



ORDO PRÆDICATORUM
Curia Generalitia

Memorial of Bl. Jane of Aza

2 August 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Dominican Family,

Greetings from the General Chapter here in Krakow!

At the beginning of our chapter, fr. Vivian Boland presented the work of the theological commission on *The Vocation of the Cooperator Brother in the Order and in the Church*. There is much to ponder and learn from the report, which was well received by the General Chapter.

The General Chapter of Biên Hòa requested for a theological research that will “deepen our understanding of the specificity of the cooperator brother vocation in the Order and in the Church” (ACG 2019, 199). The *Order of Friars Preachers* is a communion of cooperator and ordained brothers; and the *Dominican Family* is a communion of those who share the charism received by St. Dominic – friars, both lay and ordained, contemplative nuns, apostolic sisters, lay and priestly fraternities, secular institutes, and associations of young people (youth movements). The present study considers the vocation of the Cooperator Brother *within* the broader context of the Dominican Family and its participation in the Church’s mission of evangelization. Thus, I am happy to share for your reflection, the report of the commission.

I thank the members of the commission for their excellent work: friars Anthony Akinwale (Nigeria, presbyter), Vivian Boland (Ireland, chair, presbyter), Franklin Buitrago Rojas (Colombia, presbyter), Andrew Hofer (St Joseph USA, presbyter), Felicísimo Martínez (Rosary Province, presbyter), Francis Nguyen Van Nhut (Vietnam, presbyter) and Joseph Trout (St Albert in the USA, cooperator brother) along with Sr. Hedvig Deák (Hungary, Congregation of St Margaret of Hungary, apostolic sister) and Erik Borgman (The Netherlands, Lay Dominican). I also thank friars Mark Padrez and Juan Manuel Hernández, who, as former and present *Socii* for Fraternal Life and Formation, served as the Commission’s liaison persons on the general council.

Please continue to pray for a grace-filled General Chapter. I also wish you a Blessed Solemnity of our Holy Father St. Dominic!

In Domino et Dominico,


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THE VOCATION OF THE COOPERATOR BROTHER IN THE ORDER AND IN THE CHURCH
REPORT OF THE THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF KRAKOW 2025

I. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

In promulgating the acts of Biên Hòa (2019), the Master of the Order noted that ‘there seems to be a need for further theological reflection on *both the co-operator brother and the ordained brother*’. As a communion of both ordained and co-operator brothers, ‘what could our Order offer to the Church’, he asked, ‘which is an ordered communion, and whose priests are called to be “united in themselves in an intimate sacramental brotherhood”?’ Observing that there is a profound longing for brotherhood among priests, both diocesan and religious, Brother Gerard recalled that St Dominic wanted to be called Brother Dominic, ‘a theological title because it preaches, pointing to the coming Kingdom of God where everyone is a ‘brother’ and a ‘sister’, for there is only one Father who is in heaven’. One of the chapter’s recommendations to the master was that he appoint ‘suitably qualified friars’ to undertake ‘theological research on the vocation of the co-operator brother’ (ACG 2019 §199), adding that this research should ‘help to deepen our understanding of the specificity of the co-operator brother vocation in the Order and in the Church’. The Master of the Order duly appointed such a commission and this is its report.

1.1 The Terms of Reference of this Report

Unlike the tasks set for earlier commissions,¹ this time the general chapter’s request pointed us explicitly *to the Church*, not just to the Order, requesting that the theological research consider also the brother’s vocation in the Church. It was not necessary to repeat the excellent work done by earlier commissions and it seemed important that there should be a fresh starting point to the research and reflection. If we think of the Order offering the Church some help in relation to understanding and living its ordered communion, it is not strange to think of the Church offering the Order some help in relation to the same question.

A fresh starting point, therefore, was to consider how the Church, itself an ordered communion of many vocations, gifts and ministries, has been speaking in recent times about that diversity. This is what is new about our approach compared with earlier reports, that we looked first to the Church in order to find the Order within the Church and to learn from what is moving in the Church as a whole. This helped us to appreciate again the great variety

¹ In an appendix to this report, we list the more substantial considerations on the cooperator brotherhood to be found in the acts of the general chapters since 1968, as well as noting other important developments in the Order’s reflection on the brothers’ vocation during the same time period.

of vocations within the Dominican family. The idea that every Christian is a missionary disciple seemed like a good place to begin. The un-ordained, or lay, Christian is also a *missionary* disciple, called to live the fulness of the Christian vocation in an appropriate way. The Order, and the Dominican Family more widely, reflects the ordered communion of the Church, since we have presbyters, co-operator brothers, cloistered nuns, lay Dominicans, the priestly fraternity, apostolic sisters, members of secular institutes, deacons ... each is called to live their missionary discipleship in an appropriate way, giving that discipleship a further specification from their profession in the Order of Preachers.

So, rather than first looking again at ourselves, at our own history and what we consider to be our mission, the theological commission decided to look firstly at the Church, at its current needs in relation to evangelization, the ministry of the Word, and preaching; to look at what it regards as the contribution of different groups of the faithful to these tasks; and to see how we might find ourselves anew, whether we are ordained or un-ordained brothers, within the context of the Church's mission received from Christ. The report from the Synod of October 2023 stated that to say "the mission (of Christ) has a Church" is better than saying that the Church has a mission. Likewise, it is better to say that "the mission of Christ in the Church has an Order of Preachers at the service of the preaching of the Word for the salvation of souls".

The terms of reference given to our commission were therefore the following:

- 1) To consider how the Church in recent times has been speaking of evangelization, of the ministry of the Word, of the preaching of the Gospel and of the particular needs and challenges these encounter today
- 2) To consider how the Church has been speaking of the contribution of different sections of the Church in responding to these needs and challenges – presbyters, religious, and in particular lay people
- 3) To consider recent Church teaching concerning the ordained priesthood and the ministry of the Word
- 4) To consider the development of 'baptismal ministries'² in the Church and their significance for members of the Order
- 5) To prepare a text that will help us to deepen our understanding of how Dominicans can participate in the mission of the Church today, whether we call that contemporary mission 'new evangelization' or 'missionary discipleship'
- 6) To suggest ways in which the outcome of these researches might inform our presentation of the two vocations we find among the friars, that of the ordained brother and that of the co-operator brother.

² The expression 'baptismal ministries' has come to replace 'lay ministries' as a way of referring to those ministries in which members of the Church may be instituted either transitionally, in the case of men preparing for priestly ordination, or permanently, in the case of lay men and women. It presumes that Catholics so instituted are fully initiated members of the Church, i.e. have received the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist.

In view of the proposed terms of reference, it seemed clear that the commission should include not only friars but members from other branches of the Dominican family with relevant theological expertise. It seemed reasonable also to think firstly of theologians working in the areas of ecclesiology, ministry, religious life and sacramental theology. The commission appointed by the Master of the Order on 2 June 2021 therefore consisted of friars Anthony Akinwale (Nigeria, presbyter), Vivian Boland (Ireland, chair, presbyter), Franklin Buitrago Rojas (Colombia, presbyter), Andrew Hofer (St Joseph USA, presbyter), Felicísimo Martínez (Rosary Province, presbyter), Francis Nguyen Van Nhut (Vietnam, presbyter) and Joseph Trout (St Albert in the USA, cooperator) along with Sr Hedvig Deák (Hungary, Congregation of St Margaret of Hungary, apostolic sister) and Erik Borgman (The Netherlands, Lay Dominican). The Commission's liaison person on the general council was the Socius for Fraternal Life and Formation (firstly Mark Padrez, then Juan Manuel Hernández).

1.2 Methodology

The terms of reference invited the commission to take a fresh approach to questions that have been considered at length over many years. Rather than looking first at our own history and legislation, the Commission felt charged to look first outside the Order, at the Church as a whole, with its particular preoccupations at this time in its history. We took as a given starting point the vision of the Church presented in *Lumen Gentium* with its positioning of religious life as a gift of God to the Church to strengthen its service of the mission of Christ. What is the Church thinking and saying now about the universal call to holiness, missionary discipleship rooted in baptism, common and ordained priesthood, baptismal and ordained ministries? The hope was that by exploring these themes we would see more clearly the importance of the brother's vocation for the Church and so too for the Order.

Important additions from our first round of meetings were that the needs of the Church vary from region to region and this needs to be kept in mind; that there is a diversity of social and cultural realities that is relevant; that the consecrated life is another state alongside lay and ordained Christians; and that there are also permanent deacons in the Dominican family whose particular ministry in relation to our charism has never been specifically considered.

At its first meeting, online, in July 2021 the Commission agreed to work initially in four sub-groups concerned with what the Church is saying about

- 1) evangelization, ministry of the Word, preaching: their needs and challenges today
- 2) the contribution of different sections of the Church in responding to these needs and challenges
- 3) the ordained priesthood and the ministry of the Word
- 4) baptismal ministries and their significance for the Order

Each group was to identify the most important points to consider in relation to each of these topics as well as identifying resources that might help us in researching them further. A dossier on each point was put together, drawing mainly on documents of the Church and the Order, especially the teachings of Vatican II and the recent Popes, as well as work by theologians specialized in these areas.

This dossier was then subjected to a series of ‘distillations.’ In an online meeting held in November 2021, we extracted from it 33 points connected with these four main areas that seemed to be the points of greatest importance for our task. Our hope was to bring those points to an in-person meeting at which we could also receive the assistance of people expert in canon law, pastoral theology and ecclesiology.

This was finally possible in November 2022 when we held an in-person meeting at Santa Sabina, attended also by brother Ignatius Perkins, the chair of the Permanent Commission for the Vocation of the Co-operator Brother. We thank the experts who contributed to our work by speaking at that meeting: Benjamin Earl OP, the procurator general, Donna Orsuto, director of the Lay Centre, Rome, Paul Bednarczyk CSC, superior general of the ‘mixed’ congregation of Holy Cross, and Dario Vitali, professor of ecclesiology at the Gregorian University (later appointed by Pope Francis as coordinator of the expert theologians attending the Synod of October 2023).

The work of distilling further the main points of our reflection was greatly helped by the input we received at the November 2022 meeting and by the conversation we shared in a further online meeting in June 2023.

In November 2023 we were able to realise an ambition we had from the beginning, namely to have a joint meeting of the two Commissions appointed after the 2019 general chapter, the theological commission and the permanent commission. It was agreed that this meeting should receive contributions from brothers and others living and working in the different branches of the Dominican family, that the question of Dominican permanent deacons should also be considered, and that we should, if possible, have a contribution from one of the Dominican nuns about their particular vocation. So we received input from Benoît-Dominique de la Soujeole on the diaconate and the place of deacons in the Order, from Cristóbal Torres, the general promoter of the Dominican laity, from Brother Michael McAward SM, a Marianist brother and member of that congregation’s general council, on the vocation of the ‘religious brother’ in the Church, from Juan Manuel Hernández, socius for fraternal life and formation, on his responsibility towards the co-operator brothers, from sister Breda Carroll, prioress of the Dominican Monastery in Drogheda (Ireland) and from the Master of the Order, giving us an update on his experience relative to our task.

Our report has been further distilled in view of the presentations and conversation at the November 2023 meeting. Further online meetings took place in May 2024 and December 2024 during which the final version of this report was agreed.

II. THE REPORT

2.1 DOMINICANS: DISCIPLES, PREACHERS, MISSIONARIES

1. Dominicans serve the Church through preaching the Word of God. It is more than a particular charism for it is an activity that is at the heart of the gospel and of the life of the Church. Preaching does not simply mean giving liturgical homilies for it includes preaching to the city and not just to congregations already gathered. It means announcing the Word in the many forms that can take: celebration of faith, testimony of life, the service of charity, witness, listening, sharing, human promotion, commitment to justice, as well as liturgical preaching also of course. LCO speaks of it as the ministry of the Word, undertaken in all the different modalities in which that happens in the Church: kerygma and first evangelization, catechesis and Christian formation, mystagogy and continuing faith formation, the way of beauty. It might seem that evangelization is now a better term for all this but we believe it is important to retain and if necessary to renew the term 'preaching'. The mission of the Church always requires the preaching of the Word and everything the Order of Preachers does flows from its call to respond to that need.
2. The first Dominicans preached from a shared evangelical life so that the building of community and the living of communion were always essential to the way in which they were preachers. Our particular way of serving the Word of God requires a common life lived in fraternity, the Word received through contemplation and study, the Word celebrated in liturgy and prayer, the Word proclaimed through teaching and witness. Writing to the Order in 2021, Pope Francis praised St Dominic for his life spent 'proclaiming the Gospel by word and example so as to build up the Church in fraternal unity and missionary discipleship'. The Pope recalled also that from the beginning the Order of Preachers had embraced all the states of life in the Church, enabling the charism of preaching to overflow to all the branches of the Dominican family. As the Church itself is an ordered communion so the Dominican family is an ordered communion. Our fraternity will always mean living in unity the diversity of personalities, gifts, experiences and responsibilities that are ours.
3. Brothers and sisters of the Order share in its task of preaching according to the diversity of their states and gifts. It is always undertaken within a particular culture, in particular conditions of time and space. At any time, there are regional differences, but there are also temporal or historical differences, as priorities, preferences and possibilities change from one generation to another. The mendicant movement emerged in response to just such a series of cultural changes that had social, intellectual, economic and political aspects. The history of the co-operator brother in the Order witnesses to just such realities, as this particular vocation was, and is, understood and lived in different ways, in different parts of the Order, at different times.
4. The Order began in a moment in which the Church made a radical change in the organisation of its preaching mission. The Lateran Council of 1215 called on bishops to find men (*sic*)

suitable for carrying on the work of preaching when the bishops themselves either could not or would not engage effectively in the task. In the following years, Pope Honorius III frequently recommended the preachers to the bishops of the Church and soon came to designate it as not just an order of preachers but an order of confessors, with the related task of celebrating the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, another pastoral concern of the Lateran Council in 1215. This link with the authority of bishops and the celebration of the sacraments explains why the Order is clerical from the beginning. For many of the friars, their baptismal grace, completed by confirmation, and made concrete through religious profession, needed also ordination as presbyters if the preachers were to fulfil the mission entrusted to them by the Church.

5. Like Dominic, Dominicans sought to live *in medio ecclesiae*, that is through preaching to be at the service of the entire community of believers. This was to be their way to holiness. Not all friars became 'pulpit preachers', not even all the ordained friars, but all co-operated in the common mission. Some did this through ministries internal to the community – domestic and liturgical, administrative and formational – whereas others took on external ministries – pastoral, educational, missionary. Just as there is a variety of gifts and ministries among the ordained brothers of the Order, and among the nuns, sisters and laity, it seems reasonable that variety will be found also among the co-operator brothers – that some will be community brothers, others involved in education, some pursuing professional activities, still others preaching more explicitly.
6. St Dominic had already seen the necessity for the engagement of women in the work of the 'holy preaching'. The communities at Prouilhe and San Sisto, for example, were communities of nuns supported by teams of friars, the nuns in turn supporting the friars through their prayers and friendship. So, the Prouilhe community was from the beginning called 'The Holy Preaching of St. Mary of Prouilhe'.

2.2 DOMINIC'S 'INSTITUTIONAL CHARISM'

7. The phrase 'institutional charism' comes from brother Guy Bedouelle in his account of the beginnings of the Order and it is a happy one as it helps to warn us against setting up any dualistic opposition of prophetic and priestly, lay and clerical, female and male, baptismal and ordained ministries.³ The kind of community established by St Dominic – an ordered communion of friars, ordained and lay, along with nuns – was a factor giving credibility to its preaching as it already partially realised the communion of the Church itself.

³ The phrase is intended to indicate that the strength of Dominic's project lay in its combination of charismatic inspiration and institutional collaboration, a strength it would not have had if it had relied on just one of these without the other.

8. Profession in the Order of Preachers publicly recognizes and makes official the gift and obligation to be involved in its ministry of preaching. Thomas Aquinas says that this is true already of any fully initiated Christian: confirmation empowers him or her to witness by their words to their faith in Christ and to do it publicly and, as it were, officially.⁴ Our profession gives this Christian responsibility a particular specification, integrating us in a community for which the preaching of the Word is its being and purpose.
9. For us preaching is linked with praise and blessing, and is undertaken in the first place to glorify God, confessing God's grace in the wonders God has done in creation and in history. The first Dominicans show a marked sense of joy in proclaiming the gospel and in seeking to live it together, something to which the whole Church has now been recalled, each Christian having a place in communicating the joy of the gospel (*Evangelii Gaudium*). We address St Dominic as 'preacher of grace' and this also characterises the content and style of our preaching. To quote Pope Francis again, the family of St Dominic sought to reach every periphery of our world with the light of the gospel and the merciful love of Christ.
10. Any form of evangelization includes, sooner or later, the explicit proclamation of the Gospel and this is a priority objective for the members of the Order of Preachers. The many ways of serving the Word facilitate the preaching vocation of all the brothers and sisters of the Order. Yet throughout our history most of the friars have been ordained to the presbyterate for the celebration of the sacraments that are directly related to the fruits of preaching, in particular reconciliation and the Eucharist.
11. St Dominic several times refused to become a bishop. It seems that this was not just out of humility but because he did not want to preach the Gospel with hierarchical authority alone. He wanted to preach it with the strength of his own faith experience and the testimony of an evangelical life. Evangelical poverty is one essential credential of Dominican preaching, as Humbert of Romans makes clear in his concerns about Albert the Great becoming a bishop.⁵
12. A letter from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2016 seems to have strengthened the distinction between hierarchical and charismatic gifts in the Church.⁶ Pope Francis frequently appeals to this distinction in making decisions about new movements, for example. Rather than beginning with the distinctions between us, however, it is better to consider our common ground first, the communion and mission of the Order which is shared by all the brothers and sisters, and then to consider distinctions according to the particular gifts that are found among us. The ordained Dominican brother, for example, is in the first

⁴ *Summa theologiae* III 72 5 ad 2, *potestas publice fidem Christi verbis profitendi, quasi ex officio*

⁵ Humbert's letter to Albert is found in Rudolph of Nijmegen, *Legenda Alberti Magni* (ed. H.C. Scheeben, Cologne 1928, pp.154-56). An English translation is given by Simon Tugwell OP in *Albert & Thomas: Selected Writings* (The Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press 1988, pp.16-18).

⁶ Letter of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith *Iuvenescit Ecclesia: On the Relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts in the life and mission of the Church* (2016): while the hierarchical confirms the charismatic, the charismatic moves the hierarchical. We cannot hope that the Order will be clearer about this distinction and these relations than the Church itself is!

place a Dominican friar and so he is not only a presbyter. We understand our ministerial priesthood, therefore, within the communion and mission of the Order as it serves the communion and mission of the Church.⁷ The identity of the cooperator brothers is defined in relation to their profession as consecrated religious which places them in the charismatic dimension of the Church's life as *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* understands it.

2.3 WE ARE PREACHERS

13. For some historians of the Order, it was the papal bull of 21 January 1217 which finally confirmed what St Dominic wanted, an order that would be called, and would be in fact, an order of preachers. It was in that bull that the brothers were first referred to as "preachers" and not simply as brothers who preach. It is, therefore, something we are and not just something we do. We know also that the term *praedicatio* in the early days referred to the entire project of Dominican common life and obedience: prayer and study, community life and preaching. The ministry of Dominican preaching was to be a community ministry and each house was a "house of preaching." Not all the friars preached individually, not even all the friars who were ordained. In fact, the first generations were very strict in determining which brothers had received "the grace of preaching". This later gave rise to problems and the expression "grace of preaching" was removed from the Constitutions. But the fact that Dominican preaching is a community mission, and that the "preaching" is in the first place the Dominican community itself, means that all members of the community carry out this mission. Dominic entrusted the ministry of preaching to the community in order to guarantee the continuity and permanence of that ministry and to support and accredit the preaching with the witness of the evangelical life of the community. Today, it is rightly repeated that preaching is not something we do, it is something we are: "we are a preaching".
14. A major concern of the Church from the Middle Ages onwards was the licence to preach: who has the authority to preach the gospel? The *Fourth Lateran Council* (1215) changed things significantly:

... bishops are to appoint suitable men to carry out with profit this duty of sacred preaching, men who are powerful in word and deed and who will visit with care the peoples entrusted to them, in place of the bishops since these by themselves are unable to do it, and will build them up by word and example (Canon 10).

We see in this decision that the mission of the Church required an important development in organising the ministry of the Word. By the time of the Second Vatican Council, it was clear and uncontroversial that the first task of all priests as co-workers of the bishops is to preach

⁷ Note that Vatican II left untreated the question of the priest who is also a religious.

the Gospel of God to all people.⁸ Might the mission of the Church require further significant developments today or in the future? Undoubtedly. God constantly brings new things to birth in his Church, Honorius III wrote to St Dominic.

15. At the same time, Humbert of Romans pleaded with Albert the Great not to accept a bishopric: how can you preach from a base of poverty if you accept such a position of power? That base is a necessary foundation for preaching as St Dominic wanted to do it. He had scattered his brothers to various parts of Europe in order to study, to preach and to found convents. The credibility of Dominican preaching was founded on two things, therefore, on the one hand poverty and the simplicity of a shared evangelical life, on the other hand study, contemplation and scholarship. The poverty of the mendicant orders was not an end in itself. It was essential in order to give credibility to their preaching, in imitation of Christ's lifestyle and that of the apostles as he sent them out to preach. Scholarship was the other essential foundation for their preaching. Our traditions of scholarship are being well maintained, but what about our poverty / mendicancy today? What about the joy and fruitfulness which, we are told, followed on the preaching of Dominic and his first brothers? What about the contemplative dimension which is always part of our approach to study? What about the holiness of life which gives authority to those who witness to the Word?
16. The dangers going with this mission were highlighted by Humbert's plea to Albert: how preach the gospel effectively from a position of power? The Church looks to consecrated religious not only as examples of fraternal life lived in communion but also as men and women ready to proclaim the gospel to the marginalised, to live and work with those who in various ways are on the periphery of society and of the Church. Often it has been the co-operator brothers who have served this aspect of the Order's mission best, working with people at the margins, people who for one reason or another are not 'in focus', not being concerned about institutional power so as to be closer to those who are without power.
17. From the beginning the Order defined itself as clerical and the motives are quite clear in the origins of the Order. As well as the connection with the celebration of the sacraments and the link with episcopal authority, doctrinal preaching was only allowed to those who were ordained. It meant preaching the central mysteries of the Christian faith, namely the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption, the Resurrection, the action of the Holy Spirit. Non-ordained people were allowed to give moral exhortation, to preach on the virtues and against vices. Today no baptized person is prohibited from announcing the mysteries of the Christian creed and we have all known compelling and effective lay preachers.
18. We live in a time of increasingly rapid change. Only becoming accustomed to the internet, the world is now faced with the challenges and possibilities of artificial intelligence. These are developments at least comparable to the invention of the printing press and offer possibilities for communication which are clearly relevant to the work of preaching. There is

⁸ Vatican II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis: Decree on the ministry and life of priests*, n.4

a great need for men and women skilled and formed in the use of these technologies and ready to co-operate with their brothers and sisters who are formed for other aspects of the ministry of the Word. In a specialised world the Order needs people with specialised knowledge and expertise, not just in the area of theology but also in the many areas relevant to the work of preaching today. The early chapters of the Order insisted that men wanting to be cooperator brothers should have certain skills and expertise that will contribute to its mission and provide what that mission requires. The brothers continue to bring to the Order the gifts they have been given to put them to work for the mission of preaching. As specialisation increases so too does the need for collaboration and co-responsibility. It is important that the experience of all the brothers and sisters is shared across the Dominican family and that the responsibility to preach in whatever ways are open to us is taken seriously by each of us.

19. First and last, however, we are effective preachers only if we are also contemplatives of the Word, loving servants of the Word in receiving it, celebrating it, living it and proclaiming it. Whatever technological developments may mark our lives in the future, it is the life-giving Word which is our subject, a Word we wish to share with all people, helping them to join us, whatever their vocation or state in life, in contemplating it and sharing with others the fruits of that contemplation.

2.4 THE CO-OPERATOR BROTHER

20. After all that has been said, are we any nearer to glimpsing the “figure” of the Dominican co-operator brother? We know that it is a particular state of life present in the Order from the beginning and across the centuries, necessary, as the general chapter of Quezon City says, if the fulness of the Order’s identity is to be manifested: ‘where presbyter and cooperator brothers are seen to be present and working together the Order is truly and fully present’.⁹
21. As professed friars the brothers are also preachers: service of the Word is their being and life also. From the common priesthood of all who are fully initiated in the Church (LCO 1 §VI), further specified by their profession in the Order of Preachers, springs the brothers’ co-responsibility for the life and mission of the Church within the preaching of the Order. Profession in the consecrated life and, in particular, profession in the Order of Preachers constitutes the specific identity of the vocation of the brothers.
22. Aquinas wrote that religious life adorns the Church, adding to its beauty. Its purpose in the first place is not to undertake particular tasks but simply to glorify God and to sanctify those who are called to it, things that are clearly good in and of themselves.¹⁰ Consecrated life itself proclaims hope in the Resurrection. Lived well, it reveals the beauty of Christ to the

⁹ ACG Quezon City 1977, §62.2-3. See also ACG Tultenango 2022, §78

¹⁰ *Summa theologiae* II.II 183 2; 183 3; 184 1; 186 1

world and draws people into the Divine Life. This is essential but not unique to the vocation of the brother. If our common life ceases to adorn the Body of Christ and praise his goodness, we are ‘noisy gongs and clanging cymbals’. Something which has been emphasised strongly in recent years in magisterial and theological teaching is that the ‘way of beauty’ is an essential modality of the ministry of the Word today. It is also why the contemplative dimension is always prized in consecrated life.

23. The preaching of the cooperator brothers can be a healthy prophetic stimulus within the Order. This type of preaching depends entirely on the quality of a brother’s spiritual and evangelical life. We must think firstly about the brother’s spirituality rather than about his work. This “preaching without ordination”, in the many ways in which it is done by the brothers, is an important contribution of the brothers’ vocation to the rest of the Order. Recalling the charismatic basis for their preaching should help to avoid the temptation to “clericalize” the brothers and distort their vocation. At the same time, recent general chapters have reminded us of the need to renew our appreciation of the Dominican presbyterate, re-thinking its meaning by, for example, recovering the sense of spiritual paternity.¹¹
24. The charismatic aspect of the Church’s life is prophetic which sometimes means “disruptive”, challenging an institutional arrangement that can all too easily become complacent. Linking the charismatic with the prophetic, religious life is a voice from the periphery. The Church asks religious to be with the very poorest and to represent them, calling the Church to live again from the creative power of love which may at times seem chaotic before it is recognised as creative. The brother’s vocation is disquieting because it calls us to appreciate the non-instrumental, the non-functional, the human reality simply for itself, in its beauty and its neediness. Religious life serves as a “mirror and memory” for the Church, reflecting and reminding it of what it is called to be. The brother’s vocation is the vocation to religious life which is a particular way of manifesting the beauty of Christ and of drawing people to Christ. The empowerment of lay people in the Church means that young men and women will now be attracted to our life not in order to do certain things, which they could just as well do outside the Order, but to take up the preaching mission specifically as consecrated religious. Without a sense of religious life as desirable in itself, talking about the ways a brother can do internal or external ministries will do nothing to promote his vocation. The desire to reveal Christ to the world through the ‘holy preaching’ is what everything comes back to.
25. The mendicant vocation was prophetic also in obliging those who lived it to be out and about, in the world and engaging with the world. This was not only for the purposes of seeking economic support but in order to identify the presence of the Spirit moving also in the world. Yves Congar OP, in *True and False Reform in the Church*, stressed that the Church

¹¹ ACG Biên Hòa 2019, §§91c and 268, and the Master’s letter of promulgation; ACG Tultenango 2022, §82

needs to listen to the world, that the world also, we might say, can serve as “mirror and memory” for the Church. We can understand it as the kind of prophetic critique which, under God’s providence, calls us forward. Often it is the co-operator brothers who have been closest to the people and more aware of their concrete situations and circumstances. The cooperator brother is often at the periphery, perhaps therefore in the vanguard, of the Church as it engages with the world.

26. Promoting vocations for the co-operator brotherhood is an urgent challenge.¹² There are divergent views across the Order about the future of the cooperator brother’s vocation and clearly it cannot be promoted and sustained where the necessary conviction about it is not found. If vocations are to be promoted effectively, the Order must recover conviction about the brother’s vocation. To what extent are we convinced about the truth of this statement: *the Order responds more effectively to the needs of preaching the gospel today when it is made up of cooperator brothers also*? In places where this is accepted, everything should be done to support the formation and engagement of the brothers in the life of the communities and to share the experiences of such places with the Order as a whole. In places where social and cultural traditions militate against the promotion of the brother’s vocation extra effort needs to be put into understanding, explaining and promoting this vocation. Provinces need to analyse their own commitment to our mission and the ways that they are drawing young men to participate in it. We believe that the testimony of individual brothers concerning their vocation and how they are living their lives is the most powerful way to present this way of life and to promote this vocation.
27. We have cooperator brothers, therefore, so that the gospel can be preached by us in all the ways in which it can be preached. All members of the family are essential. The Order can offer men a way of living their Christian lives which is neither that of ministerial priesthood, married life or the single lay life. In discerning vocations to the brotherhood, as for the formation of brothers, their inclination to the Church’s mission and their sense of co-responsibility in regard to that mission, must be a fundamental criterion.
28. Thinking about the brothers obliges us to think about our motivation in promoting *any* vocations to the Order. Why do we do it? Is it to keep up numbers? Is it to maintain a supply of presbyters for the Church? Do we need to construct a new story about ourselves, not just about the brothers, if we are to be free from thinking in categories too long established and if we are to find fresh energy and enthusiasm in responding to new missionary needs? Perhaps a more radical change is needed, fresh vision rather than simply seeking new methods for old wineskins? The process of ‘synodality’ coincided with the period in which our commission was working. We do not yet see what implications that process might have for consecrated religious and for the brothers in particular, except that all members of the Church are called to embrace the ‘synodal way’. It means in the first place ensuring that all

¹² Tultenango 2022, §§28, 196

Dominican brothers and sisters appreciate the 'synodal' form of self-government which St Dominic gave to the Order and that all are enabled to participate as fully as possible in the workings of that form of self-government.

29. It is important to respect the mystery and grace of vocation in the life of each individual person. A vocation means a call by the Lord to a particular way of life. It is essential that aspirants to the Order are inserted first in the life of the Church, recognising the dignity of baptism and of all Christians, appreciating the universal call to holiness as well as the particular call for each person. It may be that promotion of the lay vocation in the Church has lessened esteem for religious life while the need for ministerial priests remains clear. But the cooperator brother witnesses to the grace of a consecrated life, the gospel lived radically in a life given completely to God, in poverty and simplicity, from a desire to take on the cost of discipleship. It is essential, therefore, that a friar who believes himself called to be a cooperator brother should receive the support of his brothers and sisters in pursuing this call and in living it. Younger brothers speak of being discouraged by their clerical brethren from continuing to pursue the vocation they believe is theirs. A brother who addressed our commission said that the brother's vocation is not for the faint-hearted today, those called to it need discipline, integrity, transparency and maturity. It might be helpful to reflect that the vocation of the brother is similar to that of the Dominican nun in being simply about the religious life and not in the first place functional for some particular activity. If there is no God the brother's way of life, like the nun's, is pointless but if there is God then he deserves everything (Sr Breda Carroll OP).
30. The cooperator brother's vocation is often spoken of as having a representative or 'quasi-sacramental' function and there is a temptation to find its *raison d'être* entirely in some such representative function: it reminds us of fraternity or poverty, of simplicity or availability ... In doing this the Order seeks to express its appreciation of the brothers: their presence reminds us that we are not only presbyters, it reminds us of important aspects of our spirituality. But we value each other in the first place for who we are in ourselves and for what each of us brings to the Order, not just for representing things for us. In fact, the most important structural or institutional contribution the cooperator brothers make comes simply when they live their consecrated religious life well. In this they are not only representatives but witnesses. The Master of the Order puts it very well when he says that 'one brother in a community is enough to bring us back to our fraternity'. We must, however, first appreciate the brother for himself in order to see the deeper value of the Master's statement.
31. Much time has been given to discussing the best name for the brothers, particularly at the general chapter of Biên Hòa (2019). Many within the Order dislike the term "co-operator" and it can be difficult to explain to outsiders. There are practical difficulties because it is a clunky title and unhelpful for communication within the Church at large, since no other

religious order or congregation uses this term. Efforts to find a better way of naming the brother and his vocation have proved fruitless. Their name, like that of all members of the Order, is brother (*frater*) as it is sister (*soror*) for women members of the Order. All are equal in dignity.¹³ At certain times it will be necessary to speak of a brother's or sister's specific vocation or status within the Order: nun, apostolic sister, lay Dominican, priest brother, co-operator brother. But where it is not necessary to make any distinction then it is enough to speak of the brothers and the sisters of St Dominic. The present situation is that in official documents the term 'cooperator brother' continues to be used while provinces are free to use other terminology if the circumstances of their region, or the needs of external communication, make that advisable and/or helpful.¹⁴

32. If the name cooperator brother is maintained, the term "cooperator" must be understood in the sense of co-responsibility in the evangelizing mission of the Church which the Order is called to serve (LCO 219 §II). Even if it is awkward in some ways, it has a solid theological foundation within the Order, where some distinguishing title will always be necessary. In 2009 Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the co-responsibility of all members of the Church: they are not just collaborators with the clergy, he said, they are co-responsible for the Church's life and mission. But he also said that in this regard, the Church still has a long way to go.¹⁵ Likewise, the cooperator brothers are not defined simply or even primarily as cooperating with the presbyters. Rather are they co-responsible in the evangelizing mission of the Church as it is undertaken within the Order of Preachers and in line with their particular vocation within the Order (LCO 100 §II).¹⁶ The first use of the term "cooperation" in LCO is actually in regard to the ordained friars who, as cooperators with the episcopal order by reason of their ordination, have a prophetic responsibility for the preaching of the Gospel (LCO 1 §V). The brothers who are not ordained cooperate in this same mission on the basis of the common priesthood which, as Dominican friars, they exercise in a particular way (LCO 1 §VI). We are all cooperators, therefore, in the mission of Christ as carried on by the Church, and we do it in many and varied ways. Even more, we are called not only to co-operate but to be co-responsible for the Church's life and mission.

2.5 OTHER MINISTRIES, BAPTISMAL AND DIACONAL

¹³ Note especially the fine text in ACG Quezon City 1977 referred to in the Appendix below.

¹⁴ ACG Biên Hòa 2019, §192

¹⁵ Benedict XVI, *Address at the Opening of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome on the Theme 'Church Membership and Pastoral Co-responsibility'*, 26 May 2009 (available in various languages on the Holy See's website at <https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en.html>).

¹⁶ The text of LCO 100 §II referred to has now been abrogated by the general chapter of Tultenango (ACG Tultenango §339). The previous general chapter had already removed the specific reference to the cooperator brothers (ACG Biên Hòa 2019, §388). As noted at the end of the appendix to this report, this text served to structure the report prepared by the Madonna dell'Arco Commission for the general chapter of Quezon City (ACG Quezon City 1977, §62).

33. Baptismal ministries¹⁷ are not ‘minor orders.’ Formerly referred to as ‘lay ministries’, and since 2021 open also to women, they are based in baptism. When cooperator brothers are instituted in one of these ministries it is on the basis of their being baptised persons and not from an orientation towards the ministerial priesthood. Like the diaconate, these ministries may be received in either a transitional or a permanent way. But there remains a danger of clericalizing these ministries, as there is also of clericalizing religious generally, e.g. by assuming that if consecrated people are present, they are the ones who should be asked to take on liturgical functions.
34. It is a question for individual provinces as to whether all friars in formation are instituted in the baptismal ministries of lector and acolyte. It is not necessary that cooperator brothers should be so instituted although there is nothing to prevent it. The danger already mentioned, of ministries being clericalized, needs to be guarded against, however, since at the present time the term ‘ministry’ seems more and more to imply a service of the Church community that is internal, liturgical and quasi-clerical. The term ‘apostolate’ on the other hand refers to a service of the Church community and of the world that is external, pastoral and engaged in the life of men and women beyond the walls of the church building.
35. Yet all ministry in the Church includes apostolic outreach. The ministry of *lector* involves not just reading at Mass but includes a broader ministry of proclaiming and teaching the Word, having a real apostolate to the Church and to the world centred on the Word of God. The ministry of *acolyte* is more internal, focused on liturgical services, but is understood also as including a broader ministry of preparing people for the reception of Holy Communion, bringing the Eucharist to the sick, and so on. Requirements remain as for any ministry: to live a spiritual life appropriate to the ministry one exercises, to receive the necessary formation, and to be appointed to the task by the Church.
36. Now that the *catechist* is recognised as a specific ministry, and not just a task linked with the lector, it may well be that some of our brothers will be formed and instituted as catechists, a ministry which many of them already carry out. The catechist seems to be the ministry that holds most potential for Dominicans since it is concerned directly with the formation of people in the faith. We note what the Master of the Order says in his *relatio* to the general chapter of Tultenango, ‘with the institution of the ministry of catechist ... it seems opportune to encourage lay Dominicans, especially those who have the charism of teaching, to be instituted as catechists’.¹⁸
37. It is fitting but not necessary that the co-operator brothers be instituted in one or other of the baptismal ministries. They are already apostolic through their profession as Dominicans

¹⁷ See note 2 above

¹⁸ ACG Tultenango 2022, *Relatio MO*, §57.

even where they are not instituted formally in one of these ministries. Their vocation is, in the first place, to witness by their spirituality to the religious life itself, the gift of themselves to God and to Christ as the Word of God. As professed friars of the Order they are preachers in their particular way even without any formal institution in a ministry.

38. While debate continues in the Church on the role of the deacon, permanent diaconal ministry is coherent with our mission though it constitutes, in fact, a third type of friar – neither presbyter nor cooperator brother. The conditions required for Dominican diaconal ministry are the same as for other brothers, namely a full living of Dominican fraternal life.¹⁹ The deacon is ordained to service of the charity of Christ which has its sources in the Word (hence the deacon preaches) and in the Cup (hence the deacon is typically the minister of the chalice). This is always with a view to the common good of the community he serves. The sacramental witness to charity on the part of the deacon is distinct from the charismatic witness to charity in the life of, for example, Martin de Porres who was neither presbyter nor deacon and whose service of charity was rooted simply in his personal holiness. This helps to clarify the distinction between the hierarchical or sacramental and the charismatic: one belongs to the order of signification, the other to the order of personal holiness.

2.6 RECURRING QUESTIONS

39. A number of particular issues continue to surface whenever the brothers' vocation is considered. One is *our use of the term 'cooperator'*: can we find a better way of naming this vocation? What was decided at Biên Hòa seems to be the best solution possible at the present time: see §§31-32 above. It is important to remember why the brothers themselves are unhappy with this designation: it seems to imply that they are simply cooperators in the ministries of the presbyters and exercise no ministry independently, or even that they are secondary to the mission of the Order. Resistance to changing the designation and calling all friars simply "brothers" may arise from a fear that this will have implications for the clerical status of the Order and further confuse the issue considered in n.40 below. At the same time, it should be noted that recent general chapters have removed all references to the distinction between clerical and cooperator brothers except where it is necessary to refer explicitly to one or other of these.
40. Another issue is *the question of passive voice* in the election of superiors concerning which there have been some relevant developments in the Church in recent years: a rescript of 18 May 2022 concerning un-ordained superiors in clerical institutes, and the Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Curia of 19 March 2022, *Praedicate evangelium*, regarding the link between ordination and jurisdiction, a link that was strengthened after Vatican II.

¹⁹ ACG Quezon City, 1977, §63

The *rescript of 18 May 2022* allows a general superior with his council to appoint a non-cleric as a local superior. Were a non-cleric to be elected as a major superior or appointed as his vicar this would require the permission of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life (a permission given already in the case of the Congregation of Holy Cross). It is not a change in the underlying law but a change to the Church's procedure for making exceptions under certain circumstances. Nor does it envisage local superiors being elected by their communities and so the language does not quite match that of LCO. While the requirements of LCO for electing a superior remain in place, the general chapter of Tultenango inchoated a change to LCO 443 §II to clarify that those requirements do not apply to postulations; postulation is itself a means to seek dispensation from requirements.²⁰ As always, there needs to be just cause for a postulation and it is also important not to move towards defining the cooperator brother in clerical terms.

The *Apostolic Constitution of 19 March 2022* returned to the pre-Vatican II situation where ordination and jurisdiction were further apart. But the kind of power involved, in presiding over a Dicastery for example, is always "vicarious" whereas our superiors exercise proper and not vicarious authority. But the concerns of *Praedicate evangelium* are relevant to the involvement of un-ordained brothers in our government more generally, as diffinitors, councillors, and so on. Our last general chapter encouraged provinces to invite a cooperator brother to attend the provincial chapter where there is no brother among the elected members of the chapter.²¹ Likewise, the various councils of the Order are strengthened by the presence of cooperator brothers, an arrangement which manifests the fulness of the Order and keeps the brothers' vocation in the minds of the brothers generally.

It is interesting that in speaking to our commission, Brother Michael McAward SM informed us that his congregation, from its foundation a 'mixed' congregation of ordained and un-ordained members, chose to be designated, like ours, as a clerical religious institute because this gave them greater autonomy. At the same time, they have always enjoyed particular derogations on account of their unique origins.

41. A third recurring issue is the question of *preaching during Mass* or at other liturgical celebrations: must this always be restricted to the one presiding, to another presbyter or to a deacon, and so never possible for student brothers or cooperator brothers, for sisters and lay people generally? While recalling the links between preaching and ministerial priesthood which are outlined in LCO I §§IV-VI (see also LCO §57), and recalling also the more general sense given to the term "preaching" in recent legislation of the Order, we make two suggestions. One is to be aware of the possibility offered by Canon 766: 'The laity may be allowed to preach in a church or oratory if in certain circumstances it is necessary, or in particular cases it would be advantageous, according to the provisions of the Bishops' Conference and without prejudice to Can.767 §1'. (Canon 767 §1 says the homily itself is

²⁰ AGC Tultenango 2022, §353

²¹ ACG Tultenango 2022, §174

reserved to a presbyter or deacon.) Our second suggestion is to consider the many other ways in which preaching may be undertaken: within para-liturgical or devotional settings, during novenas and moments of retreat especially in the 'high seasons' of the year, as well as the many possibilities offered by the internet and modern media, possibilities already being realised in many ways by brothers and sisters of the Order.

42. One might ask: why does the question of the authority to preach the homily come up. Countless opportunities to proclaim Christ are available to the non-ordained in the Church. Have we allowed the emphasis on this particular moment of preaching to distract us? As if we were the order of homilists and not the order of preachers? The more we talk about brothers and others giving homilies, the less we pay attention perhaps to other needs and opportunities. We may also be overvaluing the homily. Without going as far as saying we should drop this question, we need to consider whether it has become a distraction from our mission.

CONCLUSION

There is one Dominican vocation lived in different ways by the men and women who belong to the different branches of the Dominican Family. We can identify easily some of its main characteristics, all of them focused in some way on the loving service of the Word of God. We receive the Word in preaching and in prayer, in study and in contemplation. We celebrate the Word in liturgy as well as through the arts, music, literature and so on. We live the Word in the common life we share together. And we seek to preach the Word through teaching and works of mercy, responding, as Pope Francis put it in his talk to the general chapter of 2016, to the cry of the flesh of Christ, the cry of the poor.

Our aim has not been to give a definition of the brother's vocation but to highlight its goodness to which the lives of so many brothers has testified and continues to testify. To translate that vocation into words proves difficult for many reasons, social, cultural and theological. It is also difficult because there are different ways in which the vocation of the brother is being lived in different parts of the world and in different provinces of the Order. While we did not find a 'definition' of the cooperator brother we believe that this is not a difficulty: the brothers are here and we know what they mean to our communities when they are present. We sought to be motivated not by anxiety and fear about the disappearance of the brothers but rather by the desire to appreciate anew the good that they are for the Order and for the Church. One of the conclusions at which we arrived was seeing more clearly that the work of understanding the brother's vocation is the work of understanding religious life itself in the Church today. For that reason, the Order's concern about the brothers is a concern not just about that particular vocation but about the integrity of the Dominican vocation as a whole. We can apply Saint Paul's comment here: 'if

one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it' (1 Corinthians 12.26).

At the same time, if we are to present the vision of a striking way of life to a new generation it is urgent that we find both conviction and expression regarding the brother's vocation. How to do that in a way that is not exclusive or negative and yet catches something of the specificity of this way of living the Dominican vocation: this has been the challenge for chapters and commissions of the Order for many years now. But it seems clear that finding conviction about it is the main challenge: where that is found, the necessary words will come.

What we have given here may be described as a snapshot of where we are at this moment in the life of the Church and of the Order. The Appendix which follows reveals how the dynamics of the brothers' mission within the Order has evolved in recent decades. We hope of course that our work will shed some light on the task of understanding and promoting the brothers' vocation as we look to the future. We cannot end without expressing our admiration and gratitude for the brothers of the Order, living and deceased, who have inspired us in how they live our common vocation, in brotherhood and humility, in prayer and mutual service. As the Master of the Order expressed it in meeting with our commission, "one brother in a community is enough to bring us back to our fraternity".

APPENDIX

Here we note the more substantial statements about the cooperator brothers in the acts of general chapters since 1968, we note the reports of earlier commissions charged with considering aspects of the brothers' vocation, and we record some important events relevant to the brothers' place in the Order's life and mission. Besides the longer statements, commissions and reports, there is a series of changes to LCO across these years which reflects the Order's concerns regarding the integration of the brothers in the life, ministry and government of the Order, dealing with issues such as extending passive voice, removing reference to the distinction of cleric and cooperator where it is not necessary, and strengthening the formation of the brothers.

1968 River Forest – promulgated the revised LCO under which all subsequent general chapters have been held.

1974 Madonna dell'Arco - This chapter commissioned the Master to set up a **commission** on the nature and current role of the brothers so as to illuminate and strengthen their Dominican life (n.207) as well as considering the question of their passive voice (n.222). This **MADONNA DELL'ARCO COMMISSION** reported in 1977 in time for the Quezon City chapter and the fine treatment of the brothers in the acts of that chapter (a reflection on LCO 100 §II) relies heavily on the commission's report.

1977 Quezon City - This chapter anticipated substantially what subsequent chapters and commission reports have said about the cooperator brothers. Its texts on the brothers (§62) and on the Dominican family (§65) remain valuable as fine statements about the equality and dignity of all members of the Dominican family. It expresses strongly the conviction that to lose the brothers would mean losing something essential to the Order's life. It says that the clerical status of the Order does not mean that non-clerical members – brothers, nuns, laity – are less Dominican than its priests. The diversity is not founded on any inequality but on the fact that the mission of the Order needs to be served by diverse ministries that are mutually complementary.

A significant change is made to LCO 219 §II: the brothers are 'cooperators in the mission of the Order' whereas before it said that they were 'cooperators of the priest brothers'.

1983 Rome – this chapter (n.126) commissions the Master to set up a **commission** to clarify further the status of the cooperator brothers, a commission that should include cooperator brothers.

1986 Avila – this chapter (n.168) commissions the Master to study the status of the brothers, especially in relation to the possibility of assuming the office of superior

1989 Oakland – in his report to the chapter, the Master notes that Avila did not follow up on Rome n.126 but asked instead that the Master continue to study the possibility of electing brothers as superiors. He notes that it is a concern shared by other congregations and at the same time that the number of brothers is decreasing and the variety among the brothers is increasing (clerical brothers who do not desire ordination, brothers who remain deacons or become catechists, brothers serving in traditional roles) all of which requires attention and flexibility in formation.

The chapter itself included a general statement about the brothers in its acts (Chapter III 1.4).

****1984-1992** - Edward Van Merrienboer was the first cooperator brother to be a member of the general council of the Order. As Socius for Apostolic Life he was charged particularly with exploring possible new foundations especially in Asia and for assisting emerging vice-provinces (at that time Nigeria, India and Central America). Damian Byrne's approach was twofold: encourage implementation of the Quezon City acts and encourage brothers to be more integrated into their local communities and ministries based on their abilities and formation.

1992 Mexico City – It includes (Common Life, 1.4) a fine presentation of the place of the brothers, saying that the work on LCO which had been done since Madonna dell'Arco and Quezon City had clarified their vocation: by profession they partake in the apostolate of the Order, enrich our common life, and everything in our legislation is also about them except where a distinction of cleric and cooperator is necessary.

The chapter repeated the commission to the Master (n.44) to be attentive to signs of change in regard to their status and passive voice, maintain contact with others interested in this question, and consider benignly any petition for dispensation of a cooperator brother (elected a superior, presumably) and forward it to the Holy See.

1995 Caleruega – in his report, nn.120-121, the Master spoke of petitions to the Holy See from mendicant orders regarding brothers being superiors, expressed appreciation of the brothers, and says there is need for a vision of how they participate in the mission of the Order.

In its acts this chapter speaks (n.100.3) of the need for plurality in formation, especially in the formation of cooperator brothers.

1998 Bologna – the acts of this chapter devoted a full chapter (Chapter IV, nn.135-145) to the cooperator brothers' participation as preachers in the life and ministry of the Order, and to their formation. Three provinces had been asked by the Master to prepare papers on the cooperator brothers in preparation for this chapter. The brothers remind us that we are all religious brothers, they reach people in circumstances that priest brothers do not, they help us to see that our belonging to each other is founded on our solemn profession. In regard to what they do, there are different 'models' (again a reference to LCO 100 §II), the range of their apostolic activities is much broader than it was in the recent past, and the question of dropping the term 'cooperator' is raised. Provinces should be ready to receive cooperator brothers by having a programme of studies in place for them: philosophical and theological studies, professional and technical formation, according to the capacities of each and the needs of the province.

2001 Providence – this chapter built on what had been said about the brothers at Bologna. It asked (n.289) that a **commission** of experts, with cooperator brothers, be established to prepare a text with proposals for possible changes in LCO. This was necessary because the ecclesiology of Vatican II, centred on communion, participation, and equality in a diversity of ministries, obliged the Order to study more profoundly its clerical character. It was to develop a profile of the 'friar preacher' and its methodology was to include a questionnaire to all brothers of the Order. This chapter encouraged the Master (n.290) to continue to request dispensations where brothers are postulated as superiors. It also spoke (n.292) of the different kinds of permanent deacon in the Order (clerical brothers choosing not to be ordained priests, clerical brothers who for various reasons are not ordained priests, cooperators ordained deacons but remaining cooperator brothers (cf. Congregation for Religious, 15 May 1979)) but says that this is not sufficiently widespread to require changes to our legislation.

In his report to the chapter the Master offered a fine reflection on 'becoming a brother', expressing the fear that with the decline in the number of brothers the Order is becoming more clerical (perhaps he means 'clericalist'). The call to re-value the cooperator's vocation coming from Bologna 1998 will help us to renew our self-understanding that we are all brothers and to construct communities that are 'holy preachings'.

The **PROVIDENCE COMMISSION** reported in 2003, in time for Krakow 2004. Its considerations were historical, legal and theological. It summarised changes in LCO since River Forest, recalled the teaching of Vatican II on religious life, and noted the contributions of earlier general chapters especially Quezon City (1977), Oakland (1989) and Bologna (1998). The report also analysed the responses to the questionnaire sent to all the brothers of the Order (response rate 31%, 1893 of 6210 friars responded). The responses focused on the promotion of vocations, the name 'cooperator' (still preferred by a majority of the respondents), the ministries of the brothers, their formation, leadership roles, the source of Dominican identity (profession, preaching,

community, ministerial priesthood). The challenges identified concern the clerical character of the Order, jurisdiction and passive voice, common and ministerial priesthood, the mystery of the vocation of the cooperator brother. Among the practical proposals to the general chapter is a recommendation that a study of the cooperator brothers in our history should be published for use in the formation programmes.

2004 Krakow – Following the report of the **PROVIDENCE COMMISSION**, this chapter, while appreciating the work of the pre-chapter commission (n.259), asked the Master of the Order 1) to appoint **another commission** (n.257) to study the history and precise meaning of our status as a clerical order, and 2) to promote theological research to arrive at a deeper understanding of the role of the co-operator brother (n.258).

This **KRAKOW COMMISSION** consulted many brothers who were expert in history, canon law and theology, and reported in 2007. Once again it summarised historical, legal and theological aspects of the questions that had been set for it and it presented 14 recommendations to the general chapter.

2007 Bogotá – this chapter affirmed what had been said at Bologna (1998) and Krakow (2004): we are all co-responsible, all cooperators in the one mission. In n.212 it encouraged provincials and formators to take account of LCO 217-220 and to ensure that the RFP and RSP reflect the singular character of the brother's vocation and ministry within the same identity which he shares with the priest brothers. Once again it said that promoters of vocations are to promote the brothers' vocation (n.213), where possible assisted by a brother.

2010 Rome – repeated what had been said at Bogotá n.212, referring again to LCO 217-220 as well as to Krakow nn.248-259. It called for a congress of the brothers (n.218) in order to re-envision and renew the vocation and ministry of the Dominican cooperator brother for our time. In his report to this chapter the Master noted how recent general chapters had reflected extensively about the vocation of the cooperator brothers, that there had been successive commissions, and that some provinces had responded with renewed efforts to promote and cultivate vocations to the brotherhood.

Following this chapter the Master decided that before a congress could be held it was necessary to undertake a serious study of the life and mission of the cooperator brother within the whole Order. In 2011 he established a **COMMISSION OF CO-OPERATOR BROTHERS** to oversee this study which involved regional meetings of all the brothers of the Order as well as feedback from others on a set of key questions concerning the vocation, formation and ministries of the brothers, respecting the historical and cultural diversity of the situations in which the brothers live and work. The work of this commission was encouraged by a gathering of co-operator brothers at Lima in 2012 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the canonization of St Martin de Porres. The **CO-OPERATOR BROTHERS' STUDY** was finalised in September 2013, just after the general chapter of Trogir. It was translated into the official languages of the Order and circulated to all the provinces. It included many proposals about the promotion of the brother's vocation, his formation, his participation in the life of the Order and his ministry.

2013 Trogir – recent developments, including the *Co-operator Brothers' Study*, help us to recognise the cooperator brothers as fully preachers (n.150); all especially vocation promoters and formators are to value, welcome and promote this vocation (n.151); with a view to the Jubilee of 2016 the Master is to encourage the writing of the history of the cooperator brothers in the Order so as to know and appreciate this vocation and the different ways of living it (n.152); provincials and formators are to take account of the rich legislation of the Order concerning the formation of cooperator brothers (LCO 217-220; Bologna, Krakow, Bogotá).

2016 Bologna - This chapter proposed a model of the cooperator brother based on three things in which the brothers are engaged: 1) contemplation, 2) preaching and study, and 3) service (n.129). A **COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE DOMINICAN CO-OPERATOR BROTHERS STUDY** was to be established and asked (n.230) to prepare a text on the identity and mission of the co-operator that might be included in LCO. This it did in preparation for the general chapter of 2019. This committee included some ordained

brothers, one of whom was the newly instituted *Socius for Fraternal Life and Formation* (nn.306-308). The institution of that Socius was partly due to earlier reflections on the co-operator brother's vocation: a proposal had emerged that there should be a general promoter or even a socius for the brothers, and the link was made with fraternal life, seeing the brother's contribution to our life and mission particularly in relation to our brotherhood.

****2017 Augustine Thompson Book** - In response to Trogir n.152 the Master commissioned Augustine Thompson OP to write a history of the brothers in the Order. This work was published in 2017 under the title *Dominican Brothers: Conversi, Lay, and Cooperator Brothers* (New Priory Press). A Spanish translation was published in 2020 (*Hermanos dominicos: Conversos, legos y frailes cooperadores*, published by Universidad de Santo Tomas (USTA), Colombia) and a French translation in 2023 (*Frères en Saint-Dominique: Frères convers, frères coopérateurs*, published by Les Éditions de Cerf, Paris).

2019 Biên Hòa - The text proposed by the Coordinating Committee at the request of Bologna n.230 was substantially included in the acts of this chapter (nn.189-193) but the chapter decided not to add it to LCO. Other petitions from the commission were accepted, however, including the proposal that there be a **PERMANENT COMMISSION** for the vocation of the co-operator brother. After Biên Hòa, the Master of the Order established this permanent commission whose tasks had already been outlined in n.194 and n.197 of its acts. In responding to n.199 of the same general chapter he appointed a **THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION** to undertake the research requested by the chapter.

2022 Tultenango – in his report the Master gave an update on the work of the two commissions appointed after Biên Hòa (nn.27-28). Tultenango was concerned about the need to present a more positive understanding of the priestly role of our ordained friars (n.82) stressing that reflection on the brother must be paired with reflection on priesthood (loc.cit., also n.78). Other concerns were familiar – publishing about the brother's vocation (n.196), having a brother at the provincial chapter (n.174) and ensuring the brothers receive an authentic Dominican formation (n.207). The most radical development was the deletion entirely of LCO 100 §II (Tultenango n.339). Biên Hòa had proposed re-writing this paragraph to remove the specific reference to cooperator brothers (Biên Hòa n.388) whereas Tultenango has removed it entirely.

It brings this appendix to an unexpected end since it was on the basis of LCO 100 §II that the commission of 1976-77 developed its very fine presentation of the cooperator brother's role in the life and ministry of the Order. The stream of development initiated by Quezon City is thus led to this strange conclusion, the deletion from LCO of the text which stands at the source of that stream! So it is that the Spirit moves among us, quietly but unmistakably: when nothing much seems to be happening, things are moving underneath in ways that, we trust, serve to strengthen us in the life and ministry that is ours as Dominican friar preachers.

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