send you a free copy, please email newsletter@english.op.org or call our development office on 01865 610208.

All back issues can also be viewed online at www.english.op.org/friars-preachers.



Fr Bob Eccles – a full Dominican life



Fr Bob Eccles meeting with the Lay Dominicans in Cambridge

How has the parish lived the first years of the new pontificate?

There has been a perceptible 'Francis effect'; suddenly, people came to confession. Many feel personally touched by his repeated

emphasis on Mercy. His letter *The Joy of the Gospel* fed into our programme of meetings and discussions, as did *Laudato Si'*, with articles in 'The Pilgrim', our parish magazine. People responded to the Synod on the Family by launching a questionnaire, giving us an impression of how an ordinary parish looks at the challenges people face and the sign we give to those who are perhaps unsure of their welcome. And, from the use made of the parish library, I see we haven't lost interest in the writings of Benedict XVI.

How do you see your role in the parish?

I was asked particularly to help with adult formation in the faith, so we started with two series of talks followed by discussion, from October to December and again in Lent. Sister Anna Mary House ran a popular Scripture study, and I took that on when she returned to Stone. I accompany people preparing for the sacraments, the catechuminate and those preparing for marriage. There are the inter-church families and the people Pope Francis wants to reach out to. It is just as important to support and encourage 'ordinary' families, if that's the right expression, in the living of their faith. Some people are looking for the kind of spiritual direction that's not directive, and not only Catholics; I also meet with students for the ministry and recently-ordained Church of England deacons and priests. When Dominicans preach on a Sunday, the seeds that are sown spring up in conversations and friendships all over the place. Then at least once a month I relax back into the company of the Lay Dominican Fraternities, here or elsewhere around the UK. They have great gifts to bring to the Dominican mission. Oh, and there are plenty of ex-offenders who keep in touch. Life is full!

Fr Bob Eccles is a retired prison chaplain and former member of the international Dominican community established in the 'European quarter' of Brussels. He is the Provincial Promoter (national chaplain) of Lay Dominican Fraternities and is a member of the pastoral team of St Laurence Parish, Cambridge. In this interview he reflects on his busy life!

Fr Bob, how did you find Cambridge after Brussels?

'Cambridge people rarely smile, being urban, squat and packed with guile', wrote the bard of Grantchester, Rupert Brooke; but it isn't true, they smile at one another in the street all the time, or sometimes just talk to themselves. The pace of life is gentler. I'm very happy here.

Tell us about St Laurence parish.

It includes most of Cambridge north of the River Cam, which is Victorian terraces and new estates. The congregation comes from all over the world – academic families, young families with roots in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Irish travelling people. We haven't room in church to squeeze them all in. The parish runs itself with little interference from the priests and has every kind of group and movement: an excellent primary school; a ministry to young people; and a team of catechists. Plus a network of people promoting Cafod, environmental concerns, caring about migrants and prisoners of conscience. There's a strong emphasis on everyone finding a welcoming atmosphere no matter what their personal circumstances. There is a strong tradition of making good music for the liturgy. We are 700 at Mass every Sunday.



Introducing the Aquinas Institute

Fr Richard Conrad, Director of the Aquinas Institute based at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, explains its work promoting St Thomas' legacy.

SAIN'T THOMAS AQUINAS was without doubt the greatest Dominican theologian, and his writings have been, and are, valued by Protestants as well as Catholics, philosophers as well as theologians. The Order has always made much use of his writings in forming new preachers, and has taken care to promote his thought. In recent years, Dominicans and others have drawn on St Thomas when discussing faith-and-science issues, when reflecting on human psychology, when analysing the ways we speak about God, and so on. Strands of his teaching that have been rather neglected have recently come to the fore, such as his emphasis on our need for the Gifts and personal guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is no surprise that there are several 'Thomistic Institutes' in the Order, and outside it, to promote the study, discussion and dissemination of St Thomas' ideas. One of these is the Aquinas Institute set up in 2004 at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, under the directorship of Fr Fergus Kerr. Fr Vivian Boland took over as Director in 2008, and Fr Richard Conrad in 2014.

A constant figure in the Institute has been Dr William Carroll, who has spent each Hilary Term at Oxford as Aquinas Fellow. He is a regular visitor to China, where there is a growing interest in St Thomas' thought, and where he is planning to establish an annual summer school under the Institute's aegis.

The Aquinas Institute organises a number of regular activities, which include: reading classes to help students at different levels get used to studying St Thomas' writings; at least one conference each year that brings scholars, students and other interested people together for papers and discussion on a theme connected with St Thomas; a summer school at Buckfast Abbey to help young adults draw on St Thomas to make sense of theology and integrate it into a sustainable vision of Catholic life; and a series of seminars that allows experts to present papers to a group of scholars in Oxford. These have all been highly successful.



Two one-day conferences have been held in 2015, one on different recent schools of interpretation of St Thomas, and one on Biblical Interpretation from Augustine to Aquinas. A half-day conference presented St Thomas' conviction that political life basically stands to help us flourish, despite all its ambiguities. Fr Thomas Joseph White OP, Director of the Thomistic Institute in Washington DC, gave the Aquinas Lecture on God's absolute unity, which, for St Thomas, is not compromised by the Mystery of the Holy Trinity. A visiting scholar, Dr Barbara Walters, presented her research on St Thomas' composition of the Liturgy of Corpus Christi, including his choice of music for the Office. Fr Richard Conrad gave a lecture, co-sponsored by the Oxford Council of Christians and Jews, on St Thomas' valuing of the Torah.



Fr Simon Gaine OP leads a class at the Aquinas Institute's summer school

The summer school is kindly supported by Buckfast Abbey. The Earhart Foundation has generously financed the seminar series, so it has been possible to bring scholars from the Americas and from China, as well as from Europe, to speak in Oxford; it has also paid for four or five students doing research on St Thomas to attend a seminar and the conference. 2015 is the last year the Earhart Foundation can operate, so we are engaged in fundraising to help the Institute's valuable work continue. Small sums can make a big difference by enabling poor students to attend and even present their work at our conferences, and we are hoping in due course to finance some research fellows, so that our website and publications may help people draw on the riches available in St Thomas' writings. All offers of support are most welcome!

Interested? Join our mailing list! Just drop an email to aquinas@bfriars.ox.ac.uk



Future Events

Dominican Order's 800th Anniversary Jubilee Celebrations. Special events will be held across the Province from 7 November 2015 and on through 2016. Details in future newsletters and locally via our priories.

Blackfriars Poverty in Britain Group – Blackfriars Priory, Oxford. 11am, Sunday 8 November 2015. For information, email Dr Leslie Topp: l.topp@bbk.ac.uk

'Illumination: Formed by Mercy, Formed for Mission' – Holy Cross, Leicester, 14–15 November For information contact illumination@english.op.org

Dominican Youth Movement (DYM) meetings:

- North – St Cuthbert's, Durham. 7 Nov 2015.
- South – Boar's Hill, Oxford. 4–6 Dec 2015.

For information, email: nicholas.crowe@english.op.org.

'Truth Telling & the Media' – Saïd Business School, Oxford. 28 November 2015. One-day conference with speakers including Prof. Nicholas Boyle

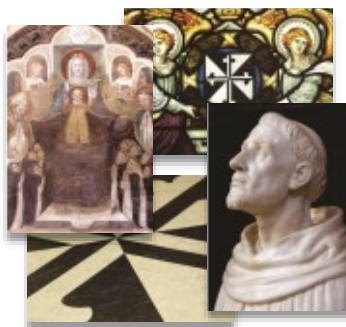
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FOR THE LATEST NEWS & EVENTS**

and Edward Hadas. Fee: £30, including lunch (enquire about concessions). To register: lascasas@bfriars.ox.ac.uk

Dominican Seminar – Hinsley Hall, Leeds. 8–10 January 2016. For details, email: nick.baggio@zen.co.uk

English Dominicans at World Youth Day – Kraków. 22 July – 1 August 2016. Contact Fr Gregory Pearson for information: gregory.pearson@english.op.org

Dominican Jubilee Greetings Cards



Now available in packs of 10, with a mixture of four designs (blank inside), these can be purchased from all of our UK houses (suggested donation £5 per pack), with any profits going towards the Friars' Training Fund.



Please support our work

In committing their lives to serve God, Dominican friars give up all personal property.

The generous support we receive from others is therefore essential and sustains the fruitful variety of ways that we serve. In making a gift you become a participant in this work. We truly value this assistance, and remember all our benefactors daily in our prayers.

If you feel able to support us in any way, please send us your donation using this form. *May God bless you for your generosity.*

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My gift is for: ☐ Dominicans' Training Fund (see p.3)
☐ Oxford Priory Fabric Fund (see p.5)
☐ General work of the Dominican Friars

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English Province of the Order of Preachers

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