

THE DOMINICANS

Winter 2023/24

The Magazine of the Dominican Friars in England & Scotland



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Following St Dominic's Way of Peace

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Sion, 'Your God reigns'. (Is 52:7)

These words of the prophet Isaiah came to mind as I looked at the new statue of St Dominic in Edinburgh, and mused that, although this great itinerant preacher had traversed the length and breadth of Europe several times, going from Spain to Sweden to Italy and France to preach the good news of salvation, he never made it quite as far north as Scotland – not in his lifetime, anyway. However, St Dominic is made present again through the works and the words of his followers. As preachers of the Gospel, the Dominican Family follows in the footsteps of St Dominic whenever we 'publish peace... good news of happiness [and] salvation' through Jesus Christ. For this reason, the Order marks a 'Dominican Month of Peace' every December when we await the coming of the Prince of Peace. It highlights a different region of the world in which the Dominican Family is active, making St Dominic, the preacher of grace and divine peace present in our time, even to the ends of the world, whether in Scotland or in the Amazon – which is this year's focus for the Month. We invite you to pray for our mission in these areas and, if you can, to help fund the Order's work in building up peace in practical ways.



Through this statue, in a very concrete way, St Dominic has made it to Edinburgh, the 'Athens of the North'. Standing at an entrance of the university chaplaincy, as in another Areopagus, his stance is one of invitation: we are being called to enter and gather as friends around him; we are invited into dialogue and learning; and as he faces the tabernacle, so he is leading us to God, in whom alone the human heart finds true peace and rest. Thus we Dominicans today live out in diverse ways the charism of St Dominic who was said to be either 'speaking to God or about God'. In this edition you will discover our engagement with the world through beauty and music, as well as educational apostolates.

It also caught my attention that St Dominic is depicted with his shoes on. Br John of Spain, who knew him personally, reported that 'When [St Dominic] was traveling from one land to another,

he took his shoes off, and when he arrived anywhere he put them on again, and he did this in all the towns and villages he came to.' So, here is Dominic in his urban mode, ready for preaching, ready to listen to the questions and conversations of the town, ready to engage in the mission of the local Dominican community.

By comparison, a new mosaic of St Dominic installed in Chichester Cathedral in 2022 shows him barefoot with a walking staff. This is St Dominic in travelling mode, the itinerant preacher whose 'beautiful feet' are bared for all to see. Except that the preacher's feet would have been bloodied by stones and brambles, which numerous stories say that St Dominic accepted as penance and preparation for the work of preaching. His sufferings on the road trained him to be patient in hardship and cheerful in difficulty which, as the Dominican nun Cecilia Cesarini said, 'drew everyone to revere and love him'. Pilgrimages such as the one featured in this edition, which took our pilgrims up a high mountain in the footsteps of another cheerful and loveable lay Dominican, Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, are thus a vivid way of following in St Dominic's footsteps, of learning to be agents of peace. In times such as ours, we are in great need of peacemakers, of men and women inspired by St Dominic who will follow his way of peace.

Fraternally,

– Fr Lawrence Lew OP, Editor

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Requiescant in Pace

We remember with affection and gratitude all the recently departed, including the following who made gifts to the Friars in their Wills.

- **Maureen Heuston** (St Dominic's, London)
- **Mary Gibbons** (Blackfriars Priory, Oxford)
- **Philomena Little** (Studium / Library, Oxford)

May they and all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Since 1221, gifts made in Wills have always played a vital part in sustaining the mission of the friars in Britain.

If you are considering leaving such a gift in your Will, please see the back page of this magazine or visit www.english.op.org/legacies



A New Statue of St Dominic

Kenny Hunter explains the process of creating a new sculpture for the garden of the Chapel of St Albert the Great, Edinburgh, shown on the cover of this issue.

On receiving the commission to create a statue of Saint Dominic, I knew that I would have to open up and learn to understand a life different to my own, a life of religious devotion. This process was supported by invitations to attending various meetings and social occasions at St Albert's. During these events I was able to observe how a community of faith supports each other and how their collective identity as Dominicans is underpinned by prayer, study, community and service. I wanted to incorporate these direct and lived experiences into the making of the statue along with the historical writings that testify to the life and teachings of Dominic de Guzman born at the end of the 12th century.

Considering both of these aspects, I felt that Dominic's face should communicate both resilience and compassion. Alongside the turbulent time of war that he lived in and what he ultimately achieved by setting up the Order, he must have had a force of will and yet also a sensitivity to the human condition. However, this driven man would live a short life as, according to Guiraud, he died at the age of fifty-one 'exhausted with the austerities and labours of his career'.

The pose of the statue further develops his duality, one arm holds the Gospel of St Matthew, suggesting study and contemplation, while the other gestures to preaching and service to the community. This asymmetry of the head and arms is contrasted by a symmetrical core to the body. His weight is evenly distributed on both feet, giving him the appearance of someone who is balanced and sure of his own foundations.

The clothing or habit of the Dominican Order also offered to me a great deal of scope to express the formal qualities of sculpture, such as mass, form, gravity, edge, light, and shadow.

During the making process, I decided

that the texture of the parallel grooves made by my tools on the developing clay figure should remain on the finished sculpture. I believe these marks animate and energise the inner life of the figure. Despite his solid and static pose, they also communicate the appearance of a hand-woven 12th-century textile. Beyond this, these types of physical marks are also echoed on the chapel of St Albert itself, through both the comb chisel marks present on the stone work, and in the linear wooden structure of the ceiling.



Stuart Allan's stunning and intimate chapel design made a significant impact on my thinking and response to this commission. While I knew that I had to bring a new and distinct element into the garden of St Albert's, there also had to be a meaningful and settled communication between both building and statue. The chapel has a rectangular footprint, whereas the statue has a circular one. As you enter through the gate, both building and statue are in view; these two different outlines are evident, yet they relate to each other through their shared colour palettes, materiality and the aforementioned textural marks – even St Dominic's tree-like presence seems to speak to the elegant corten steel roof supports that are a key element to the chapel's visual language.

They are also connected by his gaze,

which is directed not out into the world but back toward the chapel and the congregation, setting up a looping energy between prayer inside and service outside: this interdependent practice is at the core of the Dominican life.

There is more to witness here at St Albert's than the integration of a new statue into its surroundings. There has also been the creation of an enhanced social space for the congregation, which has improved the flow of people through the space while enjoying the benefits of sculpture in the round. This has been achieved through the collaborative efforts of Fr Dermot Morrin, Architect Stuart Allan, Powderhall Bronze Foundry and G. Brown Stonemason, and myself.

A final word on the importance of being open to dialogue in the development of new works of art and not making the studio a fortress. Fr Dermot visited my studio one Saturday to view the figure of Dominic in clay, very near the end of the modelling stage. It was a tense moment in a way, as I had been left alone to develop the work up to this point. Previously I had stated my reservations about the haircut known as the 'tonsure', as I felt that, while it would be the historically appropriate style for a 12th-century monk, it could potentially make him unrelatable to a contemporary audience. We reflected on the painted portrait of a Dominican that hangs above the fireplace in the brothers' sitting room, and how his slightly scruffy and grown-out tonsure might be a good fit for the driven Dominic. After half an hour or so of clay modelling, the new haircut was beginning to emerge and look like part of the sculpture and, I had to admit, also part of his character too. The resulting circular band of hair around Dominic's head then informed the circular base that he stands on, which then informed the paving design, which finally informed the curved seating. These concentric circles build outward, like Dominic's legacy, with him at the core strengthened by time and the community that strives to follow his example.

Visit St Albert's at scotland.op.org



Spode Music Week at 70!

It all began 70 years ago with the extraordinary vision of Fr Conrad Pepler OP. As warden of Spode House, the Dominican retreat centre in Staffordshire, Fr Conrad saw a need for a Catholic residential Music Week, as a place for thinking through music and liturgy, a decade before the Second Vatican Council. The Dominican concern for an educated laity was manifest in lectures, alongside practical Catholic musicianship in its proper liturgical context. An early fruit of the week was a setting of Compline by the composer Anthony Milner, brother of Fr Austin (Paulinus), and first Director of the Week.

It was Fr Austin who reconnected the Dominicans with Spode after a long absence. With the closure of Spode House in 1987, the Music Week had to find a new home. Only two residential courses survived Spode House, the other being Family Week which settled in Crich (Derbyshire). Over the years Music Week has gone from place to place, generating a nostalgic frisson for the oldies who knew them all – Hengrave Hall (Suffolk) for 17 years, then shorter stays at Stonyhurst College, Beechwood School (Kent), St Edmund's in Canterbury, Abberley Hall (Worcestershire), Mount St Mary's (Derbyshire) – before arriving in 2023 at our latest venue: Nettlecombe Court in Somerset.

We hope Nettlecombe will be our home for years to come, as it's not easy to find a venue to meet the unique needs of Spode: a chapel, concert hall, practice rooms,

accommodation for 100 or so people (a mix of families, couples, singles), not forgetting the bar, and permission to make music late at night! The adults may drink and smoke to relax, yet in a family-friendly atmosphere where toddlers can run free. Nettlecombe fits the bill and even boasts a splendid medieval church (now Anglican). The house itself is a warren of corridors in which you half expect to find a wardrobe into Narnia, and the church green is perfect for afternoon cricket. There's also a nice piece of Catholic history: the Nettlecombe Chalice and Paten are the oldest known hallmarked silver church plate in England, dating from the marriage of John Trevelyan and Elizabeth Whalesborough in 1452. The pieces were hidden under floorboards during the Civil War, rediscovered in the 18th century, and are now held at the V&A Museum in London.

I was telling you about Fr Austin Milner. The Music Week has had several chaplains over the years, but no Dominicans since Spode House closed. Towards the end of his life, Fr Austin was invited to give a Spode lecture about Fr Conrad Pepler. He brought along Robert Verrill, then a student brother and trumpeter, who naturally earned the nickname Brother Trumpet! The Chaplain at the time was Fr Philip Whitmore (Westminster diocese) but he was subsequently made Rector of the Venerable English College in Rome. Fr Robert (as he now was) had become assistant chaplain and I followed on when I was ordained in 2016 (being dubbed Fr

Cricket after a fine catch) serving alongside Fr Benedict Jonak, then Fr Dominic White. As Dominicans, it is especially helpful to work as a pair of chaplains. Fr Dominic served as sole chaplain over the difficult years of the pandemic, and in this 70th year I joined him again as co-chaplain.

So, what really happens at Spode? The Week is built around a regular timetable: daily Mass and Compline are the two main liturgical events, with music prepared in advance. The music is a healthy mix of old and new: Gregorian chant, Palestrina, Robert Sherlaw Johnson's *Walsingham Mass* and Fr Dominic White's *Missa Maris* all featured this year. Fr Conrad used to say that the health of Music Week could be judged by attendance at daily Mass. Not all participants are Catholic – we make an effort to be welcoming to all – but a good number (Catholic or otherwise) do attend the daily Mass and appreciate not only the music but the preaching and the prayerful context for the Sacrament. Lauds and Vespers are recited quietly with the keen ones; some enjoy the week as a kind of retreat. As chaplains we also want to reach out to people who struggle with questions of faith: Q&A sessions get a good turnout and a respectful discussion – Dominican preaching at its most effective, I think. This year I also ran a prayer session for the children in which I narrated *The Selfish Giant*, an old favourite of mine, and taught them the basics of the Rosary.

There is still a series of morning lectures

with invited speakers. This year's topics included the Kodaly approach to training children in music; liturgical organ music in the Spanish Netherlands; and some remarkable tales about 'Cellos lost and found' by Kate Kennedy of Oxford University, which have since been broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Rehearsals happen throughout the rest of the day for the wide variety of groups: Choir, Junior Choir, Orchestra, Children's Orchestra, String Orchestra, and other chamber groups. Notice the special place given to the children. Spode has always nurtured families and the musical capacities of children. Indeed, the week's membership has a backbone of some very large musical clans across the generations, such as the Sherlaw Johnsons, the Whites, and the Bevans, among others. Jeremy White is a long-serving Chair for the week, and has previously helped our Oxford community with singing lessons. The Bevans have garnered widespread attention with the Bevan Family Consort, like new Von Trapps! It was wonderful this year to see how a new generation of toddlers has arisen, boding well for the future of the week.

Newcomers may reasonably feel awed by the sheer quality and exuberance of the week, but find they are welcomed with open arms. You may be singing alongside



professionals, but also other amateurs or beginners like yourself, and it's so relaxed that you quickly feel at home – and just grateful to be part of such a marvellous musical world. For instance, each year we do a 'scratch work': this year it was *Dixit Dominus* by Handel that we performed one night without any practice! I just listened to the good singers next to me and

followed along with newcomer Andre, a student and organist from Edinburgh, who got a Spode bursary.

The week finds its climax in the Course Concert on Saturday, the fruit of all those rehearsals, and the Course Mass on Sunday with a large musical setting (Haydn's *Paukenmesse* this year). I particularly enjoyed the concert performance of Puccini's *La Bohème*, Act 2, complete with costumes and impressive solos from young and rising stars. The Sunday night hosts a final concert reserved for individual and group contributions, ranging from Classical arias to the Spode Hot Club jazz numbers to some silly comedy sketches and everything in between.

Spode Music Week is a unique and often sublime combination of music, liturgy, close friendships, and family fun. Not forgetting the cricket. I invite you to join us next year!

– **Fr Matthew Jarvis OP**

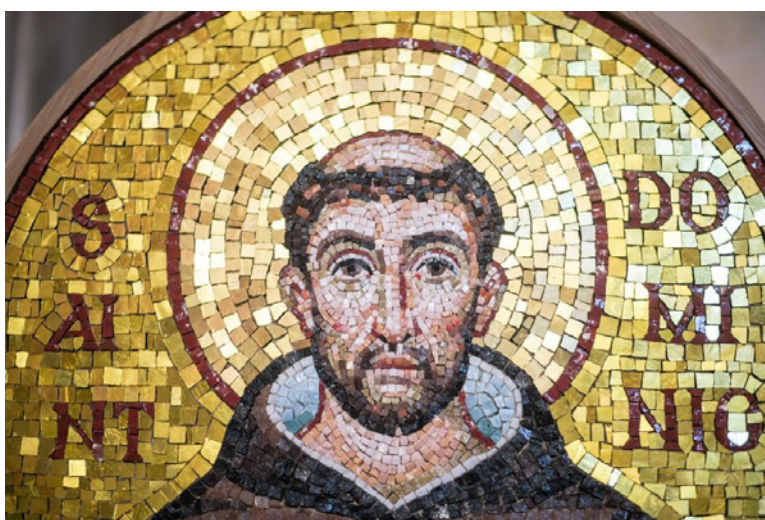
Spode Music Week will run
12–19 August 2024.
Details to follow on
www.spodemusicweek.co.uk

Mosaic of St Dominic in Chichester Cathedral

A new mosaic of St Dominic was unveiled in Chichester Cathedral on 8 August 2022, the Feast Day of Saint Dominic, with Br Bede Mullens OP as guest preacher. Iconographer David Clayton wrote on the New Liturgical Movement blog (10 October 2023):

[The mosaic] was commissioned by the Anglican Bishop of Chichester, Right Reverend

Dr Martin Warner, and done by artist James Blackstone over the course of a three-month residency at the cathedral, during which he worked alongside fellow liturgical artist Martin Earle within a



custom-built studio. The project was developed with another celebrated liturgical artist, Aidan Hart. Aidan, Martin and Jim who are Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican respectively, have

recently established a new studio and liturgical art school – The Chichester Workshop for Liturgical Arts – under the patronage of Bishop Warner.

St Richard of Chichester, bishop of that see from 1244–53, was prepared for the priesthood by the Dominican Order in Orléans, and St Dominic's apostolic spirituality informed his ministry across his diocese.

Read more about the commission on the cathedral website www.chichestercathedral.org.uk/news/mosaic-saint-dominic-unveiled-and-blessed-chichester-cathedral.



A Treasure of Devotion

The sad recent closure of the Dominican sisters' convent at Stone led to a number of items from their patrimony being passed to our priory in London, including a set of beautiful hand-embroidered Rosary banners. In this homily for the Feast of the Holy Rosary, Fr Martin Ganeri OP, Prior Provincial (pictured), reflected on the symbolism of these banners and the importance of the Rosary to the Order.

Today, then, we come together as a Dominican family and as the parish of this church, to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary – to give thanks for the Rosary, for the power of this form of devotion, and for the importance it has in our Dominican lives and in the lives of those who are associated with the Order.

Now we celebrate in particular the life of our Dominican sisters of the English Congregation of St Catherine of Siena, who continue their work especially in Cambridge and in Stroud, in teaching, in pastoral work and in supporting the care of the most vulnerable.

And, as you can see, we are delighted to be able to have on display the Rosary banners which the sisters of this congregation made by hand to represent all fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, and which the sisters have given to this priory and church, so that they can continue to be a focus for devotion in this Shrine.

These banners were the product of an

immense amount of work, a testimony both to the devotion of the sisters to the Rosary, and to their skill and dedication – as they produced them all in their own workshop in Stone.

It is interesting and important to note that these banners were the fruit of about twenty years of work in the 19th century – begun at the beginning of the 1860s and then completed by 1880 – a period that marked both the completion of the buildings of the convent at Stone and of this church here in London. And from the time of their production they were part of the liturgies and processions at Stone, just as now and for the years to come they will continue to be part of the liturgies and processions here.

So, today we give thanks for this gift and for all that these banners have meant and continue to mean for the sisters of the Congregation – as we give thanks for the sisters themselves and for their continuing work. We give thanks for all the sisters who lived and worked at Stone and for the history we have together, as brothers and sisters united in the mission of the Order, a history so closely connected, a close connection that these banners symbolise and continue to represent, as we go on with our work.

As we look at these banners and remember their production and the place they have had in the devotional life of the Congregation of St Catherine, we are also struck so much by how well they manifest what the Rosary itself means for us Dominicans, and how it manifests the

Dominican charism itself.

These banners were the fruit of a profound and sustained contemplation on the part of the sisters who made them. Sisters who contemplated the Gospel, the mysteries of the life of Christ and Our Lady and of the Church, who discerned the truth contained in them, and who then strove to live out lives in which what they contemplated was handed to others, whether it be in teaching of or in care for those they encountered. These banners breath forth that deep contemplation of the Gospel and that commitment to the active preaching and realisation of the Gospel in the world.

These banners are, then, the symbol of the active contemplation that has been at the heart of the work of the Congregation of St Catherine of Siena.

And this is a very Dominican thing and captures both the Dominican charism and why the Rosary is important in it.

In the Gospel, in the Annunciation, the first mystery of the Rosary, Our Lady utters gives her consent to what Gabriel has revealed:

‘Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’

Our Lady has contemplated the words spoken to her – the mystery revealed to her – and now she responds by a firm commitment of her will to what has been revealed and to what it demands of her, of what it demands of her now to do.

As the Laws and Constitutions of the Order states, Our Lady, in this way, serves as a model for the life of those in



the Order, something that grounds why the Rosary as a devotion is important to us. As the Laws and Constitutions state:

The brothers ought to cherish the Order's traditional devotion [the Rosary] to the Virgin Mother of God, the Queen of the Apostles. She is an example of meditation on the words of Christ, and of acceptance of one's mission. (LCO 67§II)

A model, that is, of the active contemplation that we cherish as at the heart of our Dominican charism, at the heart of how we understand our lives and mission.

To contemplate and to hand over to others the things we have contemplated. The motto that has been much cherished in our Order. As St Thomas puts it: 'that form of active life in which someone, by preaching and teaching, delivers to others the fruits of their contemplation' (*Summa Theologiae*, III, Q. 40, A. 1, Ad 2).

The Rosary, as a devotion, always calls us to contemplation, as it draws us each time to consider again the mysteries of the life of Christ and of Our Lady and of the Church, as we recall what those mysteries are, as we read again the Scriptures that recount them, as we come into contact with the reality of Christ, of Our Lady and of the Church, through the praying of this devotion.

And, yet, the power of the Rosary is also an active one:

First, in structuring our own lives in conformity with Christ, in enabling us to bring the joys and sorrows of our lives to Christ and find their resolution and transformation. The Rosary both echoes and shapes the fundamental rhythm of our human lives. When St John Paul II called the Church back to a renewed practice of

the Rosary, in 2002, he said that the mysteries of the Rosary "mark the rhythm of human life", bringing it into harmony with the "rhythm" of God's own life, in the joyful communion of the Holy Trinity, our life's destiny and deepest longing.' (St John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (2002), para.25)

And, second, the Rosary serves to ground our witness to the Gospel in the world. As St John Paul II again teaches us:

The Rosary of the Virgin Mary... remains, at the dawn of this third millennium, a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness. It blends easily into the spiritual journey of the Christian life, which, after two thousand years, has lost none of the freshness of its beginnings and feels drawn by the Spirit of God to 'set out into the deep' (*duc in altum!*) in order once more to proclaim, and even cry out, before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour, 'the way, and the truth and the life' (Jn 14:6), 'the goal of human history and the point on which the desires of history and civilisation turn'. (*ibid.*, para.1)

As the sisters spent so many hours of their time producing these Rosary banners, their lives were certainly structured in a very concrete and immediate way by their devotion to the Rosary, in the realisation of these depictions of the Rosary mysteries

– structured a stitch at a time for the weeks and months it took them to produce these works of devotion and of art.

But their work remained a symbol of the whole of the way in which the life of the sisters who made them and of all the others within whom they lived, were structured around realising in active mission what they had discerned in devout contemplation.

So, as we celebrate the Rosary today, giving a new home and a renewed place to these beautiful Rosary banners, let us give thanks for the sisters who produced them, pray that the present and future sisters of this Congregation may be strengthened in their mission to continue to carry out their work of active contemplation in the world.

And let us give thanks for the Rosary as a gift to us, all of us members of the Dominican family and of the congregation here, and those who come here to the Shrine.

May the Rosary continue to ground our contemplation of and witness to the mysteries of the Gospel.

Visit the Rosary Shrine at www.rosaryshrine.co.uk





Frassati Pilgrimage with the Dominicans

As a young man with a passion both for the outdoors and for living out my faith, Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati has been a great inspiration for me. When I heard about this Pilgrimage to northern Italy following in his footsteps, I immediately signed up. The combination of visiting the sites where he lived and hiking in the mountains, all with the wonderful Dominicans, sounded like the perfect holiday, but I can honestly say it exceeded all my expectations.

We started our tour in Turin, a beautiful city where Pier Giorgio spent much of his time, studying, going to Mass, organising youth events and visiting the poor whom he loved so much.

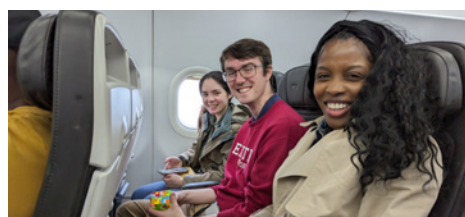
‘All around the sick and all around the poor I see a special light which we do not have.’

We visited several beautiful churches in Turin, churches Pier Giorgio would have cycled past, stopping to take off his hat and cross himself. Fr Joseph celebrated Mass in Turin Cathedral, home to the famous shroud of Turin and Pier Giorgio’s body. The next day we had Mass in La Crocetta where Pier Giorgio’s baptism and funeral took place, and where he spent many hours in adoration. We then passed his house and different streets and alleys he would have sprinted down clutching a rosary in one hand, and food or medicine for the poor in the other.

After a blessed time in Turin, we headed up into the mountains, the real home of Pier Giorgio.

‘Every day that passes, I fall more desperately in love with the mountains... I am ever more determined to climb the mountains, to scale the mighty peaks, to feel that pure joy which can only be felt in the mountains.’

Our time in the mountains was spent at the Sanctuary of Oropa, situated in the foothills of the Italian Alps. Perhaps one



of the most beautiful places I have been to, the sanctuary contains two stunning basilicas and is dedicated to the Black Madonna, a wooden statue of Our Lady carved by St Luke. Pier Giorgio was known to visit the sanctuary regularly to pray for Our Lady’s protection before heading off on one of his many treks into the mountains. Pier Giorgio would regularly lead groups of young people there and even organise for Mass to be said on the top of the mountain peaks. We spent several glorious days here, hiking in the mountains, admiring the breathtaking views, and enjoying the beautiful

architecture and exquisite local cuisine.

On our last day, we left the mountains and made for the Frassati house in Pollone, where Pier Giorgio loved to spend his time: he would often pace up and down the large garden reciting Dante, singing loudly or collecting seeds to make a rosary. We were greeted there by Pier Giorgio’s niece, Signora Wanda Gawronska, who showed us around the house, where we saw Pier Giorgio’s ice pick, skis, pipe, and a beautiful ivory cross which he gave to his sister as a wedding present. We ended with Mass out in the garden (under a giant redwood that he used to climb), before heading home, tired but extremely grateful.

Fr Joseph, along with his two faithful companions, Br Jerome and Br Augustine, led the whole pilgrimage (which was often more like a retreat) very well, with the incredible blessing of having Lauds, Vespers and Mass every day. It was an amazing and blessed experience that gave me more insight into Pier Giorgio’s life and inspired me to live out my faith with more zeal, to put God first and to do everything with cheerfulness and charity.

‘If you have God at the center of all your action, then you will reach the goal.’

Bl Pier Giorgio Frassati, pray for us. Verso l’alto!

– Joseph Witchalls



Fr Timothy Radcliffe is pictured with two other Masters of the Order of Preachers: the current Master, Gerard Timoner III, and the former Master Carlos Azpiroz Costa.

A Dominican Perspective on Friendship

Our brother fr Timothy Radcliffe was asked by the Holy Father Pope Francis to attend the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, which took place from 16–23 October 2023, as its spiritual father, and to give six meditations to the participants. Below is an extract from his third meditation on Friendship.

Preaching the gospel is never just communicating information. It is an act of friendship. A hundred years ago, Vincent McNabb OP said, ‘Love those to whom you preach. If you do not, do not preach. Preach to yourself.’ St Dominic was said to have been loved by all since he loved all. St Catherine of Siena was surrounded by a circle of friends: men and women, lay and religious. They were known as the *Caterinati*, the Catherine people. St Martin de Porres is often shown with a cat, a dog, and a mouse eating from the same dish. A good image of religious life!

There were no easy friendships between men and women in the Old Testament. The Kingdom broke in with

Jesus surrounded by his friends, men and women. Even today, many people doubt the possibility of any innocent friendship between men and women. Men fear accusation; women fear male violence; the young fear abuse. We should embody the spacious friendship of God.

So we preach the gospel by friendships that reach across boundaries. God reached across the division between Creator and creature. What impossible friendships can we make? When Blessed Pierre Claverie was ordained the Bishop of Oran in Algeria in 1981, he said to his Muslim friends, ‘I owe to you also what I am today. With you in learning Arabic, I learned above all to speak and understand the language of the heart, the language of brotherly friendship, where races and religions commune with each other... For I believe that this friendship comes from God and leads to God.’ Notice, friendship made him who he was!

It was for this friendship that he was murdered by terrorists, along with a young Muslim friend, Mohamed Bouckichi. After his beatification, a play about their friendship was performed, *Pierre et Mohamed*. Mohamed’s mother

watched the play about the death of her son, and kissed the actor who played him.

The good news the young await to hear from us is that God reaches out to them in friendship. Here is the friendships they desire and for which they search on Instagram and TikTok. When I was a teenager, I was befriended by Catholic priests. With them, I discovered the joy of faith. Alas, the sexual abuse crisis rendered such friendships suspect. More than a sexual sin, it is a sin against friendship. The deepest circle in Dante’s *Inferno* was reserved for those who betray friendship.

So the foundation of all that we shall do in this Synod should be the friendships we create. It does not look much. It will not make headlines in the media. ‘They came all the way to Rome to make friendships! What a waste!’ But it is by friendship that we shall make the transition from ‘I’ to ‘We’ (IL A. 1. 25). Without it, we shall achieve nothing.

The set of six meditations can be found online:

www.synod.va/en/highlights/retreat-for-the-participants-of-the-synodal-assembly.html



Some Definite Service

Fr David Rocks OP describes his life as school chaplain at The Oratory School near Reading.

It is the early morning and the first day of the (school) week: Monday. I leave my apartment and meander up 'Chapel Path' – my first journey of the day, and one of many occasions I will do this today. Chapel path is both a vein and an artery in our school. It links our beautiful 'old chapel' with the modern new school chapel in our main school building. This first and early journey is very important – I am on my way to celebrate Mass.

The Oratory School is a Catholic HMC independent co-educational day and boarding school. As in many institutes of Catholic education, the image of St John Henry Newman is prominent and his philosophy of education deeply appreciated. This school, however, is unique. It rightfully claims to be the school that St JHN founded at Edgbaston on 2 May 1859 as The Oratory School. Distinct from the London Oratory School, sometimes in jest we refer to ourselves as 'The Real Oratory School', but there is no monopoly on such an ethos.

Ascending Chapel Path, I can see all the way to Windsor Castle today, as the Chiltern Hills roll gently down. My mind's ear hears the strains of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, the poem our school founder wrote by accident and published by accident. It seems like, by accident, I've found myself walking up Chapel Path

as Chaplain to The Oratory School.

Throughout the course of my ministry I have always been passionate about Catholic education and our Catholic schools. They are places in which the Catholic faith is nourished and cherished. This does not mean that we do not critically evaluate them from time to time – but they are theatres for evangelisation. The Oratory School is a prime example of this – a small school with a big heart, where 'heart speaks unto heart'. Newman's philosophy of education centred on the person – educating the whole person and valuing every person. A smaller school like ours can do this very well, and that's the essence of our Catholic mission.

In its earliest days, The Oratory School was presided over by Cardinal Newman and the Fathers of the Birmingham Oratory. Today the Oratorian Fathers maintain a keen interest in the school, but their ministerial priorities are elsewhere. One thing that has remained is the tradition of having a priest as a full-time chaplain. This unique privilege falls to me – quite by accident!

Having completed two terms as prior of our community in Leicester, I was sad indeed to leave that great city. Following a quiet year back at Blackfriars Oxford, the opportunity arose to take up the full-time position of Chaplain at The Oratory School. Driving up the front drive, and walking up Chapel Path for the first time, I was hooked!

Throughout my ministry, I have had the opportunity to be involved with school chaplaincy and catechesis of children and young people. I have been able to work in school governance and planning. This is an opportunity to work in teaching as well as chaplaincy – and to be a full-time, dedicated chaplain to a school community. I have been learning – both from the young people that are under my care and from my colleagues. Previously my ministry has been centred largely around our parochial and university contexts: this is an opportunity to work within a school environment in a dedicated way.

All human life is there on Chapel Path. The life blood of our school flows up and down it all day, and a vision of God's glory in his creation sweeps down the Chilterns all the way to Windsor. I have the privilege of coming to understand the life journeys of our students, and to share in them. Taking part in things like rugby, hockey, cricket – sports that I know little about; drama productions, music performances. In all these things I am privileged to share in the new and fresh experience that is part of the lives of the young people who come in our direction.

Chapel Path is so important because it links the two hearts of our school life – our school chapels. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved there, in both – just as Cardinal Newman would have wanted. In that way, the Lord comes close to us and is part of us, and as such he is part of our school, and we are part of each other's lives and

the 'definite service' he has given to each one of us.

Our beautiful grounds and long-standing traditions might prompt the question: why would a Dominican work in a 'posh' boarding school? Our students come from every walk of life and from different continents. Some are Catholics, others not. But everyone has something to contribute. At The Oratory School, we are not unique in being faithful to our Cardinal's vision for authentic Catholic education, but we are definitely custodians of it. Dominicans should go where they are needed, and there is a need, at this time, for us to be present in our Catholic schools and bring to them the 'charism', as it were, of our Order.

The life blood continues to pump up and down Chapel Path as the day wears on and the night descends. Tomorrow morning I will ascend Chapel Path again, to celebrate the very same mystery of the Eucharist. Coming away from it, the same problems and considerations will be teased out, but this is a place of learning. Can I be inspired by that? So that the world that we inhabit could be changed, little by little, and maybe even by accident?

By accident, really, I have the opportunity to be a part of preserving and prolonging Cardinal Newman's vision for education within the context of the school that he himself founded (The 'Real' Oratory School). This is my opportunity to engage my Dominican heart in speaking with other hearts. It has been good so far. Who knows what will happen next?

The Oratory School's website is
www.oratory.co.uk



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Version: LIT-5

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Fundraising Success!

Our Development Director, Richard Brown, celebrates your generosity to the friars in 2023.

Despite gloomy prognostications, 2023 has been an unexpectedly positive year for our fundraising, so I would like to thank our donors for their amazing generosity, helping the friars to advance their mission. Here is what you achieved:

- Installing a new **underfloor heating** system in the nave of St Dominic's Church (the Rosary Shrine) in London. **We beat our target of £100k by over £30k**, allowing heating to be added for the friars' seating in the sanctuary!
- Providing over £25k in funding for our **friars in Jamaica and Grenada**, in response to special St Martin's Missions appeals after Mass, and also our new video about the friars' work in the Caribbean (see www.english.op.org/missions).
- Ensuring our parishes and priories have kept on top of inflation by generously **increasing your monthly contributions**: 2023 saw individual giving to our general funds **up by 29%** on 2019, having grown steadily each year since the dip in 2020 caused by the lockdowns.

- Funding a full 3-year **doctoral scholarship** at Blackfriars Hall, with matched funding from Oxford University.
- Securing the longer-term future of our mission by **including the friars in your Will**. In this our first year as a member of Your Catholic Legacy, we saw 39 enquiries about leaving a gift, of which 9 have already resulted in a definite pledge. 4 people took advantage of our free Will-writing service to create or update their Will, and kindly included legacies in these to the friars' benefit.
- *And much more that we cannot fit in here!*

What's next?

In the coming year the **Provincial Chapter** (held every four years) will make key strategic decisions, including the appointment of the new Prior Provincial to replace Fr Martin Ganeri, as well as other key roles. This will also give consideration to where our fundraising efforts need to focus, to ensure that the friars are properly supported in their work and that the apostolates entrusted to their care can flourish.

Please do pray for the friars as they discern their next steps, and thanks again for your generous support!

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ONLINE GIVING is a secure and easy way to support the friars. Follow the link above or look on the websites of our priories.

RETURN THE COMPLETED FORM with your payment to:
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If you would like to discuss your giving, contact Mr Richard Brown at our Development Office by email: development@english.op.org