



# 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 800<sup>th</sup> celebration in 2016;*

**3<sup>rd</sup> May 2011**

**“We hear them speaking in our own tongues of the marvellous acts of God” (Acts 2:11):  
Preaching and Culture / Community Preaching**

### **Dominican Thought For the Week**

Dominic is so much more than a saint, more even than a founder. Dominic is our brother. Dominic is our friend. I was asked to lead a retreat for the administration of one of our Dominican colleges. They asked me to focus on the Dominican tradition of leadership. It was a topic that evaded even Google. Despite the fact that I could not find any references to the Dominican tradition of leadership, I went straight to Dominic, my brother, my friend. And his pattern of life gave me all I needed to talk about the Dominican tradition of leadership. Dominic always saw the potential in his sisters and his brothers. He trusted completely in the Providence of God. Dominic was passionate about mission...

Perhaps Dominic's greatest gift to us was the gift of relationship. We will always have a brother, always have a sister, we will never be left to get on with the preaching alone. Dominic always saw the potential in others. *Ann Willits OP, in 'At Home With the Word, 800 Years of Preaching'*

**We continue to remember in prayer our Dominican brothers and sisters in countries affected by natural disasters and political strife. This week we think especially of those members of our Dominican Family in the United States whose lives have been affected by the second round of incredibly destructive tornados.**

### **Research Project in Northern Iraq**

Sr Trish Madigan OP (EA) and Sr Martha Ann Kirk CCVI, Professor of Religious Studies in San Antonio (USA), have received a grant from the Gulen Institute for a research project entitled “Three generations of Women in Northern Iraq”. Three generations of women will be interviewed to document if and how the Gulen-inspired schools and Sema Hospital have opened horizons for young women, given them confidence, knowledge, skills and virtue that can contribute to a better future for their country. The main aim of the Gulen Institute is to promote academic research as well as grass roots activity towards bringing about positive social change eg the establishment of stable peace, social justice and social harmony by focusing on the themes of education, volunteerism and civic initiatives. As part of their grant, Trish and Martha Ann will be in Iraq from 8-29 June this year. This is an extraordinary opportunity requiring not a little courage and we wish them every blessing on their journey!

## The Master's visit to Our Lady of Mercy Chapter in Norfolk USA

Fr Bruno Cadore OP visited Our Lady of Mercy Chapter in MCI (Massachusetts Correctional Institution) Norfolk. Our Lady of Mercy Chapter is a Lay Chapter of incarcerated men in St. Joseph's Province.

There Fr. Nic was the main Mass celebrant, with Fr. Bruno and Fr. Ed as concelebrants. The Sunday was the Fourth Sunday of Lent. The Gospel was about Jesus healing the blind man. Fr. Bruno gave the homily, tying it to our "cloistered brothers." The blind man was blind from birth and wasn't healed until he met Jesus. This is true of us sinners, also. We sin because we are blind. Not until we meet Jesus are we healed of our blindness. Seeing is believing.

After Mass, the Master met with our "cloistered brothers." Usually, the first question the "cloistered brothers" ask a Dominican friar is, "how can we preach?" But Fr. Bruno beat them to it. He asked "the cloistered brothers," "How do you preach?" Besides being examples of good Christian men in a very hostile environment, the men mentioned their poetry, song writing, and drawing. But the Master suggested that their best contribution to the Order would be their prayers.

Fr. Bruno also, updated us on the progress on the cause for Fr. M. Jean-Joseph Lataste, OP's beatification. And Fr. Bruno told us that he was close to the Dominican Sisters of Bethany, but that was a story for another day. The Chapter is very close to the Bethany Sisters and pray for beatification.

Fr. Bruno final words were requesting that the "cloistered brothers" pray for himself, during his time as Master, along with the general intentions for the Order.

Mrs. Faith Flaherty, OP Our Lady of Mercy Chapter - MCI Norfolk Province of St. Joseph – USA.  
*IDI May 2011*

## A Different Kind of Tree

In March, Sister Pat Chaffee, OP (Racine) traveled to Afghanistan to represent the Racine Dominicans' support of the Afghan Youth for Peace effort. The group planted trees as symbols of the young people's desire to be rooted in peace. The full story, and a video with images from the tree planting and a poem written by the youth, is posted at [www.racinedominicans.org](http://www.racinedominicans.org). For more information about the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers, and the Live Without Wars 2011 Project, visit [www.livewithoutwars.org](http://www.livewithoutwars.org).  
[www.domlife.com](http://www.domlife.com), April 2011

## Of Gods and Men

What a profound experience I had watching this excellent new French film during Holy Week! I usually cringe when I hear about a new movie about religious life or priesthood. How will the filmmakers make us look either like idiots or predators or totally irrelevant people this time? I am very pleased to announce that the makers of "Of Gods and Men" have gotten religious life right, as much as any movie in memory has. Director Xavier Beauvois, who also co-wrote the film, along with Etienne Comar, deserve great praise for their accomplishment.

"Of Gods and Men" tells the remarkable true story of a small Trappist monastery of French monks in Algeria in 1996. The monks live in peace and harmony with their Moslem neighbors. The monks operate a health clinic for the area, and treat many every day with care and compassion. Abbot Christian is very knowledgeable and respectful of the Koran and the Moslem traditions.

In the mid-'90s, violence was exploding in the region. Extremist Moslem terrorists were creating havoc, targeting foreigners and non-Moslems. The film's only violent moment shows the terrorists brutally attacking a group of Croatians. The repressive Algerian military cracks down on them. The Algerians still resent the presence of the French, their longtime colonizers. The monks find their very existence threatened. Both sides counsel them to leave the area and return to France.

In chapter, the nine monks discuss the situation among themselves. At first there is no consensus among them. Some are set on remaining, others believe they should leave. Still others feel that they have not made a decision. They need more time to think, discuss, and pray. Eventually the monks come to a consensus to remain where they are. They know that their decision to remain is a virtual death sentence. Even so, they believe that the presence of the monastery as a place of peace, prayer, and service to their neighbors, is a value that must be preserved. To leave would be a victory for those who advocate violence and force.

"Of Gods and Men" captures the rhythm of monastic life beautifully. The monks are often shown gathered in prayer and silence, chanting the psalms and celebrating the Eucharist. The

soundtrack consists almost exclusively of chanted psalms, sung beautifully. The monks farm the land, go to market, cook and clean, and discuss the issues in their lives. They preach by the Gospel by the fidelity to their monastic life. The clinic treats anyone, even one of the wounded terrorists who is brought to the monastery. However, they refuse to give into the terrorists' demands to give them all their medicines when they barge into the monastery on Christmas Eve.

One of the great accomplishments of the film is to make the monks so human. They laugh and cry and, even, in one scene, curse. They become angry and increasingly worry about their safety. They miss their families at home, and wonder if they will ever see them again. They can be cranky. Some are brave when threatened, others hide under their beds.

In one moving scene, the monks are praying in the chapel when they hear a military helicopter flying low over the monastery. Believing that this is their time to die, they join together physically, facing the window, singing and preparing to die. In another great scene, the monks have their final supper together. The camera shows them each as they eat and drink as they listen to Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake. They seem to know that it is their own Last Supper. The significance of the moment is not lost upon them, or the viewer.

As they live, so they prepare to die. They go about their lives as usual, but with an added intensity, knowing that every day, every moment, might be their last. Every noise, every knock at the door may be the end for them. They go about their lives with tremendous dignity. I thought about missionaries and early Christians whose very life together was a threat to the prevailing culture. I also thought how our lives can be "Holy Preaching," when lived faithfully and intentionally. I know how easy it is to take my religious life for granted. After experiencing this film, I hope not take it for granted again.

I think everyone who reads this review would appreciate the profound experience of this film. I hope to see it again while during its theatrical run, and know that I'll be adding it to my personal library when it becomes available on DVD. There is much food for reflection here on the theology and spirituality of religious life.

Tom Condon, OP in [www.domlife.com](http://www.domlife.com)

***Please send contributions – short paragraphs – about Dominican Life in your area to [archives5@bigpond.com.au](mailto:archives5@bigpond.com.au) – OFTEN!***