

“The Church must be attractive. Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world... It is this witness I expect from you!” - Pope Francis

# Dominicans

## Still preaching the Gospel all over the world

Working in over 100 countries

35,000 active sisters

More than 40 provinces and vicariates

More than 6,500 friars and 4,000 nuns

More than 100,000 lay Dominicans in the Dominican family

The year of Consecrated Life (2015-2016) overlaps the 8th centenary of the foundation of the Order of Preachers. Since St Dominic de Guzman (1174-1221) received papal approval in 1216 for the band of travelling preachers gathered around with him, the members of his Order have been committed to preaching the Gospel.

We do this as members of communities within which our lives are shaped by four elements; preaching; prayer; study; community. We are inspired by the example of St Dominic who was said to be always either “talking to God or talking about God”.

Dominic saw in the Europe of his day an urgent need for informed preaching. The Albigensian cult was gaining ground to an alarming extent, because most Christians at the time were very poorly instructed.

The cult saw the material world as evil, and escape from it the only route to salvation. Dominic's sermons have not survived, but he must have placed a strong emphasis on the goodness of creation and of the human body: today we might use the word 'holistic' to describe this.

**“Preaching is truly necessary, for without it the glory of Heaven would never be realised, Hell would be filled up all too soon”**

The fifth Master of the Order, Fr Humbert of Romans, delighted in speaking about the ‘grace of preaching’. By this he meant that preaching is a special vocation, in which the preacher is assisted by the Spirit of Truth, and he spells out the vital importance of preaching: “Preaching is truly necessary, for without it the glory of Heaven would never be realised, Hell would be filled up all too soon... demons would rule, hearts would have neither hope nor



Jerome Murphy O'Connor.

joy in their salvation, nations would not know the Christian faith, and God's Church would have no foundation, growth or stability.”

Dominicans do a great many different things as we try to respond to the needs of the Christian community in our time and place. We run churches and parishes; we work as chaplains and teachers in second- and third level colleges; we preach in retreat houses and at parish missions – indeed anywhere the opportunity arises; we write and publish books and articles, in print and digital form; we are involved in scriptural and theological research; we are chaplains to hospitals and convents; we are missionaries

in several parts of the world.

Every talent can be used in the great work of proclaiming God's word.

In the eight centuries of its existence, the order fostered such eminent theologians and philosophers as St Albert, St Thomas Aquinas and Yves Congar, whose researches underpin many of the documents of Vatican II.

### Mystics

Among its members have been mystics like St Catherine of Siena, Tauler and Meister Eckhart, and the artist Blessed Fra Angelico.

Dominicans have a tradition of commitment to social justice as seen in the work of Bartolomé de las Casas



the death of St Dominic, and there are houses of the order in most of the major centres of population.

In the 20th Century, two Irish Dominicans were chosen as Master, to lead the order worldwide. Fr Michael Browne, a native of Grangemockler, Co. Tipperary, was elected in 1955 and held office until 1962 when Pope John XXIII appointed him a cardinal. Galwayman Damian Byrne served as Master from 1983 to 1992.

### Recent years

In recent years, the Irish province has been blessed with vocations – last September six young men became full members of the order when they made solemn vows, and they were ordained deacons in recent weeks.

Notable Irish Dominicans of the 20th Century include Austin Flannery, editor of *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, the standard English language version of the council's documents, and the noted biblical scholars Jerome Murphy-O'Connor and Wilfrid Harrington. The sculptor Henry Flanagan saw his artistic work as a form of preaching, surviving long after words would have faded.

Today, there are Dominicans in over 100 countries, over 41 provinces and vicariates and some 6,500 friars, 4,000 nuns, 35,000 active sisters, and over 100,000 lay Dominicans in the Dominican Family.

Having the example of so many brothers and sisters who have gone before us, we are confident that with God's help, we can build on this history and continue their work of preaching the Gospel of Christ to the whole world.



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and Francisco de Vitoria on human rights, and of Gustavo Gutierrez, founder of liberation theology.

In every age, Dominicans have been moved by compassion to respond to the signs of

the times, always conscious that every generation needs to hear afresh the message of God's love and friendship with humanity.

The order came to Ireland in 1224, only three years after