



OPFAM

Dominican Family Matters

A Newsletter for the Dominican Family in Australia, New Zealand, Solomons and Papua New Guinea

Woe to us if we do not preach the Gospel!

Motto for the years leading up to 800th celebration in 2016; 2010 – "The Mission of Preaching"

21st September 2010

*We remember in a special way our Dominican Family members
in Pakistan, in New Zealand and the Sudan*

Dominican Thought for the Week

The Preaching of Antonio de Montesinos

It was September in the year 1510 when the four of us arrived from Spain. We were preachers—Friars Preachers—Dominicans. We'd just finished our studies in Salamanca. We hated to leave—an exciting revival of theology was taking place there, led by our brothers Francisco Vitoria, Domingo Bañez, Melchior Cano. But the Master of the Order - himself an intellectual giant - was Cajetan —Tomás de Vio Cayetano — a true visionary. He sent us to this new land, just 18 years after Columbus' first trip across the ocean. He sent us to announce the Good News, to evangelize, to form a community of preachers, and to be a link between the New World and Spain. He called us "the new apostles".

My Gosh, we were excited. We first arrived at a place called Hispaniola (they'd later call it the Dominican Republic and Haiti). We saw the incredible beauty of the land—it was so lush—the mountains and the trees and the rivers and the flowers and the animals—and the PEOPLE! Physically they were striking with their bronze-colored skin, their pitch-black hair and those dark, penetrating eyes. They were noble looking—men and women alike—so handsome. And the CHILDREN: just beautiful—free and playful and loving.. We loved the land...and we fell in love with the people. They were children of God like us, virgin land waiting for the seed of the gospel. What a privilege to be sent to them and to share with them the gospel of Christ! Our young prior, Pedro de Córdoba, was already beginning to take notes that would one day become the first indigenous catechism in the New World.

After a while we decided we wanted to be closer to the people so we moved to a simple hut made of palm branches. We wanted to learn from them; we adopted their diet, and learned how to prepare the food as they did. We spent hours and hours studying—days/weeks/months trying to learn their language, their customs – there was so much to learn! The people were patient with us, very accepting of our limitations. They seemed to really appreciate our efforts. We worked side by side with them and slowly began to learn the ways of their culture. It was amazing to see how they loved nature. They revered the land and called it their mother because it gave them life. They did not understand what it meant to divide the land into *encomiendas*. In fact, one old, very wise Indigenous man asked us one day, with the use of an interpreter, "You divide the land among yourselves. But tell me, how can you own and divide into pieces your own mother. It wasn't long before we saw some very tragic things: the soldiers, the *encomenderos*, and some of the clergy were taking advantage of the indigenous people. They kept increasing their demands on the workers. The people worked so hard and were treated so harshly that they began to get sick and many died. They were being treated like slaves, or worse, *como animales*. They were beaten, the girls and women were abused, raped and made pregnant, their children brought up into slavery—little kids forced to work like animals. Often children were taken from their mothers, husbands and wives were torn apart.

We complained to the authorities about what we saw. The head of the colony was Columbus' brother, Diego Colón, but he and the others kept patronizing us and telling us we didn't know what the "Indians" were really like—how dirty they were, naked, lazy, idolatrous and ignorant—they couldn't even learn Spanish! They kept telling us that we'd get used to it and that our

main task was to serve the sacramental needs of the Spaniards, and to force the Indians to accept our beliefs and be baptized.

We were writing about what we saw to our brothers back in Salamanca and Avila, and many of them were very supportive and would write back to us about social justice and human rights—and the dignity and sovereignty of all peoples.

Finally, we couldn't take it anymore. We could no longer read the Gospel and remain silent. We met to talk about the situation, each one sharing what he had seen and experienced. We knew we had to do something. We prayed and fasted for many days, asking for God's light and wisdom.

We looked at the causes of the problems. We studied the Scriptures. We put our thoughts together. We knew we HAD-to speak out. It was the fourth Sunday of Advent, 1511. The readings were challenging. We decided that Fray Antonio de Montesinos, the best preacher among us, should preach the sermon. The very last thing we did, before giving our brother, Antonio, a blessing, was to sign the homily. We wanted everyone to know that this was not one brother's ideas, but the preaching of the whole community.

Montesinos enters the scene

I am the voice of Christ crying out in the desert of this island. Therefore it would do you well to listen with all your heart to this voice which will be the most novel, the sharpest, the toughest, the most shocking and dangerous voice you have ever heard.

You live and die in mortal sin for the cruelty and tyranny done against these innocent peoples.

With what right and by which justice do you hold these Indians in such horrible servitude?

With what authority do you carry out such detestable wars against the people of these lands—people so meek and peaceful?

How can you hold these peoples so oppressed and fatigued? You kill them in order to acquire your precious gold everyday. Are these not human beings?

Are immigrants not human beings? Are prisoners not human beings? Women, are they not human beings? Are children not human beings? Are the handicapped and the unborn not human beings? Are people with aids, the elderly, and the poor not human beings?

Are you not obliged to love them as you love yourselves?

Do you not understand this? Do you not feel this? How can you be in such a profound and lethargic sleep?

[Knock on door] Ahh, buenos dias, Señor Almirante... Buenos dias, señor coronel. Bienvenidos a nuestra casa. Pasen, pasen adelante...

Oh...so you don't want to come in? ... You want to know who preached the sermon?.. Oh! You say that the people were upset by the sermon, including the young priest, Bartolome de las Casas? ... And that next Sunday you want a retraction, an apology for what was said?

With all due respect I must tell you, sirs, we ALL preached that sermon. These are my brothers. Our entire community preached that sermon.

Yes, we know that you have an obligation to the king and to the people. We have an obligation, too: to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And yes, you can tell Father Bartolome de las Casas that he is most welcome to come and talk to us himself. . But we will tell him the very same thing that we have said to you: that he must give the land back to the people and RELEASE them from their slavery. Whenever, wherever there is injustice or the abuse of human rights, we Dominicans *must* preach the Word of God. This is precisely why we were sent here. Excuse me? You want us to preach next week. Yes, we WILL preach again... and again... and again...

Text by: Brian J. Pierce, OP, Jim Barnett, OP and Prakash Lohale, OP, Chapter proceedings www.op.org

We continue to remember in prayer those attending the General Chapter of the Order in Rome on this the final day.

You prayers are requested

Many readers would know of the work of the Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia among people with impaired hearing, which began in 1876 and continues in various forms to this day.

One of the Sisters whose entire ministry was among these people was **Sister Anne (M. Mannes) Walsh**. Sister died on Sunday morning, and we will give thanks to God for her remarkable life and pray for the repose of her soul, on Thursday 23rd September, 11 am, at a Mass of Christian Burial in Our Lady of Victories Church, Shortland, Newcastle.

Anne was a most beautiful, gentle lady, whose loving presence meant so much to so many.

She had been a gracious, faith-filled Dominican woman for a remarkable 76 years.

Today is the International Day for Peace

Dominican Sisters of Peace share prayer service

In 2002, the United Nations General Assembly established Sept. 21 as the International Day of Peace. During that same year, the Dominican Leadership Conference (DLC) promoted this most important day to give special recognition of the need for peace in our world and hearts. We join our voices with our extended Dominican family and all who hunger for peace around the world.

To access a prayer service (in PDF format), www.domlife.org

Dominican Calendar

Sep-22 The 233 Blessed Martyrs of Valencia, Spain. All killed for the faith in 1936 by the Communists. Of these, 20 are Dominican priests and brothers, Bl. Jacino Serrano and 19 Companions.

Sep-24 Bl. Dalmatius Moner (1291-1341) Spanish, priest, ascetic.

Sep-28 Bl. Lawrence of Ripafratta (1373-1456) Italian, priest, eloquent preacher, spiritual director, novice master of St. Antoninus and Bl. Fra Angelico

The 16 Martyrs of Nagasaki Saints: Lorenzo Ruiz, husband and father, Protomartyr of the Philippines, member of the Rosary Confraternity (+1637); Dominic Ibañez de Erquicia, Spanish (+1633), and James Kyushei Tomonaga, Japanese, and 7 other Dominican priests; 2 Dominican Cooperator Brothers; 2 Lay Dominicans; 2 parishioners of Dominican missions, canonized 1987.

Please send contributions – short paragraphs – about Dominican Life in your area to archives5@bigpond.com.au – OFTEN!