

*Draft #6 April 2000*

# Pillar of Prayer

*An Explanation of Expected Outcomes*

GOAL: To Lead Inquirers Into a Deeply Committed Dominican Prayer Life

*... from the first day you made up your mind to acquire understanding and humble yourself before God, your prayer was heard. Daniel 10:12*

The spirituality of the Order of Preachers is characterized by prayer, preaching, study, community and service/apostolic works interrelated and firmly rooted in the common ground of Sacred Truth. The prayer of Dominicans is characterized by Biblical, contemplative, Marian and liturgical components and involves the corporal as well as the spiritual aspect of the person. St. Thomas Aquinas characterized this charism in his *Summa Theologica*:

"Just as it is better to enlighten than merely to shine, so it is better to give to others the fruits of one's contemplations than merely to contemplate." "

This phrase - *contemplata afis tradere* - is one of the mottos' of the Order of Preachers and the definitive description of Dominican prayer and spirituality.

In the Dominican charism, prayer occupies a primary position because all other aspects of an authentic Christian spirituality flow from a direct and intimate relationship with God. This relationship with God is essential for any Dominican who wishes to grow in the other pillars of community, study and preaching.

There are many beautiful prayers in the Dominican tradition. These include, but are not limited to, the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, the Dominican Rosary, the "Nine Ways of Prayer," "O Lumen," *lectio divina* and

intercessory prayer. Inquirers are not expected to become experts in all prayer forms by the end of First-Year Formation. However, they should be able to demonstrate a commitment to prayer and a basic knowledge of some of the prayers that are central to the Dominican tradition.

The goal of the Pillar of Prayer in the first year of the Formation Program is to lead inquirers into a deeply committed prayer life, with an emphasis placed on Dominican prayer forms.

By the end of the First-Year Formation Program, inquirers should be able to demonstrate the following outcomes or competencies:

Knowledge of and developing commitment to

1. Daily Eucharistic Celebration;

2. The four-week cycle of Morning and Evening Prayer;
3. The Dominican Rosary.

## **Competency: Knowledge of and Developing Commitment to Daily Eucharistic Celebration**

### **History and Purpose**

According to the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, "The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows."

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* also gives some insights into the reasons why frequent participation in the Eucharist is so important to the Dominican vocation:

"The renewal in the Eucharist of the covenant between the Lord and man draws the faithful into the compelling love of Christ and sets them on fire." a And, "While the liturgy daily builds up those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord ... at the same time it marvelously strengthens their power to preach Christ ..." 5

Lay Dominicans, with all Catholic Christians, renew the Lord's sacrifice by their participation in the Eucharistic liturgy. In this way, they keep the command he gave to his disciples at the Last Supper when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me." 6

Participation in the Eucharistic liturgy is the defining act of Catholicism. It is the central mystery of our faith. In it, we have the opportunity to draw closer to the Lord than in any other activity since Christ is present in the gathering of the people (where two or three are gathered in His name),<sup>7</sup> in the person of the priest, in Scripture as it is read aloud, and especially in the Eucharist. 8

In developing a love for the Eucharist, Lay Dominicans not only unite themselves more closely to Christ and his Church, but also to the Dominican saints. According to Paul of Venice, St. Dominic wanted to sing the Mass every day, even when he was traveling, if he could find a convenient church. Several of the brothers testified during his canonization process that Dominic never celebrated the Mass without weeping. St. Catherine of Siena, Patroness of Lay Dominicans, resolved to receive communion daily and she obtained permission to do so even though this practice was not common at that time.

St. Thomas Aquinas, like Dominic, was also moved to tears as he celebrated the Mass. As the composer of the Eucharistic hymns, "Pange Lingua" and "Panis Angelicus," Thomas holds a special place in the development of Eucharistic liturgy. This came about after Pope Urban IV charged him with writing the Corpus Christi

texts for the Mass and the Divine Office, which he completed in 1264. Our present texts for the feast of Corpus Christi, which date from the fifteenth century, are attributed to him. "O precious and wonderful banquet," he exclaims, "that brings us salvation and contains all sweetness! Could anything be of more intrinsic value?"

In light of his own devotion to the Eucharist, Thomas understood how important our disposition is to the grace we received from the sacrament. He understood that our commemoration of the Lord's passion benefits us only when we are united to the sacrament through faith and love. A profound desire for the Eucharist, along with faith in the grace it bestows, arises out of a profound understanding of its significance. This is achieved through grace, study and prayer.

Inquirers should be encouraged to participate in the Eucharistic liturgy daily, as is possible. 9 Study and discussion on the history and meaning of the liturgy, along with frequent attendance, will provide the ground from which a deeper love of the liturgy will grow and blossom.

### **Learning Activities**

Choose from the following:

1. Have the inquirers read the following and respond with reactions in a journal. Ideally, the inquirers should discuss these readings and their reactions with the class:

*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, (Vatican II, 1963), Sections 1-58.  
*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, ((USCC, 1994), Article 3, The Sacrament of the Eucharist, Sections 1322-1419.

2. Encourage the inquirers to become Eucharistic ministers, lectors or altar servers in the Eucharistic celebration at their parish church, or perform some other service directly related to the celebration of the Mass.
3. Ask the inquirers to set a goal to increase their attendance at the daily Eucharistic celebration. For example, if they have been attending only on Sundays, have them set a goal to attend one or two days during the week.
4. Review the lives of at least one of the following Dominican Exemplars of Devotion to the Eucharist:  
St. Dominic Guzman, OP  
St. Thomas Aquinas, OP  
St. Catherine Benincasa, OPL (Catherine of Siena)  
Praxedes Fernandez, OPL
5. Although in the first year of formation there is no emphasis on contemplative prayer, it is suggested that inquirers explore the life of one of the following Dominican mystics, Exemplars of contemplative prayer:

St. Dominic Guzman, OP  
St. Catherine Benincasa, OPL (Catherine of Siena)  
Meister Eckhart, OP  
Mechtilde of Magdeberg, OPL  
Bl. Henry Suso, OP

### **Evaluation/Assessment Activities**

Choose from the following:

1. From their journal reflections, have the inquirers write a brief paper (one to two pages) summarizing how their understanding and appreciation for the Eucharistic celebration has increased from the reading assignment in number 1 of the Learning Activities.
2. If applicable, have the inquirers give a brief description of their work as Eucharistic ministers, lectors, or altar servers, explaining how their participation increases their understanding and appreciation for the Eucharistic celebration.
3. For inquirers who set a goal for increased attendance at the daily Eucharistic celebration, have them write a brief paper (one to two pages) or give a brief talk on what they have learned from the experience.

### **Competency: Knowledge of and Developing Commitment to the Four-Week Cycle of Morning and Evening Prayer**

#### **History and Purpose**

The Liturgy of the Hours is one of the most beloved treasures of the Church. According to Jewish custom, Jesus would have been taught to observe three formal prayer times each day: at sunrise, at 3:00 P.M. when the evening sacrifice was offered in the temple in Jerusalem, and at sunset. This was, of course, in addition to his private prayers and night vigils.

The early Christians followed the Jewish custom of praying at regular hours (Acts 3:1; 10:1-3, 30). By the end of the second century the principal times of prayer for all Christians were at sunrise and sunset, celebrated in common whenever possible. By the early third century there were seven regular hours of common prayer, with Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer occupying the most prominent positions. Over the centuries the monastic tradition contributed to the development of the Liturgy of the Hours with the custom of praying the entire Psalter on a regular basis.

By the time St. Dominic became a canon regular in the Cathedral at Osma, Spain, at the close of the twelfth century, praying the Liturgy of the Hours was limited primarily to the clergy and religious, and this was one of Dominic's primary responsibilities. He was first of all a man of prayer before he became an apostle and it was from this foundation that his apostolic zeal and the fruits of his ministry arose. He considered the Liturgy of the Hours so important that he committed the Order of Preachers to this form of worship from its earliest days. Brother Stephen of Spain testified during Dominic's canonization process that during Matins he would go around both sides of the choir, urging and encouraging the brothers to sing loudly with devotion. Under his influence the Dominican Order retained its monastic dimension in addition to its apostolic mission.

With the Vatican II reforms, the laity were again encouraged to recite the Divine Office together with the priests, among themselves, or individually. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* states"

"... (Christ Jesus) continues his priestly work through His Church. The Church, by celebrating the Eucharist and by other means, especially the celebration of the Divine Office, is ceaselessly engaged in praising the Lord and interceding for the salvation of the entire world." °

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* echoes these sentiments:

"This celebration, faithful to the apostolic exhortations to pray constantly is so devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God." "

By participating in the public prayer of the Church, the laity exercise the priesthood bestowed on them in their baptism.

The Liturgy of the Hours is a life-giving wellspring. It helps us keep our hearts focused on God and our minds free from error. It is at once both a gift from and an offering to God, while at the same time serving as a blessing poured out upon the world. By the nature of its history and purpose, the Liturgy of the Hours is intrinsically Christian and at the same time it is an integral part of the Dominican vocation.

Due to the complexity of the Liturgy of the Hours, First Year Formation activities are designed to familiarize inquirers only with the four week cycle of Morning and Evening Prayer, excluding feast days, memorials, optional memorials and seasons. To help minimize the confusion that inevitably arises when people are first introduced, to the *Liturgy of the Hours*, it is recommended that inquirers use the one volume, *Christian Prayer*.

## **Learning Activities**

1. If some or all of the inquirers have had no experience with the Liturgy of the Hours, the formation director will need to explain the difference between the

one volume and four volume editions. Once the inquirers have a basic knowledge of the one volume and four volume editions, have the class recite Morning or Evening Prayer together, depending on the time of day, at the beginning or ending of the formation class.

2. Choose from the following:

A. Have the inquirers read the following and respond with reactions in a journal. Ideally, the inquirers should discuss these readings and their reactions with the class:

*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Chapter IV, "The Divine Office," Sections 83-101, (Vatican II, 1963.)

John Brook, *The School of Prayer, an Introductio to the Divine Office*, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), pp. 1-29.

B. Arrange for the class to pray Morning or Evening Prayer together, with the friars, sisters or nuns of a local Dominican community, if possible. In addition to experiencing the monastic dimension of the Liturgy of the Hours, this will give the inquirers a sense of their place in the Dominican family.

3. Review the lives of at least one of the following Dominican Exemplars of commitment to the Liturgy of the Hours:

St. Dominic Guzman, OP  
Mother Maria Pia Backes, OP  
Bl. Margaret di Castello, OPL  
Mother Alphonsa, OP (Rose Hawthorne)

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### **Evaluation/Assessment Activities**

Choose from the following:

1. From their journal reflections, have the inquirers write a brief paper (one to two pages) summarizing how their understanding and appreciation for the Liturgy of the Hours has increased from the reading assignment in number 2. A. of the Learning Activities.
2. Have the inquirers take turns leading Morning or Evening Prayer at the beginning or end of the formation class to demonstrate their basic knowledge of the prayer form.
3. Have the inquirers give a brief talk about their experience praying the Liturgy of the Hours with another branch of the Dominican Family, explaining how this experience enhanced their understanding of the Dominican vocation.

## **Competency: Knowledge of and Developing Commitment to The Dominican Rosary**

### **History and Purpose**

The Rosary is a perfect marriage of devotion in the heart and reflection in the mind. It leads to deeper states of contemplation and virtue while serving as a firm foundation for a life of preaching and apostolic work. According to tradition, St. Dominic received the Rosary from the Blessed Virgin Mary as an aid to the conversion of heretics. St. Dominic was deeply devoted to the Virgin Mary and the repetitious use of the Ave Maria outside the monastery originated somewhere around the time of his life. Two early Dominican groups promoted this prayer: The Militia of Christ, founded by St. Dominic, and the Confraternity of Prayer, founded a few decades after his death.

St. Dominic's contribution to the Rosary was to combine the repetitious use of the Ave Maria with reflection on Scripture. Brother Romeo, a companion of St. Dominic, died fervently clutching a knotted cord while saying the Aves. St. Thomas Aquinas, born shortly after the death of St. Dominic, repeatedly wrote the Ave Maria in the margins of his manuscript while meditating on sacred truths. The early Dominican friars, in reciting the Ave Maria while living a life of Gospel reflection, embodied the essence of the Rosary as we understand it today.

In 1470 B.I. Alanus founded the Rosary Confraternity. Another Dominican, James Sprenger, started the Rosary Confraternity around the same time in another place. Five years later, on the date B.I. Alanus died, the Confraternity received papal approval. As a result of their work, the tradition of St. Dominic and the Rosary has been enthusiastically embraced by the universal Church.

Like the early friars, lay Dominicans repeat the Hail Mary while reflecting on Scripture as a means of uniting themselves with the Holy Spirit. Just as the Holy Spirit spoke these words to Mary on earth, he continues to speak to her today in the hearts of the faithful. Lay Dominicans are encouraged to recite the Dominican form that is used by the Dominican Family.

### **Learning Activities**

1. . Explain the variations in the opening and closing prayers that are used in the Dominican form. Pray the Dominican Rosary together at least once, if not on a regular basis.
2. Choose from the following:
  - A. Have the inquirers read one of the following and respond with reactions in a journal. Ideally, the inquirers should discuss these readings and their reactions with the class:

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, (USCC, 1994), Sections 964-975, 2678 and 2708.*

John Paul II, *Mother of the Redeemer*, (An Encyclical Letter, 1987).

Paul VI, *For the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, (An Apostolic Exhortation, 1974).

Gabriel Harty, OP, *The Riches of the Rosary*, (Dublin, Ireland: Veritas Publications, 1997).

- B. Have the inquirers create an additional series of Scriptural mysteries based on the life of Jesus. Possible topics include the conversion mysteries, the preaching mysteries, etc. Refer to *The SevenDay Scriptural Rosary* by Larry London for some examples of additional Scriptural mysteries.
3. Review the lives of at least one of the following Dominican Exemplars of commitment to the Dominican Rosary:
- St. Dominic Guzman, OP
  - St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, OPL
  - Pope St. Pius V, OP
  - St. Catherine de Ricci, OP
  - Bl. Alan de la Roche, OP
  - St. Rose of Lima, OPL

### **Evaluation/Assessment Activities**

Choose from the following:

1. Ask inquirers to write a brief paper (one to two pages) based on their journal reflections, describing how their understanding and appreciation of the Rosary has changed from the reading assignment in number 1 of the Learning Activities.
2. If the Dominican Rosary is prayed in class or in the chapter meeting, have the inquirers take turns leading the Rosary to demonstrate their knowledge of the Dominican form.
3. In class, have the inquirers share some of their reflections on the Mysteries of the Rosary and/or discuss how praying the Rosary has deepened their commitment to Christ.