

THE DOMINICANS

Easter 2020

The Magazine of the Dominican Friars in England & Scotland



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Welcome to our Easter issue

As with so many other things, the production of this issue of 'The Dominicans' was overtaken by the upheaval of the global pandemic of COVID-19. In response, I decided that we would publish online only those articles and news submitted for this issue. I thank our contributors and especially our guest writers who sent in their articles and photos. However, with the closure of our churches, and the extended Lent and 'Quarantine in Quaresma' that we find ourselves in, it did not seem expedient to produce a print edition that did not address our current circumstances. Hence, I have decided that after Easter, we shall produce a new issue of 'The Dominicans' but with articles, reflections, and news that I hope will help us think contemplatively and to live the 'new normal' during this pandemic. As ever, as Dominicans, I believe we need to preach the Gospel of new life in our current situation, and to be useful to our contemporaries. It is my hope that the forthcoming print issue of this magazine will respond to the needs of our times.

In the meantime, permit me to share with you these words of our Lord, reminding us of his abiding presence in our homes and in our hearts, even as we struggle with the closure of our churches and being deprived of the consolation of the sacraments.

Receiving this magazine

This magazine is distributed free of charge 3 times a year. You can collect copies from any of the UK churches run by the Dominican Friars, or we can mail it directly to you. An email newsletter is also sent out around 3 or 4 times a year.

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"I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live

also. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."
(John 14:18-21)

Thank you for reading, and may God bless you, and may Our Blessed Mother keep you safe under her mantle of protection.

– Fr Lawrence Lew OP, Editor

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

ROSARY RALLY

FOR THE WHOLE DOMINICAN FAMILY

29 April 2020 – 9:00pm – 5 Glorious Mysteries



"I exhort the whole Dominican Family—friars, nuns, sisters, laity, secular institutes, priestly fraternities, and youth—throughout the world to pray the Rosary together according to this plan prepared by fr. Lawrence Lew O.P., our Promoter General of the Holy Rosary."

– fr. Gerard Timoner O.P., Master of the Order.

On Wednesday 29 April 2020, let's gather in our communities and homes to pray the five Glorious Mysteries of the Holy Rosary, at 9:00 pm in your local time. If possible, share it live online. Across the world, on the feast of Saint Catherine, all Dominicans and their friends shall thus unite in praying the Rosary against this pandemic: We pray for the sick; for the healthcare services; for the families of the sick; for those who suffer economically, socially, and psychologically; for protection and healing. After each decade, please pray the prayer given by Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima: "O my Jesus..."

Academic Honours for Fr Fergus Kerr

At 12 noon on Monday, 9 December, 2019, an academic procession entered the beautiful Raeburn Room at Old College, Edinburgh. The procession was made up of four people in full academic attire: a beadle carrying an academic mace; Professor Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh; Professor David Fergusson, Professor of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh; and Fr Fergus Kerr, Dominican friar and member of the Edinburgh Dominican Community. The occasion was the conferral of the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity on Fr Fergus for his many contributions to Scottish Catholic Theology.

Professor Fergusson, speaking in the name and by the authority of the Senatus Academicus of the University of Edinburgh, gave a laureation in which he explained why Fr Fergus had been chosen for the high honour. He then called upon the Vice-Chancellor to confer the honorary doctorate. This was done in the Edinburgh style, in this case an unwittingly ecumenical gesture, by tapping the head of Fr Fergus with 'the Geneva Bonnet', a hat supposedly made from the breeches of the noted Scottish Reformer, John Knox.

In his laureation Professor Fergusson said the following:

"The recently published *History of Scottish Theology* describes Fergus Kerr as the most distinguished Scottish Catholic theologian of the twentieth century. That seems an unassailable judgement. In at least three areas, he has made an outstanding contribution to contemporary philosophical theology. His appropriation of the work of Wittgenstein has enabled us to understand the extent to which the human person is not an angel but an animal. We are embodied creatures, set



in a social and material world. As he shows, theologians have too often failed to recognise these features of the human condition, yet they are vital for understanding the significance of ritual, liturgy, and meaning. In his work on Thomas Aquinas, Fergus Kerr has awakened us to the contrasting interpretations of his theology, which reflect the different historical circumstances in which Thomists have worked. Aquinas himself emerges here as a contextualised thinker who can better be understood and appreciated as a great and innovative thinker of the thirteenth century. And Fergus has also taught us much about the richness of twentieth-century Catholic theology with its patterns of retrieval and development of church doctrine. What sets him apart is that he always writes in a style that is lucid, measured, irenic and wise. Perhaps that is why he has proved such an effective preacher over many years in both Oxford and Edinburgh."

In this Professor Fergusson drew attention to something of fundamental importance for Dominican engagement with theology. Yes, it is meant to involve rigorous scholarship and in-depth reflection, but this is directed ultimately towards enriching the Christian culture and the engagement of the People of God with the Gospel. In other words, it is about preaching in a way that empowers others to engage with the Christian message more deeply. Fr Fergus has indeed been a highly effective preacher from the pulpit in Oxford and Edinburgh; but through his writings and his presence within the academy, his preaching, in a broad sense of the word, has reached across the world.

After the formalities of the conferral, and fittingly for a celebration of a theologian noted for reminding us that we are social and embodied creatures, Dominican friars and members of the Edinburgh Divinity Faculty joined the Vice-Chancellor and Fr Fergus for a convivial lunch during which the good health and happiness of Fr Fergus were toasted.

– John O'Connor OP

Highlights from the conferral can be viewed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6j6Mi5LR-A>



An Unexpected Journey

Br Joseph Bailham (pictured above, first row, second from the right), now in his final year of studies in our Oxford Studium, recounts a year spent in Italy at the venerable Dominican priory in Bologna.

In 2021, the English Province will be celebrating the eighth centenary of the arrival of the first Dominican friars in England, arriving on 5 August 1221, bound for Oxford as instructed by the General Chapter of that same year in Bologna. The following day was the day on which our Holy Father, St Dominic, died. He died in Bologna having returned from a preaching mission. A close bond then exists between not only the founding of Dominican life in England and the conclusion of St Dominic's earthly life, but also between the two great medieval cities of Oxford and Bologna.

In the early summer of 2018, I was given

an opportunity to study in Italy, spending a year abroad, but I would have to go to Bologna rather than Rome, as I'd hoped, since there was no room in Rome. I was hesitant about going to Bologna because I did not know Italian, and not only was the Bologna Priory an all-Italian community, but, moreover, the studies would all be conducted in Italian whereas in Rome they would have been in English. It would be a lie to say that, given the options, that I was ecstatic and full of trust in the Lord that all would go perfectly well. In reality I struggled to see how this was going to end positively. After a blisteringly hot month in Milan attending a language school, and with enough Italian to say, 'I'm tired' or 'I like this', I decided to take the plunge and head to Bologna, despite serious concerns on my part just days before arriving.

Unsurprisingly the language front was not just difficult, but utterly exhausting. I was certainly grateful for the Italian tradition of the siesta, which I have

subsequently adopted wholeheartedly into my Dominican life! Despite the obvious difficulties with language, the fears I brought with me were soon laid to rest. It was a great example of how things seen from one's own perspective can be all too narrow. God has a bigger plan.

The Bologna convent, in comparison with Oxford, is massive. Long cloisters with high ceilings. A grand, though moderately baroque, basilica, contrasting with the plain simplicity of the relatively small Oxford chapel. Intricately ornate choir stalls to seat a couple of hundred friars, whereas Oxford can hold approximately fifty. The complex in Bologna is truly impressive.

The life was much more formal than I have been accustomed to in the English Province, but I enjoyed it very much. Like the priory in Oxford, Bologna is a busy place. However, probably due to its size, it had a much more contemplative atmosphere. I miss being able to walk up and

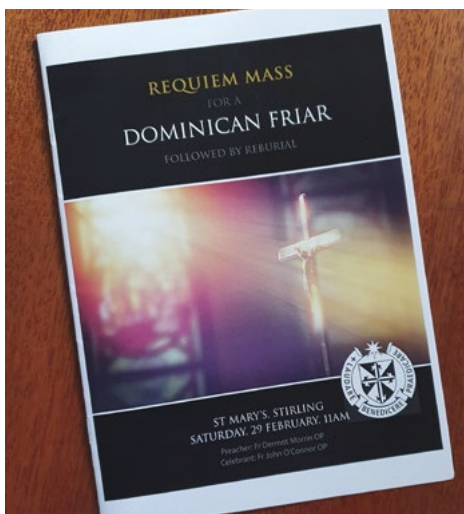
down the cloister, or around the large quadrangle, praying the rosary.

Buildings are indeed wonderful and impressive, but what makes a place a home or not are the people with whom you live. This turned out to be the hidden gem God had laid out before me. It was a great privilege and honour for me to share my year abroad with such a loving and warm group of student friars. We were approximately twenty-two in number, about double the size of the Oxford studentate. Their care, patience, humour, prayerfulness, and indeed the list goes on, were some of the greatest gifts to me that year, and for which I will be ever grateful to God.

As you can imagine, I was spoilt cuisine-wise during my year in Bologna. But as good as that was, one cannot compare it to the opportunity of living in the same complex where St Dominic's remains are entombed, and to walk daily past the part of the convent in which he died all those centuries ago. Each evening after Vespers the entire community would process to the Rosary Chapel singing the *Salve Regina* according to the Dominican tone, and then the hymn to St Dominic, the *O Lumen*, to the very chapel in which his remains are interred. Behind his elaborately designed tomb (parts of which the great Michelangelo contributed), St Dominic's skull is encased in an impressively grand reliquary, which is carried on his feast day. On finishing the *O Lumen* the cantor would intone 'Pray for us, Holy Father Dominic', and if one were at the head of the procession, one would be staring straight at the skull of St Dominic. It may all sound rather macabre, but I never ceased to be moved to be able to look at his skull, as a son of the English Province, living in Bologna eight hundred years on after the first friars were sent to England by the General Chapter of 1221 in which St Dominic himself participated.

The language became easier as time went on, but I was certainly no Dante by the end of my year there! Nonetheless what I had feared would be a catastrophe of a year, in the end, thanks to God's great goodness and no doubt St Dominic's prayers, turned out to be a year full of many blessings in ways I had never envisaged. *Grazie del mio cuore a tutta la comunità a Bologna per un anno indimenticabile!*

Medieval Dominican Friar Laid to Rest in Stirling



On 29th February, 5 Dominican friars gathered in Stirling for the reburial of a friar whose remains were discovered a few years ago in Stirling. Stirling Council named him 'the Goosecroft Friar' after the area on the edge of the medieval Stirling where the Priory was located and where he was buried.

This man died between 1280 and 1320, aged around 25–30 years. He therefore probably witnessed and lived through the Wars of Independence.

A full report with photos, archaeological information, and a reflection on the occasion, can be found in the News section of our Edinburgh priory's website, <https://scotland.op.org/the-goosecroft-friar/>.

Photography by Whyler Photos of Stirling www.whylerphotos.com

Book Reviews

In this issue we are pleased to review two new books written by former Masters of the Order of Preachers, including Fr Timothy Radcliffe of our own Province.

'Alive in God: A Christian Imagination' – Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP, reviewed by Br Jordan Scott OP

Imagine there's no heaven; it's easy if you try,' sang John Lennon in 1971. Well, replies Timothy Radcliffe on the first page of his *Alive in God: A Christian Imagination*, plenty of people these days disbelieve in heaven, God, and the rest, without any effort at all. Nevertheless, Timothy suggests, while Beatlemania is showing its age, the promise of Christianity remains as relevant as ever: 'Christian faith... is about choosing life, its core beliefs intersect with the hopes and dreams of everyone who wants to live rather than just survive.' The reality of life, its ups and downs, its successes and failures which are common to all of us, the simple messiness of life, demands what we might call an interpretative schema – though, if we were being more down to earth, what we would straightforwardly call an *imagination*.

We cannot get through life without forming a story, a narrative by which we explain what we see happening around us and to us, and, being all-too-human, our stories inevitably intertwine with those of others who are spinning a similar yarn. Timothy quickly brings up the problem of tribalism which he sees afflicting modern democracies today as much as they ever did the societies of the past. We live life according to how we imagine things to be, and our assorted stories often bring us into conflict with those who see things differently. The opportunity for dialogue can also present the danger of violence.

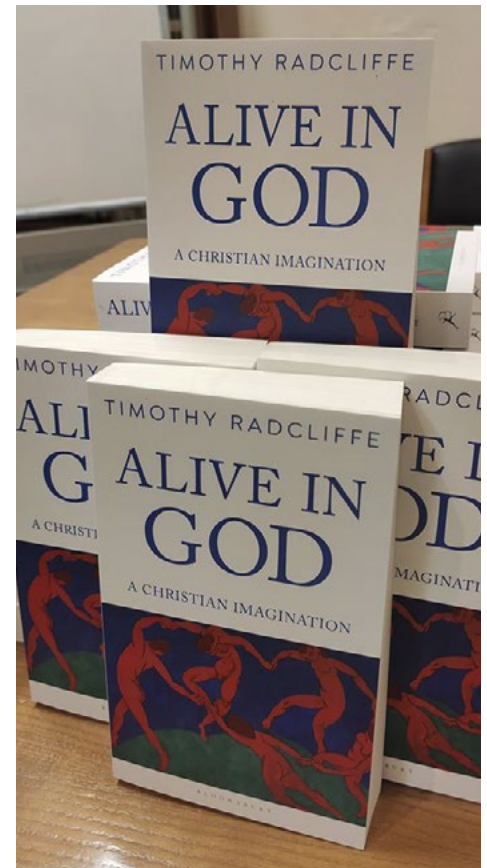
What we might want then is a way of looking at the world which nurtures our desire for purpose and identity but which also opens us up to the genuine familial bond which ties together everyone on our planet. We might be looking for a story which values self and neighbour.

The enduring relevance of Christianity, from the perspective of imagination, is not that it can be reduced to a static '...is true' slogan, but rather that it opens up a renewed perspective on life: thinking in theological terms, Timothy references Benedict XVI's understanding of living as a dialogue with God, and notes that we are even now 'at home in that eternal conversation'. Human Life, as complex and varied as it might be, is a place wherein God reaches and can be found, and this, Timothy suggests, is an adventure to enthral us.

Timothy's project in *Alive in God*, then, is to explore one way in which Christ's modern-day disciples might re-invigorate their outlook on life so as to tell out to others the joy and promise of living in the light of Christ. There are of course many ways in which one can be a Christian witness, a point the book celebrates, but nevertheless Timothy perceives that an obstacle to effective evangelisation can be a Christian imagination which fails to engage with this life as worthwhile: he reminds us 'one will only become excited by belief in the one who rose from the dead if one has some sense of what it means to be alive in the first place.'

One can sense Timothy's alertness to the contemporary concern with authenticity and it is crucial to note that this book is attempting to remind us of what is in the Gospel, rather than attempting to mould the gospel to a modern concern. Jesus said, 'I come that everyone should have life and have it to the full', which meant, as Timothy points out, a personal ministry of healing the sick, sitting with the outcast and reaching out to those who had least cause for hope.

Throughout his book Timothy brings



to our attention the work of poets and authors, from Seamus Heaney to Ted Hughes, philosophers and scientists like Aristotle and Oxford biochemist Robert Gilbert, and recounts the experiences of those who have spent their lives working to help others in charitable endeavours or taking a heroic stand to defend others, such as Suad Nofa, a schoolteacher who each day braved violence, and gunfire, to mount a one-woman protest against ISIS; and the nameless Muslim women on a bus in Kenya who, when jihadists boarded and demanded the Christians get out, wrapped their hijabs over their Christian sisters and defied the men: 'all must be shot or no one.' These witnesses, whose experiences testify to the goodness of living, are brought by Timothy into play to subvert 'the globalisation of superficiality': there is depth and meaning to human life, we need only look to see it.

Timothy's book is inspiring and contains within it a Christian vision for life that you will not merely enjoy sharing, but will also likely find that friends and colleagues will benefit from hearing.

Special Offer: 20% discount if you use the code DOMIN19.
<https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/alive-in-god-9781472970206/>

‘With Him: Listening to the Underside of the World’ – Fr Bruno Cadoré OP, reviewed by Br John Church OP

Bruno Cadoré described his role as Master of the Order as the ‘agent of Dominican communion’. This book, written in his final year, is perhaps best read as an extended meditation on that very theme: the fraternal life that defines the Dominican way. It is through this fraternal communion, Cadoré suggests, that we are best placed to listen, with Christ, to the ‘underside of the world’.

The book begins by covering Cadoré’s steps from his childhood home to uncovering the contemplative calling that drew him out of his career as a doctor into the Dominican Order. He describes the emergence of this contemplative desire as the moment when ‘that longing rooted in childhood finally caught up with me’. Drawing on the impact of a visit to Taizé, the taste for prayer remained formative during his years in medical school and on into clinical training. It was around this time that he first encountered the Order, attending vespers in a Dominican church in Strasbourg, and gradually came to know the community.

Soon he entered the noviciate, and speaks of joining the Order not as a momentary decision, rather to ‘check with Him what to make of what I believed to be my path’. Straight after this year of ‘wresting me out of myself to transplant me into the heart of Dominican life’, Cadoré was sent to Haiti to work as a doctor, in order to fulfil national service obligations deferred by his medical training. He speaks very movingly of his time there, and his encounters with a Church of ‘extreme authenticity and simplicity’. There was much disappointment when requests to return were denied by his religious superiors.

In this practice of obedience, as in descriptions of his subsequent elections as Prior Provincial and finally as Master, both of which came unexpectedly, one begins to see how Cadoré’s understanding of Dominican life came to be centred on fraternal communion. He describes fraternity and communal life as the ‘prop and the lever towards living out

the vow of obedience’. It is a vow which is a decision to ‘entrust one’s calling to others’. Much as Herbert McCabe OP describes the Dominican notion of obedience as ‘fraternal unity’ and ‘learning to live in community’, Cadoré humbly saw these duties he would not have chosen for himself as the means by which he was to live the fraternal life, connecting with brother as brother.

Fraternal communion, in Cadoré’s understanding, takes us to the very heart of the Dominican mission in the world: to create ‘a doorway into a living dialectic of truth’. As expressed by the motto ‘Veritas’, ‘Truth’, this has been the Dominican ambition from its inception, building bridges and ‘understanding the thinking of the other for what it is’. Cadoré gives as examples St Thomas’ work in the 13th century, facing the Aristotelian revolution in cosmology, and the courage of Marie-Joseph Lagrange in the early 20th century in the midst of a renaissance in biblical studies. He also considers the strength of some Liberation theologians, who overcame suspicions to understand the mystery of salvation, ‘taking into

account the plight of the world’s most forgotten people’.

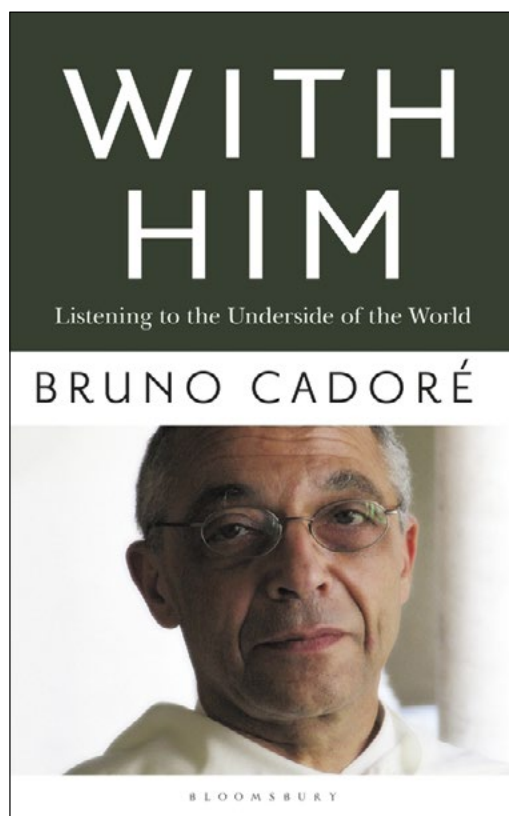
In this commitment to truth, dialogue and friendship maintain a primacy. We are reminded that friendship is the ‘first original guideline of the Order’, and it is also within this context that ‘listening to the underside’ takes place, seeking out the poor, the sinners, and befriending them, just as Jesus did. Cadoré sees in the Order’s greatest mistakes a failure to live this friendship: the Inquisition was a ‘tragic pitfall’, where the friars ‘imposed communion by dreadful campaigns of exclusion’. This was an abandonment of the Order’s true mission, which exists so as to be ‘the servant of God’s dialogue with His people’.

The book covers a great deal else, including rich accounts of what it means to be a preacher, and a reflection on the nuns as the contemplative heart of the Order. Yet Cadoré’s thoughts extend well beyond the world of the Dominicans, touching on many of the most urgent challenges facing our planet. He discusses a globalisation which has resulted in a loss of neighbourliness, where “antagonistic loyalties” make cultures incapable of living side by side, and the need for humanity’s common responsibility in listening to its underside.

In the epilogue, Cadoré draws his comments to a close by noting that every time he has mentioned a ‘Dominican’, it could easily be replaced by a ‘Christian’: the Dominican life is a commitment within a religious fraternity to ‘renewing the promises of baptism’. Its mission as servants of dialogue is universal. Written by one who sees his role as an ‘agent of Dominican communion’, *With Him* is an exploration of how the Dominican life is a blueprint for becoming an agent of universal communion.

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<https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/with-him-9781472970152/>



A Religious Community of Craftsmen

Jenny Kilbride explains the history of The Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic (1920–89), which was closely associated with the Dominican Order; and the Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft which safeguards its legacy.

For anyone who is interested in the 20th-century history of liturgical art in the UK, a visit to the Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft in Sussex should be a priority. In 2013 the Museum re-opened after a major refurbishment. It is housed in an award-winning building and was short-listed for the Art Fund Museum of the Year Award in 2014. The Museum holds an internationally important collection of work by the artists and craftspeople who lived in the area in the first half of the 20th century, and offers visitors the opportunity to see these special objects in the place where they were created.

Central to the collection is a large number of objects made by the members of the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic. The Guild was founded by Eric Gill, Hilary Pepler, Desmond Chute and Joseph Cribb in 1920, with the intention of creating a craft community which would be 'primarily a religious fraternity for those who made things with their hands'. Much influenced by the Dominicans and in particular by Fr Vincent McNabb, they converted to Catholicism and joined the Third Order. The ideals of Distributism also played an important role in the life of the community. In the early years a chapel, workshops and houses were built and many other craftsmen joined the original group. Eric Gill moved away in 1924 but the Guild continued to thrive despite his departure. The Guild finally closed in 1989, after which the land was sold and buildings demolished.

The Museum's current exhibition 'Disruption, Devotion and Distributism' celebrates the 100th anniversary of this fascinating experiment in art and living. While much attention has been paid to Eric Gill over the last few years, this exhibition by contrast focuses on other members of the Guild and the outstanding

work they produced in the sixty-five years following Gill's departure. For much of the 20th century, the workshops were famous for the fine craftsmanship of their church silver, wooden furnishings, altars, stations of the cross, vestments and innumerable gravestones and memorial tablets.

Lettering was at the heart of the Guild. Gill's cut letters have influenced generations of stone carvers and his type designs are still used today, Gill Sans being the best known. But the output of Hilary Pepler's St Dominic's Press was equally influential on later generations of printers. David Jones and Philip Hagreen produced a profusion of outstanding wood engravings to illustrate Mass sheets, ordination cards, music for psalms and canticles as well as books and pamphlets.

The Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic was founded with the intention of creating a craft community which would be 'primarily a religious fraternity for those who made things with their hands'.

The Museum holds the largest collection of St Dominic's Press work in the country and the 100-year-old Stanhope Press which Pepler bought in 1916 has pride of place in the Print Gallery.

Joseph Cribb joined Eric Gill as an apprentice in 1906 and, on Gill's departure, took over the workshop. On his death in 1967, his assistants Noel Knapp-Tabernor and Kenneth Eager took over in their turn. Visit any churchyard in the South-East and you are almost sure to find a gravestone or tablet distinguished by the clarity of its letterforms and the quality of the stone cutting. The chances are that it will have been carved by Joseph Cribb or one of his assistants.

The carpenters' shop was established in 1922 by George Maxwell who came to Ditchling at the suggestion of Fr McNabb. As well as making furniture and fittings for churches across the country, he is now mainly known for the weaving equipment

he made. His looms are still sought after by weavers today.

The weaving workshop was established by my father Valentine KilBride in 1924. Over the following 55 years he built up a business specialising in silk hand weaving and church vestment making. His interest was in reviving traditional, Gothic, plain silk-woven vestments cut in a conical or bell shape. I joined him in 1972 and, after his death in 1981, continued for a further 7 years until the Guild closed in 1989.

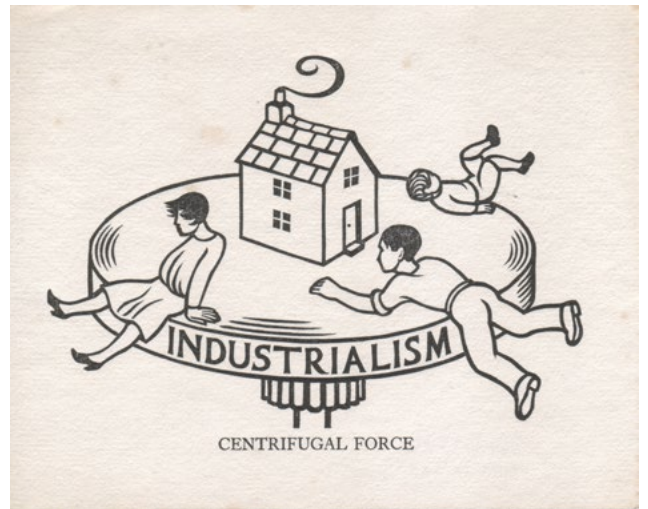
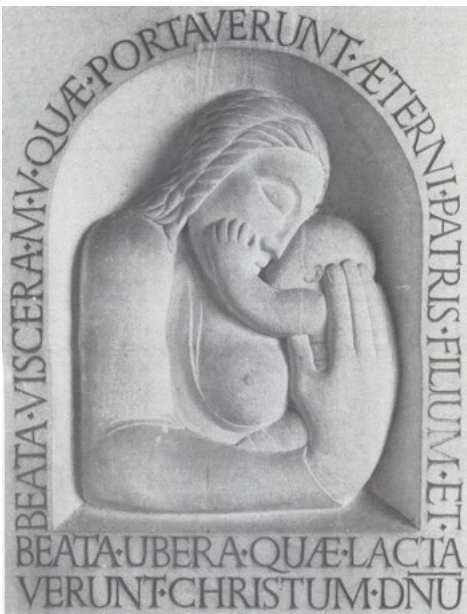
Another arrival in 1924 was Philip Hagreen whose wood-engravings for the St Dominic's Press have already been mentioned. His skills as a letterer were evident in his many bookplate designs and engravings on Pruden silver vessels. His workshop was taken over in 1951 by Edgar Holloway who worked as a designer and cartographer for many major publishing houses, continuing the tradition of fine clear hand-drawn lettering established by Gill and Hagreen. In later years his etchings and watercolours brought him many admirers.

The silver- and goldsmith, Dunstan Pruden, joined the Guild in 1932. Over the years he fulfilled hundreds of commissions for ecclesiastical metalwork ranging from chalices and candlesticks to crucifixes and croziers. A highpoint of his career was the gold chalice he made for the Metropolitan Cathedral in Liverpool in 1959.

The last person to join the Guild was another member of the KilBride family, Ewan Clayton, whose work as a calligrapher and his extensive teaching and writing on the subject have brought him worldwide fame.

Although the current exhibition closes on 19th April 2020, there are always rotating displays of work from the permanent collection on show and an ongoing programme of events and workshops that reflect the main themes of the collection.

Further information about the Guild can be found on the Museum website www.ditchlingmuseumartcraft.org.uk



Remembering Fr David Sanders OP

Of your charity, please pray for the soul of our brother, David Sanders OP, a member of our Priory in Oxford, who departed this life on 30 March 2020, in the eighty-first year of his age, the fifty-third year of his Religious Profession, and the forty-eighth year of his priesthood. *Requiescat in pace*. Below, we reprint a 2015 interview with him by Matthew Jarvis OP, from our studentate blog, [Godzdogz](#).

As I settle into the comfy chair in the Student Master's bedroom, with the buses rumbling outside along St Giles, it occurs to me that for the next half hour the roles will be reversed: I will be the one asking him about how he's getting on in the Dominican life.

David Christopher Sanders grew up in a North London parish run by Olivetan Benedictine monks. 'I think my vocation, without a doubt, came from the liturgy, a very strong sense of the presence of God ... and a call'. Religious life seemed normal; the Olivetans were 'happy, well-adjusted religious and people were attracted – a bit like here at Blackfriars – to the liveliness, the preaching, the good liturgy of the parish'. Fr David has always been interested in Scripture, experiencing 'the pull of the Gospel'.

But the young David didn't want to enter religious life too early. Studying English at King's College London was 'alright', though he got 'quite involved' in the Catholic Chaplaincy and made some lifelong friends. He then went to Tanganyika for three years, teaching in a school run by German Benedictine missionaries ('a very efficient mission, almost overwhelmed the local population'), and was there during the Zanzibar revolution in 1964 which led to the formation of the united Tanzania.

The early-1960s were important for the Church, too. 'It was a very exciting time to be a young Catholic, because of all the new movements which would come to a climax at Vatican 2.' David had been present at Pius XII's final public audience at Castelgandolfo and keenly followed the news of Roncalli's election as John



XXIII, a man who had close Olivetan connections.

Why did David join the Dominicans, then, instead of the Benedictines? He was drawn to a more itinerant vocation, he explains, and 'a taste for adventure' runs in his family (his brother was then serving as an army officer in the Far East). The Dominicans seemed to be 'perhaps the only Order I could survive in, flexible...' Then he adds: 'and I could get a good education.' So it was also the intellectual side, knowing about Dominicans such as Herbert McCabe and Anthony Ross, and attending Laurence Bright's extracur-



Ordination day, 2 October 1971 at Blackfriars, Oxford

ricular theology lectures for Catholics at King's. He felt the Dominicans were the only ones who could stand up intellectually to the agnostic academics in the university.

It was exactly fifty years ago, as Vatican

II was drawing to a close, that David joined the Order, in a novitiate of twelve, of whom three others are still in the Order (Timothy Radcliffe, Simon Tugwell, and Tom Kearns). It was a period of crisis in religious life, and I ask about the six novice masters they had in the space of one year. 'There were only three! Timothy says six, but I think he might have been influenced by the beer that was made in the novitiate at Woodchester.' As if to put the strength of the drink beyond doubt, he adds: 'I hadn't worn glasses until I drank that beer!' But he concedes even three novice masters is a bit much. 'It really was an extraordinary crisis. Everything was falling apart in many ways.'

Philosophical and theological studies followed at Hawkesyard then Oxford. Brother David matriculated at Trinity College for a year's diploma in Scripture, then spent a year in Paris, to improve his French, complete his licentiate and enjoy a different experience. The great priory of St Jacques then housed a hundred friars, including Chenu, Congar and Pohier. That was in 1973, a year still affected by the '68 revolution, but we don't dwell on the details of how he ran into a supermarket and bought a small chair to put in his rather austere cell and to avoid the tear gas from a riot outside...

On 2 October 1971, at Blackfriars, Oxford, Fr David was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Christopher Butler, the former Abbot of Downside who had

a major influence at Vatican II. Timothy Radcliffe was ordained in the same Mass.

What are the highlights of Fr David's priestly ministry? He enjoyed teaching at the United Theological College of the West Indies in Jamaica for nine years and the pastoral challenges of working on urban and rural parishes. The life of a missionary has never quite left him; he still manages St Martin's Mission, making appeals in parishes throughout England to raise funds for our Caribbean mission. Teaching at Cambridge was also a 'blessing': he ran the Bible Study group at the Fisher House chaplaincy for fifteen years and gave Scripture 'supervisions' for several colleges. It was striking how students gave very different responses to Scripture, and thus 'how much one learned oneself'.

What about his time as an editor? He produced a monthly issue of *Priests and People* for thirteen years, and had close links with *The Tablet*. 'You had to be very open to what was going on, and try to respond to what were the felt needs in the Church and society at the time.' He was also glad to have good writers, sensitive to theology and history, and drawing on a wide culture: Eamon Duffy, Nicholas Lash, Luke Timothy Johnson, among others. From such articles came two popular books: *Faith of Our Fathers* by Duffy and *Living the Gospel* by Johnson. For Fr David, they exemplify how 'to preach the Gospel in different situations without feeling inhibited'.

How has Fr David navigated the Dominican diversity of apostolates? 'I've been very lucky. I think I thrive on a combination of the academic and the pastoral.'

He acknowledges he has been 'blessed' in Jamaica and England to do both simultaneously, 'and therefore happy'.

So we turn to community life, which underpins all the external activity. 'If you've got a good community, it's a very satisfying way of life.' At Cambridge, Fr David was prior of the 'mixed community' of friars and lay students, 'where everyone shared in the liturgy and the cooking... that was a great experience. We had endless dramas... but we survived!' Others call it the 'mixed-up community', and Fr David admits it was an 'unusual' setup, though a sense of nostalgia remains.

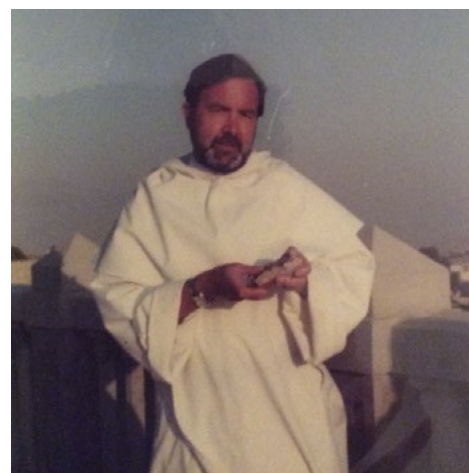
There have always been young people and students around Fr David, and he gets on well with young and old alike. 'It's only the difficult people you don't like – because they're difficult!' He pauses for a moment, and concludes that co-operative is the operative word. I suppose that's his way of highlighting our vow of obedience.

There has been no lack of work either: Fr David was bursar in Cambridge, then prior for six years, and afterwards in Oxford 'endlessly student master' (1999–2004, then 2011–present). Fr David has formed more than one generation of Dominican friars, including over half the present Oxford community. He knows that a good community can lighten the burdens of one's own work. Community meetings are very important, albeit a 'great penance', since good government matters: 'things go wrong if the Constitutions are neglected'. Then, to avoid accusations of legalism, he quickly adds, 'not in a wooden way'.

We return to liturgy and prayer, the

driving force of his vocation. Private prayer is 'absolutely essential', and the Holy Spirit has answered many prayers. But prayer also manifests itself in preaching; the Dominican life encourages 'a combination of preaching and prayer as a personal ascesis'. And preaching is not only about reaching others but also allowing the Gospel to speak to oneself: 'The challenge of preaching is a way of growing', that is, 'to make sense of the Gospel in the world we live in'.

What, finally, does our oldest member of the community think about the future? The would-be *Soixante-Huitard* avers that historical context is important: religious life 'reflects very much what's in the air in society'. He is 'extremely hopeful' about the future and is pleased with his Dominican students: 'they combine a seriousness about study with a desire to evangelise. It does offer a source of hope when you see a community which is flourishing, because it's inspired by the Gospel.'



Fr David in Jerusalem

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Version: LIT-2

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For links to live broadcasts of Mass every day from our priories, please visit english.op.org and click on the 'Livestream' button in the main menu.

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