

Welcome to our Advent issue

In one of his first interviews as Master of the Order, Fr Gerard Timoner OP emphasises that the Order, he hopes, is moving 'towards a more intentional and deeper sense of communion'. The Holy Trinity is the model and source of our communion, and at this time of year the Liturgy recalls the communion that God has established with us through the Incarnation of Christ. In the Body of Christ, the Church, we are thus called into communion with God, united to him in charity.

Ours is an increasingly polarised world in which charity is all too often wounded or broken. Differences of perspective and opinion, different views in matters of politics and religion can drive people apart, fracturing friendships and dividing societies. It is especially tragic that such tribalism is evident even within the Church, often scandalously manifested in social media to such an extent that Catholics can no longer be known by their love for one another (cf Jn 13:35). Hence the Master said that the Order is called to 'build the communion of the Church, the Body of Christ, as St Francis and St Dominic did when the Church was in dire need for a "new" evangelization in the 13th century'.

Communion and collaboration, reconciliation and community are the themes that arose repeatedly in the

articles prepared for this edition of our Provincial newsletter. I did not explicitly plan for this, but the Holy Spirit, it would appear, orchestrated this, and he thus calls us Dominicans to reflect more deeply on the communion that we have among ourselves and that we are to make known to others especially in the



Church of our times. The Master thus reminds us that we Dominicans are called to be a 'communion of brothers'. However he rightly notes: 'To be realistic, diversity and differences among the brothers could sometimes weaken communion. But this, too, can become part of our prophetic service to the Church and society: it is possible to have differences and remain brothers, that it is possible to disagree without breaking communion.'

I hope that our friends who have known us Dominican brothers, and who read these pages, will agree that however different we may be, and however much we might disagree with one another, our communion as brothers in Christ and as sons of St Dominic remains unbroken – for the love for the Gospel, and the love to contemplate the Word and preach Christ for the salvation of souls unites us. We invite you, through this magazine and your generous support of our mission, to enter into communion with us, a communion that is founded in the Triune God.

Thank you for reading, and may God bless you.

– Fr Lawrence Lew OP, Editor

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

'To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good... All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.'

– 1 Cor 12:7, 11–12

Receiving this magazine

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Requiescant in Pace

We remember with affection and gratitude the recently departed who made bequests to the Friars (the beneficiary is indicated below).

May they and all the faithful departed rest in peace.

- Anne Dwyer (Province of England)
- Alan Francis (Blackfriars Priory, Oxford)
- Mary Todd (Blackfriars Priory, Oxford)

Correction: we apologise for the erroneous listing of Emmanuel Durand OP in the last issue; this legacy was in fact from Fr Michael Durand; Fr Emmanuel is still alive.

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



The Word Made Visible

Fr Dermot Morrin OP writes a weekly meditation on sacred art for the newsletter of St Albert's in Edinburgh where he is based. We asked him to share his insights with us on a much-loved painting in the National Gallery collection in London.

'The Virgin and Child with Saints Jerome and Dominic', Filippino Lippi, c.1485.

I have known this painting for many years, but recently, I was struck by just how odd St Dominic's behaviour must look to some gallery viewers. Despite such august company, he has his head stuck in a book! True, his friars do tend to be a bit on the bookish side, but surely no book could surpass the chance of enjoying the Virgin and Child's company.

On the other side of the painting, and in strong contrast to St Dominic, a penitent St Jerome gazes at the mother and child with very visible devotion. Behind him we can see his pet lion in the act of chasing a bear away from the mouth of the cave. Deep inside and almost hidden from view, the saint is also doing penance. There is an oak tree growing behind St Jerome and the Virgin. In its branches a bird is feeding her young. In the far distance, a man moves downhill with a pack animal. Could this be St Joseph? Is this the familiar scene of the Holy Family at rest during the flight to Egypt? If so, St Dominic seems to be oblivious. What book could be so good?

Behind St Dominic, there is a building with people going in and out. In fact, it is a kind of hospital or dispensary. This altarpiece was painted for a side chapel in the Church of San Pancrazio in Florence. Originally, it was part of a larger religious foundation which included the dispensary. This is the very place that the Dominican friars lodged when they first arrived in Florence, and it is even documented that St Dominic went there to clothe a brother in the habit.

Lippi underlines the association of St Dominic with this place of healing by adding a little leather sheath on his



© The National Gallery, London

belt. It contains a set of the instruments that an apothecary or herbalist might use. Around St Dominic's feet Lippi has added various specimens of what are no doubt medicinal herbs. So is it a book about herbal remedies? Well, I think not. Our clue is in the presence of St Jerome who said that ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ. The book that so engrosses St Dominic must surely be his favourite, the Gospel of Matthew. In the centre, we see what he sees with his mind's eye. I suspect we are meant to understand that he is reading the passage from St Matthew about the flight into Egypt.

This painting is an altarpiece, so it acted as the backdrop to the celebration of the Eucharist. Lippi reminds the viewer that just as the Virgin nourishes her child

with her milk, so God nourishes us by his Word and by the Sacrament. St Dominic and his followers are sent to preach the Gospel. Lippi's Dominic reminds us that it is done primarily by contemplating the scriptures and then handing on the fruits. In the scriptures, the prophet Isaiah once declared, 'Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' In the Gospel of Matthew we are told that this name means God-with-us. It is by such familiar truths that the great seasons of Advent and Christmas will bring healing to our woundedness, and nourishment for the year ahead.

A high-resolution image can be viewed online at the National Gallery's website.



The World's Confessional

Fr Leon Pereira OP serves in Medjugorje, where thousands of Catholics flock each year. As a Dominican he works alongside the Franciscans in preaching and ministering to souls especially through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In this article he reflects on his experience as a confessor to tens of thousands, and he is preparing a book on the importance of this sacrament.

When I was a junior doctor working in a hospital in Leeds, something that often struck me was how many patients wanted to confess. They weren't asking for a priest (they weren't all Catholic), but they wanted someone to hear their sins. When people are poorly and vulnerable, faced with their own mortality, confession comes readily. But I was unable then to absolve anyone. My thought at the time was, I should be a priest – I'd be more useful!

Confession is good for the soul, and it comes naturally. We all have an innate need to confide. I'm not surprised that many murderers are caught only because they could not keep their 'perfect crimes' to themselves. They shared, not simply to boast, but because humans find it so difficult to keep dark secrets to themselves. Friends often know that a person is committing adultery. It seems we are not simply bad at keeping secrets; we actively need at least one other human to know our inner darkness. Perhaps confiding acts as a lifeline; like an unravelled ball of twine to lead us out of our labyrinthine misery, in case we repent.

Most people have more prosaic sins, not through lack of desire but sheer lack

of opportunity. Still, the desire to confess remains innate. I say this because experience leads me to reject the claim that sacramental Confession is too difficult for modern humans. I would say Confession is what we need more than ever, and we are all *capax pœnitentiæ*: by God's grace, capable of repentance and penance.

Ministry of Mercy

I have been based in Medjugorje (Bosnia and Herzegovina) for the last four years. This parish is often called, with good reason, the 'confessional of the world'. It has been my ordinary experience to hear Confessions for at least two to three hours every day, and certainly for six to nine hours when I had more energy! In this period I estimate I have spent more than 3,600 hours hearing roughly 40,000 individual Confessions (these are conservative underestimates). This contrasts with, at most, 500 hours in my preceding 11 years of priesthood.

Priests steel themselves not to betray shock during Confession. I thought I'd already heard everything under the sun, and then I came to Medjugorje. Now I can say I've truly heard not just everything under the sun but also everything trying to hide from it. A good confessor should retain an unruffled exterior, to encourage the penitent. An unperturbed interior is not difficult either. I just think, They're Your people, Lord, and no one loves them more than You.

Overcoming Reluctance

Some claim that Confession is difficult, but I liken it to taking blood. If we fuss and cluck, we increase a patient's nervousness and we also increase their subjective perception of pain. But if we treat

plunging a needle into human flesh as entirely normal, and try to do it quickly while distracting the patient, they often say, I didn't even feel that! Confession ought to be like this. Since sinning is a common experience, the remedy – Confession – should be treated as entirely natural and normal.

From my experience, I would say that the problems of Confession almost always originate with the clergy. I hear fairly frequently from people who haven't confessed in 40, 50, or 60 years, and often because of a bad prior experience in the confessional. I also hear about abuses: general absolution being granted willy-nilly, or penitents being told to confess only one sin, or to confess to a pebble. The people of God are no fools; they know they are being short-changed. I explain to them that general absolution is for when they are on the Titanic after she hits the iceberg, and if they survive, they are duty-bound to make an individual Confession. As for confessing only one sin, I ask penitents if they'd be satisfied with washing just one part of their bodies rather than having a complete shower or bath. People yearn to confess – they just need a confessor who is not going to condescend to them.

Problems in Practice

Bad catechesis has its effects. With Irish Travellers of a certain age, I feel like Santa in a shopping mall listening to Christmas wish-lists. Will you pray for this-and-that Father? They look surprised when I ask about their sins. I also get people who claim to have no sins, despite several years away from Confession. The Franciscans here will allegedly respond: 'Jesus, it's You! You've come back!' As the Italians say, *Se non è vero, è ben trovato*

– even if it's not true, it's a good story. Such people don't genuinely think they are sinless; it's more that they are unable to acknowledge their sinfulness, because they don't think they'd survive the guilt. Lots of good catechesis is needed, especially for adults.

Some of the hardest Confessions to hear are from the self-righteous, who complain about everyone else's faults: spouses, parents, children, in-laws, colleagues. I'm tempted to tease them, Shall I absolve all of them, but leave you unshriven? Such penitents generally require more time with a priest outside of the context of Confession. I realise the scrupulous suffer greatly with Confession. Frankly, these days I'm more concerned about the 'unscrupulous', that is, those who have almost entirely lost any sense of sin. I catechise these patiently and frequently, within and without the confessional.

The hardest thing for me as a confessor

has not been hearing the so-called 'worst sins' (surely the worst sin is pride?), but having to withhold absolution. It goes against the human desire to be nice, but niceness is not necessarily virtuous. In those rare cases, I spend a great deal of time, patiently and kindly talking to penitents, praying with them. Repentance can be a multi-stage process, and genuine accompaniment shouldn't rush absolution until the penitent is ready. This calls for the virtues of prudence and charity. We priests are stewards of Christ's mysteries, not masters. We cannot betray Christ and the Faith just to be popular and loved.

One great joy for me has been hearing the Confessions of my brother priests. Pope Francis has set a good example of being seen as a penitent kneeling at the confessional. Confessing humbles us, but also hearing Confessions can humble us too. One learns to confess better by

hearing more penitents. I must admit I often feel a great joy within me at the reconciliation of those who have been estranged from God. The converse, when penitents are closed to God, is always a source of sorrow.

Finally, my experiences convince me that every priest and seminarian ought to be trained in deliverance ministry. I frequently absolve people who have made curses, cast spells, summoned spirits, etc. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't experienced it myself, but confessors can get physically sick from merely attempting to absolve such penitents without first making them renounce by name these particular sins before the Cross. We priests must also spend a good deal of time in prayer before and after Confessions: for our own protection, for the penitents, and of course, to do penance and to fast for all the penitents we encounter, since we give them much lighter penances.

Ordinations & Simple Professions



Brs John Bernard Church and Daniel Benedict Rowlands completed their noviciate year and made their simple profession on 21 September, at Blackfriars, Cambridge.

They are pictured with the Prior Provincial, Fr Martin Ganeri, and the Novice Master, Fr Bruno Clifton. The two have now begun their studies at Blackfriars, Oxford.

Please continue to pray for all our brothers, and for vocations to the Dominicans.

Saturday 7th September saw two priestly ordinations for our Province, with the ceremony this year taking place at St Dominic's, London. The church was filled, with large groups travelling from Leicester, Oxford and Cambridge, as well as from as far afield as USA, Germany, and Italy, all supporting Toby Lees and Luke Doherty by their presence and prayer. Our own Archbishop Malcolm McMahon once again conferred the sacrament. The celebrations continued with a garden party in the grounds of the priory. Fr Luke has now moved to Holy Cross, Leicester, and Fr Toby continues his studies in Rome for one more year.





The Gift of Fatherhood

Fr Leo Edgar OP, based in St Dominic's Priory in London, has the distinction of being both a father in the biological order of nature, and a spiritual father as a Priest of Jesus Christ. In this article he gives a very personal reflection on his vocation, and on what he calls 'double fatherhood'.

When I was asked to put pen to paper, and record some of the variety that has occurred during the eight decades of my life so far, I realised that I could actually divide my life into three periods: 1930s to '60s was made up of schooling during the Second World War, followed by National Service in the RAF, and then work experience abroad with the opportunity to discover something of other nations' cultures and languages and discovering my own identity; 1960s to '90s consisted of the exciting developments of the 1960s when the world was changing faster than ever before, reflected in the Second Vatican Council. For myself, Marriage and the raising of a family was foremost in my mind; and 1990s to 2019 brings us up to the present when, from 1999, after the death of my wife and as a widower parent, I applied and was accepted to study for the priesthood in the Dominican Order.

Asked to contribute an article on my

own experience of what might be termed 'double fatherhood', I find the easiest way is to describe the two life experiences as similar in some ways, and vastly different in others. Both as parents and priests we are happy to be called 'Father' in the tradition of the Catholic Church. At first glance, if we hear what Christ himself said in Luke's Gospel, 'Call no one your father, only God is Father', we might find it odd even to call our paternal parent 'father'; but in my case, 34 years of marriage and almost 54 years of parenthood were transformed into the double role when I was ordained a priest in London in 2004 at the ripe old age of 69. My story is far from common.

I often get asked by friends of long standing, including Catholic friends, what on earth made me do it? My answer is normally that after 40 years working in the fast-moving world of 'fashion retailing' with a major international retailer, I felt called to answer God's invitation to devote more of my life to Him than I had before. It is an invitation that one does not take lightly!

I say 'more of my life' purposely, as I am still a father of four and a grandfather of nine children. That role has not changed. But the role of priest and friar has given me an insight into the comparisons and similarities of the two roles.

In the course of my almost 20 years as a Dominican, I have observed the

similarities of being parent and 'pastor'. The two words are not dissimilar – nor are the roles. As parent, one's major responsibility is the care of one's family, along with one's soul-mate. I had the great blessing of being married to a wonderful wife and mother, which helped enormously in becoming a good father. As pastor, one has similar responsibilities, being the carer of a much larger 'family', which also needs to be guided and pointed in the direction of God and educated in the teaching of Christ, doing what one has already done for one's own children.

Again, one has the need of motherly assistance; and Our Blessed Lady is our role model, always available to nurture and guide us throughout our lives. Reflecting on my family life in partnership with a wife, and reflecting on my current work as a chaplain to the Dominican Sisters at Bushey, it is, in my opinion, high time for accepting that women are better than men in so many areas of 'spreading the good news of the gospel'. Throughout the history of Christ's Church, women have contributed so much to the theological, spiritual, and pastoral benefit of the institutional church – for example the Saints Mary Magdalene, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, Thérèse of Lisieux, Mother Teresa of Calcutta and many, many others; but above all by the Mother of Christ herself – Mary, the Mother of mankind, without whose influence and example the Church would be so much poorer.

As a Dominican friar, one also undertakes pastoral 'family' responsibility, living a communal life in a religious community, not of one's own choosing but, as part of a world-wide network of friars devoted to preaching the gospel. As friars we make vows to God of obedience, poverty, and chastity. As father of an earthly family, the vows are to love and honour for the rest of one's life the woman to whom one is married, and to care for the upbringing and education of one's children. A fundamental difference between being a 'father' and a 'Father', is that in marriage you have to learn to live not only with another, but for another particular person. And this distinction is so important in today's world where so many are unwilling to make the commitment to share life with and for another.

[Continues on p.7]

Communication for Communion



Fr Matthew Jarvis OP, based in Holy Cross, Leicester, is one of a team of translators who serve the General Chapters of the Order. He reflects on his experience in Vietnam this past summer.

Dominicans have a peculiarly participative form of governance which has stood the test of 800 years. The General Chapter, gathering friars from all over the world every three years, is the highest authority in the Dominican Order. Even the Master, elected every nine years, is subject to its decisions and must serve the wishes of the brethren for the common good.

This was my second General Chapter, having served as an interpreter (French-English) at Bologna in 2016. But Biên Hòa (Vietnam) in 2019 was something quite extraordinary. The first General Chapter in a non-Christian country and

the first to elect an Asian as Master of the Order, Fr Gerard Timoner from the Philippines: these are reasons enough to call it 'historic'. The Vietnamese province itself is extraordinary, with the largest membership of the Dominican Family by far. We joyfully witnessed this at the Closing Mass of St Dominic on 4th August, including the

Solemn Professions of 21 friars, attended by an estimated 18,000 members of the Dominican Family.

As the Chapter went about its business, it was clear that the Dominican mission to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ has increasingly global dimensions: the Order is a 'communion of provinces' and not a federation, such that initial formation, fraternal life, study and mission will need to be approached in fresh ways that strengthen communion in an ever more connected – yet sadly not so unified – world.

As a translator, I had the privilege to see some of these challenges up close. Language barriers must be overcome if we are to be true brothers and sisters. To paraphrase St Thomas, communication is necessary for communion. Thus, translators are bridge-builders, enabling fraternal exchange, fostering a communion of minds and hearts. It's a daunting fact that without us translators the Chapter could

not function, and the meetings would probably be even longer!

Simultaneous interpreting is hard work, requiring intense concentration and a proactive familiarity with diverse topics under discussion. I think that building fraternal communion is similarly hard: we have to work at it, seeking mutual understanding with a generous heart, to overcome the personal, cultural, and even theological distances between us. But both tasks are rewarding in the end. I get great pleasure from translating what the brethren say, knowing I am serving the Chapter, and when we build communion we inevitably find joy in the bonds of friendship.

When language barriers remain, we should not forget that communication is much deeper than words. I tried learning some Vietnamese words, especially thanks to the student brothers who were patient with me. But when I failed to say much, my new friends could still understand what I meant through body language and an underlying sympathy of hearts.

As I fondly look back on my month in Vietnam, it's the language of the heart that I thank God for. Through this language, I have discovered new brothers and sisters and made new friends. It also reminds me of the first time I met Fr Gerard. It was ten years ago in Manila when I was working as a Dominican lay volunteer. He wanted to know how I was getting on learning the Tagalog language, and added that I could always fall back on 'the universal language'. 'What, mathematics?' I asked. 'Or do you mean music?' 'No, no,' he laughed out loud, '...the smile!'

[Continued from p.6]

There has been much discussion in recent months and years about 'married priests' in the Catholic Church. They exist of course already, with convert married Anglican clergymen who have subsequently been ordained in the Catholic Church, and these priests are highly thought of in the parishes they serve. Having experienced personally these good priests and fathers in the North-East

of England for several years, I discovered the value and experience these men bring to the parishes and people they serve.

How we see ourselves is often so different from how others see us. It seems important to me to try and see myself as an ordinary man who has been extraordinarily blessed with my double-life! I can only feel hugely privileged to be father of a family, and also a pastor in the church. In the course of personal development,

I suppose that we each have our own attitude to responsibility. When God allows one to be a parent through marriage of a man and woman, it is to be a partaker in God's own creation of mankind; through procreation one is privileged to share in the beauty of creation. In Genesis we read of the wonder of God creating man and woman in the Garden of Eden. Both vocations should help to bring those in our care closer to Christ.



The Word in Film

Fr Toby Lees OP, who was ordained this summer and is completing his Licence in Sacred Theology in Rome, reviews the movie 'Paterson' (2016, starring Adam Driver) and recommends it for its Advent themes.

Caryll Houselander, the Catholic poet and mystic, spoke of the Genealogy as a 'symbol of Advent gestation'. The Genealogies are not the most exciting readings from the Gospel that we'll ever hear, but they do give us that sense of God slowly working in lifetimes and across generations to bring about His work of salvation. The individual parts can seem insignificant and slow, but the whole is the greatest drama ever written.

A film I recently watched that certainly doesn't rush us in dramatic terms is *Paterson*. In fact, one reviewer described it as a film 'in which nothing happens', and on the level of a high-octane action and plot twists that's absolutely fair, but on another level, the truth is that a lot of goodness happens, and that strikes me as much more important.

Paterson is a film that takes its time, but is never boring, and the truth that *Paterson* most emphatically conveys is that drama and novelty are not the barometer of a life well-lived, but goodness. And *Paterson* just oozes goodness, but in a very understated way. *Paterson* is a bus driver, living in Paterson, a very ordinary town. He's also a poet, but refreshingly he does not resent the day job which keeps him from writing poetry full-time. His poetry – which is neither

amazing, nor dreadful – is not poetry for which he craves recognition, it is more born of a recognition. It is as if, in an unsentimental way, he realises that there is something magical about life, which prose or a diary entry would not quite do justice to, a world charged with grandeur, but not grandiose. Most of his poetry reads like extraordinary appreciation of the goodness of ordinary things.

It is goodness that is the most striking thing about *Paterson*. Good acts come easily to him because he is good. At first, there is a certain tension watching *Paterson*, a certain tautness, that makes you start to suspect that he might just snap or lose it at any point. You are just not used to watching a film or a man with so little cynicism. This is not to say his life is without frustrations or difficulties, but more that he seems like a man who has the gift of a certain perspective on things. This other perspective is hinted at by a picture of him in a serviceman's uniform on his bedside, but about which we are not told anything.

Where this goodness comes across most powerfully is in his marriage and his interactions with his wife, Laura. They are very different personalities. She is delighted by novelty and excited by new possibilities: new skills she might master; new fashions; and her regular redecoration of things around the house. She wants to be a cup-cake baker and a country star. In contrast, *Paterson* is a 'steady she goes' kind of guy, but this is no obstacle in their love; for each genuinely loves and understands the other as other. Each helps to realise the other, without simply

turning into the other.

At first the dialogue between Laura and *Paterson* seems too nice, too sincere, almost implausible, but over time you realise that perhaps there is a better way than the irony and sarcasm we trade in for fear that our sincerity be perceived as naïvety, for fear that sincerity might expose us to vulnerability... and, yet, vulnerability is the price of loving, and sincerity is necessary for a true meeting of minds and real understanding.

In one scene, when *Paterson* is having his nightly beer at a neighbourhood bar, the barman comments on *Paterson*'s not having a cell phone. He responds, 'I don't want a cell phone; it would feel like a leash' – the comic juxtaposition to this is that the couple's bulldog, Marvin, the comic star of the film, and whose nightly walk is the pretext for *Paterson*'s beer, is currently on a leash outside the bar. When the barman asks whether his better half has one, and hears that she has an iPhone, iPad, laptop, he asks whether she doesn't want him to get one. *Paterson* responds, 'No, [pauses] she's okay about it [pauses] she understands me really well.' The barman tells him, 'You're a lucky guy'. And I think this gets to the heart of *Paterson*'s contentment with a life that so many would think humdrum and boring: so many live in fear that no one really understands them, or live in fear that if somebody really saw them as they are, that they would not be loved. *Paterson* has neither of these fears... nor should the Christian; for we too are known as we are and loved as we are.

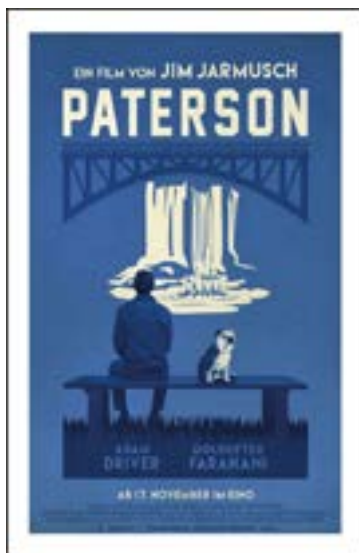
There is one real moment of nervous drama in the film [spoiler alert]. A jilted lover in the bar, a melodramatic actor, proclaims 'If I can't have you, nobody can', first turning the gun on the ex-girlfriend and then on himself. *Paterson* leaps up knocking the man to the ground and the pistol from his hand. The action is dramatic, but it is also perfectly in keeping with *Paterson*'s character, a man who in little ways keeps on putting himself out for the other is on this occasion given a bigger stage.

Irrespective of this incident – and the fact the gun turns out to shoot foam pellets not bullets – we shouldn't really think differently of *Paterson*: there is a heroic quality to his life, which doesn't depend upon this incident, but is drawn out by it.

So too with us; not all our lives will be dramatic. Similarly, there are saints who wanted to be martyrs; but weren't. Nonetheless, all our lives have a cosmic significance, not dependent on their dramatic quality from a purely human perspective. God may use us in a remarkable way or He may call us to a life of hidden sanctity; what matters is that we are actors in His drama. All those figures in the Genealogy, which can sometimes seem to drag in Church, had no idea that their names would one day be heralds of the coming of the Saviour. We may have little idea what God is doing in lives or what He plans for us, but the coming of Advent focusses our minds on being ready and being His vessel, however fragile or small.

One of the poems at the beginning of the film is about matches: it seems rather banal, until it suddenly sparks into life. One of the ordinary matches he describes, lights the cigarette of the woman he loves and everything looks different after this:

*... So sober and furious and stubbornly
ready
To burst into flame
Lighting, perhaps the cigarette of the
woman you love
For the first time
And it was never really the same after
that
All this will we give you
That is what you gave me
I become the cigarette and you the
match
Or I the match and you the cigarette
Blazing with kisses that smoulder
towards heaven.*



In the Footsteps of Blessed Alan de la Roche

On the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary this year, the Master of the Order appointed our brother, Lawrence Lew OP, to serve as Promoter General for the Rosary. Fr Lawrence will serve a six-year term as an official of the General Curia of the Order, which is based in Santa Sabina, Rome. However, Fr Lawrence will remain resident in St Dominic's, London and continue to minister there principally as Rector of the Diocesan Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary.

The Promoter General of the Rosary is charged with encouraging the whole Dominican family to pray and promote the Rosary; with supporting the Rosary Confraternities, and uniting them in prayer and love for Our Lady; with co-ordinating new ways to encourage and promote the praying of the Rosary; and preaching the Rosary throughout the Dominican world. *Please pray for Fr Lawrence in this new role.*

On the day this was announced, the Archdiocese of Singapore providentially released a video on YouTube of

Fr Lawrence's thoughts on praying the Rosary as a family and with children. The video can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/U79qmJxOC-o>

In the same week, Fr Lawrence had the privilege and joy of leading the 35th annual Rosary Crusade of Reparation which is held in London. Hundreds processed in the rain walking from Westminster Cathedral to the London Oratory, praying the Rosary and singing Marian hymns as they walked through Victoria and Knightsbridge on the weekend of Cardinal Newman's Canonisation. Inside a packed Oratory,

Fr Lawrence preached on the eschatological hope and promise of the Rosary.

To find out more about the Rosary Shrine in London, visit www.rosaryshrine.co.uk or watch the EWTN documentary: www.rosaryshrine.co.uk/ewtns-rosary-shrine-special-feature/



A Community of Thomists

Br Albert Robertson OP writes about the collaboration between the Washington DC-based 'Thomistic Institute' and the brothers in Blackfriars and the Aquinas Institute in Oxford, and its potency for creating communion between scholars, students, and seekers who are interested in the riches of the Catholic intellectual tradition.



In the time since I was asked to help begin a chapter of the Thomistic Institute in Oxford nearly two years ago, we have certainly come a long way. Our collaboration with the Thomistic Institute in Washington DC has been a really valuable way of making the intellectual traditions of our Order, but also the work of our Hall and Studium in Oxford, more accessible to a wider audience within the University of Oxford and the broader community in the city.

This summer began a new phase in our collaboration when I was lucky enough to be able to travel to Washington DC to participate in two conferences run by the Thomistic Institute, one for the student leaders of their different chapters around the USA and Europe, and another run in collaboration with the Institute for Human Ecology (IHE) at Catholic University of America.

The Civitas Dei Fellowship, run in collaboration with IHE, was a graduate-level conference introducing participants to the Catholic intellectual tradition on questions of the common good from Augustine, through Aquinas and his commentators, to the legal philosophy of the late Justice Antonin Scalia. The conference showed the rich and broad tradition which the Thomistic Institute is trying to transmit to young aspiring intellectuals, and equipping these young men and women with the necessary contacts and relationships to try and transform academic life in their respective institutions. Many of the participants were law students, or studying for degrees in political science and related disciplines, and so the week offered the opportunity to speak to people from outside the world of

academic theology about common experiences and hopes and plans for future research and collaboration.

The second conference was for campus chapter leaders and committee members, and had both an academic and a practical purpose. We were joined by Prof Ed Feser as well as staff members from the Pontifical Faculty at the Dominican House of Studies to provide an introduction to Thomistic theology and philosophy, but also to share our experiences of running chapters in our respective locations. It was a real sign of hope to see the student leaders of so many chapters enthusiastic and energised for the work that is ahead this academic year.

As in previous years our chapter in Oxford will be hosting a number of lectures which will complement the work of the Aquinas Institute, but this will also hopefully be a year when we can expand the range of events which we put on. This will not only involve some day conference events, but we are also hoping that we might be able to run something similar to the Civitas Dei Fellowship so that we can welcome students from across Europe and the USA to Oxford – an ideal place to explore the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Across the ten days that we were participating in these conferences in Washington DC, time and again we returned to the question of community, and this was not just something which we spoke about in practical terms at the conference for student leaders, but was also something which we experienced across the days that we were there. Much of our initial work with the Thomistic Institute chapter was aimed at ensuring that a good number of people attended

the lectures, and that they represented a wide cross-section of the life of the university and the city, and by and large this has been our experience across the events we have hosted over the last couple of years. We have certainly been surprised at how many people have come, and how this seems to have answered a real need within the student body and wider community. Importantly, these have not just been Catholics but people from different Christian traditions, and also those who are not Christian or who do not believe; and this is particularly important, because the Thomistic Institute is not designed to be Catholics speaking only to Catholics, but to draw other people into a community seeking after truth. When one spends time speaking with students there can often be quite a feeling of isolation, not always because of a loneliness, but simply because at times, by its very nature, academic life can be an isolating pursuit. In Oxford, terms are short and pressured, and it can often foster the feeling that community and friendship is something formed in one's spare time, once the essay is written and the lectures attended. But the work of the Thomistic Institute places the experience of communion at the very centre of the intellectual enquiry, in fact it's part of what roots it so firmly in the Dominican tradition.

This year will be a busy one for the friars and students who organise the activities of the Thomistic Institute in Oxford as we seek to expand not only the number and type of events, but also as we try and deepen the sense of community among participants, so please continue to pray for these endeavours, and to spread news of our work.

Development News: Oxford



August 2021 will mark two important anniversaries for Blackfriars: 800 years ago, in 1221, a small group from the newly-founded Dominican Friars arrived at this little town with its newly established university, and became deeply involved in its life for 300 years.

Later, in 1921, following nearly four centuries of exile, a new Blackfriars was at last refounded on the current site. In both medieval times and in modern times, Blackfriars has contributed greatly to

the life of the University and the city, and indeed to the wider Church. It is with a view to protecting and developing all that Blackfriars does, that on 16 November we launched a special fundraising campaign. This campaign, 'Building the Next Century of Mission, seeks to fund:

- A large new annexe building, giving much-needed additional space for teaching, research, administration and accommodation.

- Teaching posts ('lectorships') for those who train future priests
- Scholarships to secure and support the best graduate students
- Funds for the ongoing fabric needs of our historic Priory buildings

For more information, visit www.bfriars.ox.ac.uk/800 or contact us (see below) for a free leaflet explaining the campaign.

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My gift is for

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If you would like to discuss your giving, call Richard Brown at our Development Office on 01865 610208 or email development@english.op.org