

Appointment of Brother Augustin Laffay, O.P., as member of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences

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Brother Augustin Laffay, O.P., Archivist of the Order of Preachers (Rome), has been appointed by the Holy Father as a member of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences. The news was published in the Bulletin of the Holy See Press Office on Monday, February 22, Feast of the Chair of St. Peter.

Born in 1965 in France, Br. Augustin lived mainly in Lyon until he entered religious life in 1994. He pursued higher studies in history and law which enabled him to teach in a secondary school and then, briefly, at the University of Lyon III. The preparation of his doctorate allowed him to discover Rome with the help of several scholarships from the French School established in the Palazzo Farnese. His thesis on the Cistercian-Trappists, *Dom Augustin de Lestrangé (1754-1827) et l'avenir du monachisme*, was published by Éditions du Cerf

in 1998 in the collection « *Histoire religieuse de la France* ».

A son of the Province of Toulouse, he made his profession in the convent of Marseille on December 17, 1995, and continued his studies in philosophy and theology in the province. Ordained priest on June 23, 2001, he prepared a licentiate in theology and held various positions in his province: master of novices and chaplain of a lycée in Marseille, prior and then Master of Students in Toulouse. In 2012, Br. Bruno Cadoré, O.P., Master of the Order, asked him to work on the renovation of the Dominican Historical Institute (IHOP) founded in Rome 80 years ago. The Institute was renovated and was able to accompany the Jubilee celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the Order of Preachers.

His published works deal with the history of religious life, mainly Dominican. He collaborated with Br. Bernard Montagnes, O.P., and Br. Henry Donneaud, O.P., on *La Province dominicaine de Toulouse (XIX^e-XX^e siècles). Une histoire intellectuelle et spirituelle*, "Signes des Temps", Karthala, 2015 and directed with Tangi Cavalin the work *Un siècle de vie dominicaine en Provence (1859-1957). Saint-Maximin et la Sainte-Baume*, Nancy, Arbre bleu editions, 2019. His last book deals with the birth of the Secular Institutes in connection with the great spiritual figure of Br. Joseph-Marie Perrin, O.P.: *Aux origines de Caritas Christi. Juliette Molland, le père Joseph-Marie Perrin et la fondation des petites sœurs de Sainte-Catherine de Sienne (1936-1944)*, Nouvelle Cité, 2021.

For ten years, he has been working on the development of an innovative electronic research tool, the *Dictionnaire biographique des frères prêcheurs. Dominicains des provinces françaises (XIX^e-XX^e siècles)*, initiated and directed by Tangi Cavalin with Nathalie Viet-Depaule and available at <http://journals.openedition.org/dominicains>.

Br. Augustin was called to Rome by Br. Gerard Timoner III, O.P., the current Master of the Order, and began in the convent of Santa Sabina his service as Archivist General for a six-year term of office on January 8, 2020. ■

Dominican celebrations in Albania in honor of St. Dominic



On January 17, a solemn Eucharistic celebration opened the jubilee year of St. Dominic at the Dominican Parish of St. George Martyr in Lagjja Mirdita, Durrës, in Albania. His Excellency Msgr. George Frenco, O.P., Metropolitan Archbishop of Tirana-Durres, presided and the parish priest Br. Geoffrey Bugeja, O.P., concelebrated.

The celebration began with the rite of the *Lucernaria*, with readings and prayers, the blessing and lighting of candles outside the church precincts. The faithful then entered the church in procession singing the litanies of the saints of the Order. The idea behind this being that we frequently refer to St. Dominic as the *Lumen Ecclesiae*, light of the Church. In his homily, the Archbishop presented his reflections on the Gospel of the day, and referred to our Holy Father Dominic and the presence of the Dominicans in the country since the beginning of the Order. In fact, only a few years after the death of St. Dominic in 1221, the Dominicans were active in Albania. They arrived in 1240 and worked there until the end of the 15th century when they were banished by the Turks. They then returned in 1996 to the city of Durrës, from where they reach and serve several other villages that have a strong Catholic presence.

In addition to our Dominican brothers and sisters, other religious sisters took part in the celebration together with the people of God who ask for the intercession of the Saint of Guzman. The singing of the antiphon *O Lumen* and the lighting of the Jubilee candle marked the end of the celebration.

On Sunday, February 7, the parish of St. Dominic in Durrës, Albania, celebrated its patron saint, on the occasion of the beginning of the jubilee year for the eighth centenary of our saint's birth to heaven. The celebration was organized by the parish priest, Br. Bernard Caruana, O.P., and his team.

It started with the blessing of a new icon of St. Dominic painted by an Orthodox iconographer guided by Br. Bernard. The auxiliary bishop of the diocese, Msgr. Arjan Dodaj, F.D.C., presided over the celebration and Br. Constantine Mamo, O.P., concelebrated. The *Vox Iuvenum* choir from Tirana accompanied with their beautiful voices.

Three persons read a short presentation of the saint followed by singing by the choir. A selection from the *Libellus* about the beginning of the Order of Preachers by Bl. Jordan of Saxony, first successor of St. Dominic as Master of the Order, was read. Those present in the congregation prayed an Albanian translation of the responsory *O Spem Miram* followed by other prayers of the faithful. The bishop blessed the Icon and lighted a Jubilee candle prepared for the occasion, and the choir sang the Latin version of the *O Spem Miram* to the melody written by Charles Gounod.

A celebration of the Mass for the Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time followed. During the homily Msgr. Arjan spoke beautifully of our Father Dominic presenting him as a true preacher of truth that shone in the Church, and who only spoke to God in prayer and about God in his preaching. He stressed the fact that, according to his early biographers, Dominic was always transmitting the joy of being faithful to the Lord. He pointed to Dominic's many saintly sons and daughters who were his true disciples. He reminded those present that Dominican Friars came to Albania in the early years of the Dominican adventure as an Order of Preachers. After a period of absence from the country they returned to Albania and are present in the Diocese in the person of the Archbishop Msgr. George Frendo and the brothers responsible for the running of two parishes in the city of Durrës.

After the solemn blessing at the end of the Mass two men carried the Icon of Dominic in procession to the side chapel where it is offered for the veneration of the faithful. Other activities are being organized in

honor of Our Father Dominic throughout this Jubilee Year. ■

Opening of the Jubilee 2021 in the Croatian Dominican Province



On the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, on Thursday, January 28, 2021, the Croatian Dominican Province joined for an evening mass in the Dominican Church of the Queen of Holy Rosary in Zagreb to begin the celebration of two great jubilees: the Jubilee Year commemorating the 800th anniversary of the death of Our Holy Father St. Dominic and the 800th anniversary of the arrival of the Dominicans in Croatian territories. The Mass was presided by the Apostolic Nuncio to the Republic of Croatia, Msgr. Giorgio Lingua.

In his homily, Archbishop Lingua said he was honored to be invited to celebrate the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas with the Dominicans in the year in which the Order of Preachers celebrates the 800th anniversary of the *dies natalis* of its founder, St. Dominic, and the 800th anniversary of the arrival of the Dominicans in Croatian territories, and how significant their presence in this area has been over the centuries. He also thanked the Dominicans for everything they are doing and did during the eight centuries of their presence in Croatia, emphasizing their special contribution in the spiritual and intellectual field. Msgr. Lingua pointed out that Dominicans can be truly proud of their past and that

it is necessary to pray to the Lord to be worthy inheritors and witnesses of their glorious predecessors today.

The Eucharistic celebration was followed by the grand opening of the newly renovated central Provincial Library "Hijacint Bošković", situated within the Priory of the Queen of the Holy Rosary. In addition to being renovated in accordance with the needs of study and learning and better storage of books, Br. Slavko Slišković, O.P., Prior Provincial, expressed hope that various events will come to life in the library, such as book presentations and various scientific, educational and cultural events. In accordance with the epidemiological measures, representatives of the state and city authorities, cultural institutions and the scientific and university communities also gathered with the Dominicans, some of whom delivered speeches. The musical contribution of the ceremony was given by Trio Veljak.

The opening ceremony was also covered by the media – the Holy Mass was streamed live via Laudato Television and Croatian Catholic Radio and via the Province's website and YouTube channel, while the opening program of the renovated library was streamed live via the Province's website and YouTube channel. ■

Blessed Jean-Joseph Lataste (1832-1869)



Alcide Lataste was born in France, in Cadillac in the Gironde, on September 4, 1832. After secondary school, he worked for a few years as a tax controller

in different towns in the south of France: Privas, Pau and Nérac. These years were an opportunity for him to discover, as a member of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul founded by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, a fraternal life turned towards the poorest and marked by common prayer and the Eucharist. At the age of twenty-five, impressed by Brother Lacordaire, Alcide Lataste entered the Dominican novitiate in Flavigny on November 4, 1857.

His first years as a Dominican were marked by illness, which kept him somewhat apart from the other friars and their activities. In 1860, at the priory of Saint-Maximin, he had a profound spiritual experience during the transfer of the relics of St. Mary Magdalene. "Kissing this once debased but now sacred head, I said to myself: it is thus true that the greatest sinners have in them what makes for the greatest saints; who knows if they will not one day become such...". At the end of his studies, he was ordained priest on February 8, 1863, and assigned to the priory of Bordeaux.

In September 1864, he was sent to preach a retreat to the inmates of the prison in Cadillac, his hometown. In spite of all that he had heard in his youth about these women and their crimes, he addressed them from the very first day as "my dear sisters", insisting on this bond of fraternity in Christ that united him to his listeners. The preacher was surprised to see that many of the inmates were leading a life of prayer and wished to give themselves to God. Praying with them before the Blessed Sacrament, he conceived - or rather, in his own words, he received from God - the idea of opening to them the doors to a Dominican contemplative religious life.

Before taking up his office as Master of the student friars, he returned for a second retreat at Cadillac in September 1865; there he met again with the inmates who had remained faithful to the spiritual guidance he had given them: offering to God their daily life after the manner of nuns, albeit in prison. At the conclusion of this retreat, he preached with enthusiasm: "Here have I seen marvels!" He drew a parallel with the same expression used by Catherine of Siena at the end of her ecstasies. It was not in ecstasy but in prison that he saw marvels, hearing the confessions of the inmates and praying with them.

From then on, he became more directly involved in the realization of the ideas that had germinated in him the previous year. In March 1866, he published a pamphlet, *Les réhabilitées (Rehabilitated Women)*, which he distributed especially to elected politicians and to many journalists in an attempt to change public opinion regarding women leaving prison. The projected foundation of the House of Bethany was presented as a sign intended to shift mentalities on this point.

With the help of Mother Henri-Dominique, who very quickly committed herself alongside him in this utopian project, Brother Lataste was able to found the House of Bethany on August 14, 1866. This new community very quickly experienced great difficulties, especially because of the reactions of rejection and mistrust that it received from among those already in religious life. Brother Lataste devoted himself wholeheartedly to the service of his "dear sisters". Meanwhile he continued his preaching activity, but this was soon jeopardized by the pulmonary tuberculosis which he contracted in Lent 1868. He died on March 10, 1869 in the House of Bethany at Frasnés-le-Château (Haute-Saône). His body was transferred the following year when the convent of the Sisters of Bethany moved to Montferrand-le-Château. From the beginning, his tomb was the object of constant devotion. Prayer intentions, and even letters addressed to him, are still deposited there today.

Among the signs of the fruitfulness of Blessed Jean-Joseph Lataste's example and preaching, we should particularly mention the existence of Lay Dominican fraternities that bring together in one community both prisoners and people from outside. The first of these, the fraternity of Our Lady of Mercy, was born in Norfolk MA prison in the United States in 1998.

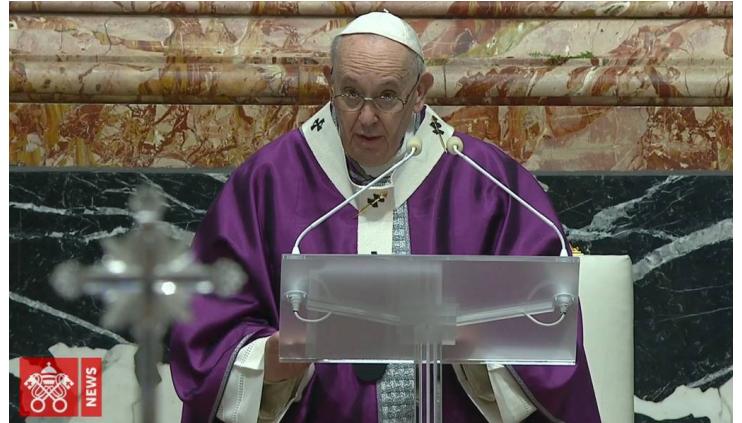
A canonical process was opened in 1937, which led to the beatification of Brother Lataste in 2012. An unexplained cure is presently being studied by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints with a view to his canonization.

For more information:

Père LATASTE, *Prêcheur de la miséricorde, De la prédication en prison à la fondation de Béthanie*, Paris, Cerf, 1992.

J.M. GUEULLETTE, *Ces femmes qui étaient mes sœurs... Vie du Père Lataste, apôtre des prisons*, Paris, Cerf, 2008. ■

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for Lent 2021



"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem" (Mt 20:18)
Lent: A Time for Renewing Faith, Hope and Love

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus revealed to his disciples the deepest meaning of his mission when he told them of his passion, death and resurrection, in fulfilment of the Father's will. He then called the disciples to share in this mission for the salvation of the world.

In our Lenten journey towards Easter, let us remember the One who "humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). During this season of conversion, let us renew our *faith*, draw from the "living water" of *hope*, and receive with open hearts the *love* of God, who makes us brothers and sisters in Christ. At the Easter vigil, we will renew our baptismal promises and experience rebirth as new men and women by the working of the Holy Spirit. This Lenten journey, like the entire pilgrimage of the Christian life, is even now illumined by the light of the resurrection, which inspires the thoughts, attitudes and decisions of the followers of Christ.

Fasting, prayer and almsgiving, as preached by Jesus (cf. Mt 6:1-18), enable and express our

conversion. The path of poverty and self-denial (*fasting*), concern and loving care for the poor (*almsgiving*), and childlike dialogue with the Father (*prayer*) make it possible for us to live lives of sincere faith, living hope and effective charity.

1. Faith calls us to accept the truth and testify to it before God and all our brothers and sisters.

In this Lenten season, *accepting and living the truth revealed in Christ* means, first of all, opening our hearts to God's word, which the Church passes on from generation to generation. This truth is not an abstract concept reserved for a chosen intelligent few. Instead, it is a message that all of us can receive and understand thanks to the wisdom of a heart open to the grandeur of God, who loves us even before we are aware of it. Christ himself is this truth. By taking on our humanity, even to its very limits, he has made himself the way – demanding, yet open to all – that leads to the fullness of life.

Fasting, experienced as a form of self-denial, helps those who undertake it in simplicity of heart to rediscover God's gift and to recognize that, created in his image and likeness, we find our fulfilment in him. In embracing the experience of poverty, those who fast make themselves poor with the poor and accumulate the treasure of a love both received and shared. In this way, fasting helps us to love God and our neighbour, inasmuch as love, as Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches, is a movement outwards that focuses our attention on others and considers them as one with ourselves (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 93).

Lent is a time for believing, for welcoming God into our lives and allowing him to “make his dwelling” among us (cf. Jn 14:23). Fasting involves being freed from all that weighs us down – like consumerism or an excess of information, whether true or false – in order to open the doors of our hearts to the One who comes to us, poor in all things, yet “full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14): the Son of God our Saviour.

2. Hope as “living water” enabling us to continue our journey.

The Samaritan woman at the well, whom Jesus asks for a drink, does not understand what he means when he says that he can offer her “living water” (Jn 4:10). Naturally, she thinks that he is

referring to material water, but Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit whom he will give in abundance through the paschal mystery, bestowing a hope that does not disappoint. Jesus had already spoken of this hope when, in telling of his passion and death, he said that he would “be raised on the third day” (Mt 20:19). Jesus was speaking of the future opened up by the Father's mercy. Hoping with him and because of him means believing that history does not end with our mistakes, our violence and injustice, or the sin that crucifies Love. It means receiving from his open heart the Father's forgiveness.

In these times of trouble, when everything seems fragile and uncertain, it may appear challenging to speak of hope. Yet Lent is precisely the season of hope, when we turn back to God who patiently continues to care for his creation which we have often mistreated (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 32-33; 43-44). Saint Paul urges us to place our hope in reconciliation: “Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20). By receiving forgiveness in the sacrament that lies at the heart of our process of conversion, we in turn can spread forgiveness to others. Having received forgiveness ourselves, we can offer it through our willingness to enter into attentive dialogue with others and to give comfort to those experiencing sorrow and pain. God's forgiveness, offered also through our words and actions, enables us to experience an Easter of fraternity.

In Lent, may we be increasingly concerned with “speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement, and not words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 223). In order to give hope to others, it is sometimes enough simply to be kind, to be “willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference” (ibid., 224).

Through recollection and silent prayer, hope is given to us as inspiration and interior light, illuminating the challenges and choices we face in our mission. Hence the need to pray (cf. Mt 6:6) and, in secret, to encounter the Father of tender love.

To experience Lent in hope entails growing in the realization that, in Jesus Christ, we are witnesses of

new times, in which God is “making all things new” (cf. Rev 21:1-6). It means receiving the hope of Christ, who gave his life on the cross and was raised by God on the third day, and always being “prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls [us] to account for the hope that is in [us]” (1 Pet 3:15).

3. Love, following in the footsteps of Christ, in concern and compassion for all, is the highest expression of our faith and hope.

Love rejoices in seeing others grow. Hence it suffers when others are anguished, lonely, sick, homeless, despised or in need. Love is a leap of the heart; it brings us out of ourselves and creates bonds of sharing and communion.

“‘Social love’ makes it possible to advance towards a civilization of love, to which all of us can feel called. With its impulse to universality, love is capable of building a new world. No mere sentiment, it is the best means of discovering effective paths of development for everyone” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 183).

Love is a gift that gives meaning to our lives. It enables us to view those in need as members of our own family, as friends, brothers or sisters. A small amount, if given with love, never ends, but becomes a source of life and happiness. Such was the case with the jar of meal and jug of oil of the widow of Zarephath, who offered a cake of bread to the prophet Elijah (cf. 1 Kings 17:7-16); it was also the case with the loaves blessed, broken and given by Jesus to the disciples to distribute to the crowd (cf. Mk 6:30-44). Such is the case too with our almsgiving, whether small or large, when offered with joy and simplicity.

To experience Lent with love means caring for those who suffer or feel abandoned and fearful because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In these days of deep uncertainty about the future, let us keep in mind the Lord’s word to his Servant, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you” (Is 43:1). In our charity, may we speak words of reassurance and help others to realize that God loves them as sons and daughters.

“Only a gaze transformed by charity can enable the dignity of others to be recognized and, as a

consequence, the poor to be acknowledged and valued in their dignity, respected in their identity and culture, and thus truly integrated into society” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 187).

Dear brothers and sisters, every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving. The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods, helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father.

May Mary, Mother of the Saviour, ever faithful at the foot of the cross and in the heart of the Church, sustain us with her loving presence. May the blessing of the risen Lord accompany all of us on our journey towards the light of Easter.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, November 11, 2020, the Memorial of St. Martin of Tours. ■

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/le-nt/documents/papa-francesco_20201111_messaggio-quaresima2021.html



Here you can see our pictures of the Mass for Ash Wednesday in 2020



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