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Homily of Cardinal Zuppi

CARDINAL MATTEO MARIA ZUPPI

Inauguration of the Jubilee Year – 800 Years from the Birth of St. Dominic in Heaven

Basilica of St. Dominic | Bologna, ITALY | January 6, 2021



This jubilee year on the occasion of the eighth centenary of the death of St. Dominic is a grace for us all. Holiness always helps holiness. I want to thank the whole Dominican Family, the Master of the Order of Preachers, who wanted to share this joy with the Church, and specifically with the Church and City of Bologna. Father Dominic mysteriously and your presence for hundreds of years have generously sown the seed of the Word, bearing fruits of faith, charity, intelligence, devotion. Thank you.

A Jubilee is a fitting time for joy and renewal. In exchange we give thanks and remunerate the gifts we have, and the gifts we represent for others. It will last a whole year, because the jubilee is not, as digital man would have us believe, a rapid succession of meetings, but above all a spiritual itinerary. And that takes time. It helps us to rediscover what the angel of the Church of Ephesus defined as “Love for a time”, “the first love”, to elude the bitter consideration of old Nicodemus and the

danger of lukewarmness. In fact, not to feel emotions, or to moderate them all may make us think we are balanced and guarantee our tranquility, but it simply means that we are neither cold nor hot, as happens when we think we are rich and need nothing. St. Dominic helps us to feel the cold of a world marked by so many pandemics and the heat of the passion that the love of Christ may reach so many people's hearts, warm them and enlighten them.

We are helped by the moving image of the Mascarella, which you have chosen as the icon of this Jubilee and which takes us back to the first generation of Dominicans. It is the oldest painting of St. Dominic (a few years after his death) but is also – and this is typical of St. Dominic – the picture of the whole community together with him. The humble person is always in a communion, fruit of the Spirit, which values our charism, generates us and makes us a single thing: from this we come and in this we are united. In a world of solitude and of so much individualism, how necessary are tables of friendship and profound intimacy, not efficient self-service or anonymous company canteens! The brethren are shown together but they are not all the same, so each friar's face has different features, as though to indicate their various origins. A universal yet local table, with many identities: all brethren, not all the same! We are at one and the same time called and sent forth, brothers among ourselves and universal brothers, missionaries but not monads.

This image will help us to contemplate our tables today, to discover with our own features the charism that bears many fruits and to choose to prepare many tables at which to experience the sacrament of mutual love, the feast of humble service that protects us from all arrogance, from an elevated idea of the self that makes us bend others to our will and not vice versa. And the little Door, which is actually small because it is humble but is great in charity towards the poor, is a practical continuation of this table of communion.

St. Dominic teaches us to wear our best clothes, because this table is joy and fullness. "Everybody was enfolded in the wide embrace of Dominic's charity, and since he loved everyone, everyone loved him." It was his personal law to be happy with other people. "Without difficulty as soon as they

met him, everyone began to love him". "His figure shone with a sweet, amiable splendor; he was no less respected for that, on the contrary, everyone's heart was very easily captivated by him, and you need only look at him to feel attracted towards him. Whether travelling with his companions or in others' homes, whether with the great, with princes, with prelates, everywhere he happened to be he abounded in talks and examples that led souls to despise the world and love God; always a man of the Gospel in words and deeds." This is how to lay the table and how to be able to enjoy it and make it attractive!

Today St. Dominic communicates to us the passion of taking the Lord's Gospel everywhere, to everyone, those far away, the poor, students, the little and the intelligent. He wanted the fire of the love of Christ to be kindled in people's minds and hearts. This, I believe, is the *kairos* we are experiencing, so the decisiveness of the moment that will not admit delays and frees us from a sense of time expanded and outside time. It is a *kairos* both because of the insistence of Pope Francis, hence of the Magisterium, that drives the whole Church to become a missionary, and because of the pandemic, an opportunity to show light in this "darkness that covers the earth", in the "thick darkness that covers the peoples". At a time when we are led to withdraw in fear, to be reduced to minorities - no matter whether aggressive or intelligent – we are urged to establish relations with everyone, in order to communicate the truth that is Christ.

St. Dominic preached the Gospel, making it attractive and understandable, not condemning, as often happens in the ever-crowded posts of the prophets of doom, those who do not learn from history and can see only enemies, ruins and disasters and not opportunities, challenges, huge fields already ripening. "Arm yourself with prayer, not with the sword! Wear humility, not elegant clothes!" St. Dominic counselled.

And he went to the crucial places, and lived there, where intellectual and theological research was going on, where many people gathered because they were centers of dialogue and research, such as the university. He urges us to go there again, to understand what they are today, not to cut

ourselves off with screens and protections, not to think we can safeguard the truth by building monasteries defended by walls of fear and ignorance, defending a treasure that, if disembodied, has no value, a yeast that proves useless because it is not mixed with the dough, a salt that becomes insipid precisely because it is not dissolved to give flavor to all the rest.

This Jubilee year appropriately begins on the Feast of the Epiphany of Jesus, strong, shining presence to be recognized and communicated, a feast regarded in the Order as the feast of preachers. It is the scene in the center of the altar of St. Dominic's tomb, and in the center of the Basilica in the *ancona* of the main altar. We come together with many seekers of heaven, men of science and research of all origins because we have no borders and we speak that language that proves most familiar to all who listen. How many "pilgrims of heaven" to be able to recognize! How many "shipwrecked always in this infinity" to accompany!

St. Dominic points to the magi as an example of humility, because they set forth, worship and teach us to do likewise, they make no compromise with Herod, which is to say with the pervasive, captivating logic of the world, subjugated to those powers and thoughts that empty consciences and dominate people.

May the alluring light, which makes us tremble, accompany this Jubilee year. It is reflected by St. Dominic, it is humble but not for that reason does it cease to shine, it is the star that helps us find our direction in the night and leads to the light all those who come from afar, those many seekers of truth, to Him who is the way, the truth and the life.

To all of you, and to us, are repeated the very words of Dominic's valediction: "Beloved brethren, this is the heritage I leave you as my children: have charity for one another, to guard humility, and to make a treasure of voluntary poverty". These are the three gifts that we undertake to carry this year, so that St. Dominic may help us to prepare tables of communion in order to break the always abundant bread, full of the Word, of the Eucharist, of brotherly love. ■

Word of Thanks

BROTHER GERARD FRANCISCO TIMONER III, O.P.
*Inauguration of the Jubilee Year – 800 Years
 from the Birth of St. Dominic in Heaven*

Basilica of St. Dominic | Bologna, ITALY | January 6, 2021



We have celebrated the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Thanksgiving, to give thanks to the God for the grace of his Epiphany, his revelation as *lumen gentium*, "light to all the nations". In a most special way, we thank God for giving us St. Dominic, the founder and first friar of the Order of Preachers, whom we lovingly call as *lumen ecclesiae*, "light of the Church". In simplicity and silence, we celebrate the "epiphany", the manifestation of the love and solicitude of the Lord for St. Dominic and for the Dominican family for more than eight hundred years.

God first created light and it is marvelous how the movement of many creatures is influenced by light. Scientists call this movement *phototaxis*, that is, a movement with respect to a light source. Positive phototaxis is movement towards the light, conversely, negative phototaxis is movement away from the light.

St. Dominic is *lumen ecclesiae* because his entire life was oriented towards Christ, *lumen gentium*. As light, Dominic is like the moon rather than the sun. Jesus is the only true light of the word, and just like all of us who are baptized in Christ, Dominic merely reflects the light of Christ. This is what the fathers of the Church call as *lunar ministry*, to reflect the light of Christ, as the moon reflects the light of the sun. And we know that the brightness of moonshine

depends on the moon's position in relation to the sun. **The brightness of the light we bear depends largely on our relation with Christ.** Dominic is a brilliant *lumen ecclesiae* because his entire life is oriented and "exposed" to Christ; there is nothing that blocks the light from Christ, and so Dominic reflected this light more fully and brilliantly. Dominic did not keep to himself the spark of divine inspiration, he founded an Order of Preachers, an order of men and women dedicated to the study of truth, the preaching of grace, and the building of communities, especially the Church. And so we thank God for the gift of Dominic, *lumen ecclesiae!* Today, the Dominican Family all over the world celebrates the opening of the jubilee of his birth into eternal life.

In the name of the Order, I would like to thank His Eminence, Matteo Cardinal Zuppi for presiding over the Eucharistic celebration. We are also grateful for his unwavering and wholehearted support to the jubilee celebration and for his friendship and closeness with the Dominicans. We also thank the civil and religious authorities here present; and everyone who collaborated in the preparation of this solemn celebration.

I am grateful to Br. Fausto Arici, prior provincial of the province of San Domenico and Br. Davide Pedone, prior of this convent where the mortal remains of St. Dominic rests, and all the friars who organized this celebration.

I am also grateful to Br. Philipp Wagner, chair of the Committee for the Jubilee which organized and oversee the jubilee celebration in these extraordinary times. Finally, I wish to thank Br. Bruno Cadorè, former Master of the Order, who started the preparation of the commemoration of the 8th centenary of St. Dominic's *dies natalis* with the help of Br. Gianni Festa, Postulator General of the Order. ■

New Provincial of the Philippines

The new Prior Provincial of the Philippine Province of the Order of Preachers is Brother Filemon I. de la Cruz, Jr., O.P.



Brother Filemon was born on January 19, 1964, in Manila. He is the fourth child of Mr. and Mrs. Filemon and Cezarina de la Cruz. He entered the Dominican Pre-Novitiate in June 1980 and was vested with the habit of the Order on May 11, 1983. He made his simple profession on May 11, 1984, and his solemn profession on May 11, 1987. He was ordained to the Priesthood on April 30, 1992, by Most Rev. Camilo D. Gregorio, DD, then Bishop of Bacolod.

He studied in Espiritu Santo Parochial School in Santa Cruz, Manila. He earned his bachelor's degree in Philosophy from the Philippine Dominican Center of Institutional Studies (PDCIS) in 1986. At the University of Santo Tomas (UST) in Manila, he completed his canonical degree of Baccalaureate in

Sacred Theology in 1991, and his Master's degree in Theology in 2006.

In terms of ministries, Br. Deng, as he is fondly called, was Master of Students in 1992-1996; Master of Novices in 1996-2000; Promoter of the Dominican Priestly Fraternities in 2012-2014; Provincial Councilor in 2012-2016; Socius of the Prior Provincial in 2014-2016; administrator in the University of Santo Tomas in 2001-2017; and Superior of the Dominican community of the Rumah Santo Tomas in Surabaya, Indonesia, in 2017-2020. Prior to his election, he was newly assigned to the House of Saint Lorenzo Ruiz and Companion Martyrs in Navotas, Manila.

Brother Filemon was canonically elected by the brothers gathered in the 12th Provincial Chapter hosted by the Convent of St. Albert the Great in Caleruega, Philippines, on January 17, 2021. The election was confirmed by the Master of the Order on January 18, 2021. With his acceptance, Br. Filemon will serve as the Prior Provincial of the Dominican Province of the Philippines for the next four years. ■

New Rector of *Convitto Internazionale San Tommaso D'Aquino*



On November 27, 2020, the Master of the Order appointed as the new Rector of the *Convitto Internazionale San Tommaso D'Aquino*, Brother Orlando Rueda Acevedo, O.P., who had just

completed his six years as Socius for Apostolic Life. Since, according to its Statutes, the *Convitto* is a residence of the Order for the permanent formation of diocesan and religious clergy, established according to the norms given by the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Holy See also gave the *Nihil Obstat* for Br. Orlando to be appointed Rector of the *Convitto*. He succeeds Br. Luke Buckles, O.P., who has returned to the Holy Name Province in the United States, and whom the Order thanks for the latter's valuable and fraternal service to the *Convitto* for four consecutive terms.

The *Convitto* was created by the General Chapter of Rome in 1946 (Cf. *ACG Rome 1946, 88*). In February 1948, a contract was signed with the Carmelite Fathers so that the *Convitto* could function in the building of the General Curia of the Carmelites in Via Giovanni Lanza in Rome. In 1949, as some letters of the time testify, priests from various dioceses in the United States and Beijing were already residing in the *Convitto*. Seven years later, the *Convitto* had to find a new location, according to a letter dated May 6, 1956, which mentioned the need to move because the Carmelites were selling the building. The Prior Provincial of St. Joseph (USA) then proposed, by letter dated August 8, 1959, to acquire the property of the French Sisters of Our Lady of Compassion, the same building where the famous Irish College operated for many years, and which gave the street its name: "*Via degl'Ibernesi*" (Street of the Irish).



Drawing by the artist Patricia Hakim

At the end of the 18th century, during the French invasion of Rome, many religious institutions were closed. Similarly, the Irish College was closed by order of Napoleon in 1798. Since then, an institution for the care of the sick has operated within its

premises under the responsibility of the French Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, known as the Sisters of Charity. Once the building was acquired by the Order of Preachers on June 29, 1960, the *Estudio Passarelli* was asked to redesign the building, restore it and increase the number of rooms for resident priests. Passarelli added an intermediate interior building and a chapel, built entirely in reinforced concrete, in the typical style of the time, called "brutalist" because of the finishes of the "raw" material; today considered an authentic heritage in the heart of the historic center of Rome.



1937



2020

The Convitto was established as a subsidiary house of the Convent of the SS. *Domenico e Sisto* (Angelicum). In 1976, after a request made to the Master of the Order, the friars of the Convitto did not have an active voice in the conventual chapter. On January 28, 1977, on the feast of St. Thomas

Aquinas, the Master of the Order, Br. Vincent de Couesnongle, O.P., established the Convitto as a house under the immediate jurisdiction of the Master of the Order. ■

Cardinal Mario Grech leads Solemn Opening of the Jubilee Year in Vittoriosa, Malta

The Dominicans of Vittoriosa have opened the Jubilee Year commemorating the 800th anniversary from the death of Our Holy Father St. Dominic with a week-long program. On December 31, 2020, the faithful joined the community for a mass starting at 11:00 p.m. to welcome the Jubilee Year. At midnight the bells tolled solemnly to announce the year of St. Dominic.

Then a week-long preparation was initiated on Saturday, January 2, with the Solemn welcoming in the Church of the statue of St. Dominic. During the week on various days many communities from the surrounding villages and cities were invited to lead masses dedicated to special groups that frequent the Priory. On Tuesday the Archbishop of Tirana, H. G. Mons. George Frendo, O.P. gave an online conference, entitled *Dominican Preaching: An Announcement of Hope*. This conference is part of nine other talks, organized by the Committee for the Centenary of St. Dominic's death of Vittoriosa, entitled, *Aquae Sapientiae*. This event is aimed at studying from various aspects the Dominican Charism today and going forward.

On Wednesday, January 6, the Dominican Community of Vittoriosa joined the rest of the Order in the official opening of the Jubilee, with a whole day of Eucharistic exposition. On Thursday, January 7, the Capuchin community of the neighboring town of Kalkara was invited, as a sign of the long-established fraternity between the Dominicans and the Franciscan Order. In the morning of the following day, a book launching was carried out by the Committee for the Centenary, in collaboration with St. Albert the Great College, which is owned and run by the Maltese Dominican Province. The book, entitled "*800 Candles*", was designed and illustrated by Mr. Carlo Fenech,

translated into Maltese by Mrs. Daniela Schembri, and proofread by Mrs. Marilyn Fenech, all members of staff of the said College. The book, launched by the Rector, Brother Aaron Zahra, O.P., is designed to relate the life of St. Dominic to young children in an accessible and interactive way. Copies of the book may be acquired through www.opbirgu.org.

On Saturday, Br. Zahra, who is likewise the Prior, led a solemn translation of the relic of St. Dominic, followed by Solemn Vespers and a High Solemn Mass. At the end of the mass the sub-Prior, Br. Tonio Mallia Milanese, O.P., presented to the Church a ciborium cover made of silk-crochet-designs, having four Dominican symbols on each side.



The crowning event of the celebrations, however, was the coming of Cardinal Mario Grech to the Dominican Church of the Annunciation on Sunday, January 10, to lead a Pontifical Solemn Mass. The Mass was attended by H. E. President George Vella, President of the Republic of Malta, the Chief Justice, Dr. Mark Chetcuti, and various other

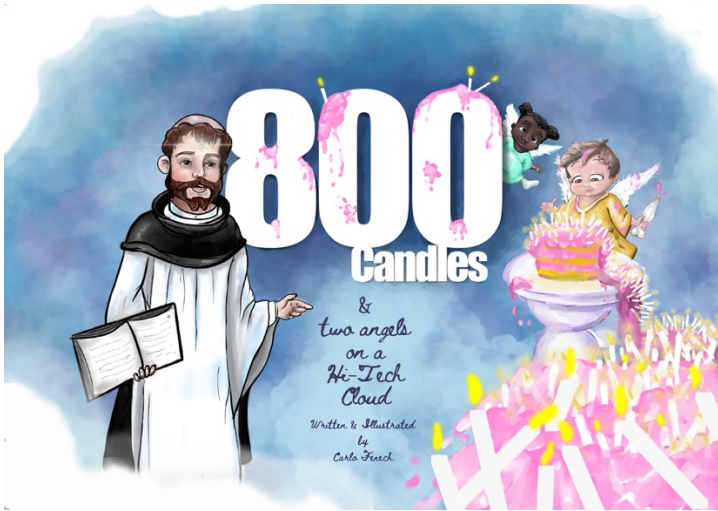
dignitaries. The Cardinal was welcomed by Br. Zahra and the Mayor of Vittoriosa, Mr. John Boxall, while the Prince of Wales Own Philharmonic Society played the *Inno Pontificio*. At the end of the Pontifical Mass, Cardinal Grech lit the Jubilee Candle. The candle is designed in the shape of the reliquary of St. Dominic, which is kept at the Monastery of Monte Mario in Rome, and which carries a relic of Our Holy Father's cranium. This relic is to be brought to Malta for the first time at the end of August, as part of the festivities due to be held in Vittoriosa for the occasion of the Jubilee. The music for the Pontifical Mass was conducted by the Cappella Bugeja under the direction of Br. Salvatore Galea, O.P.

In the evening a Musical Program was held in the Church of the Annunciation by the Prince of Wales Own Philharmonic Society, during which, a new hymn to St. Dominic was executed for the first time. The hymn was composed by Br. Alan Joseph Adami, O.P., and versed by Maestro Raymond Schiberras.

The Dominicans of Vittoriosa are planning more events during the year to mark this special year for the Order. On 13th February, the remains of Teresa Parlar, a Tertiary Dominican from Senglea known for her mysticism, will be brought and buried anew in the Church of the Annunciation. The climax of the celebrations this year are due to be reached between the 21st and 29th of August 2021, when the relic of St. Dominic will arrive in Malta for the very first time. ■

Organizing Committee for the 8th Centenary of the death of St. Dominic

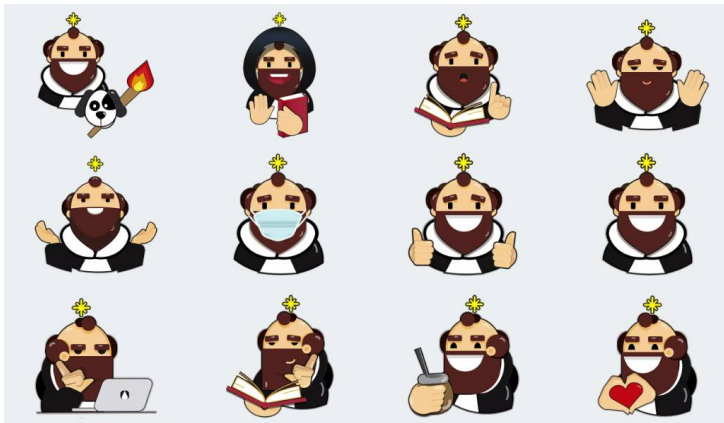
The Organising Committee for the 8th Centenary from the death of St. Dominic in collaboration with St. Albert the Great College, run by the Maltese Dominicans are launching a new book, illustrated and designed by Mr. Carlo Fenech. The book, which is to be distributed in schools, is particularly targeted for young children, with a narrative that relates the life of the saint in an innovative, and accessible manner.



The book was launched on Friday, January 8, 2021, at 11:00 a.m., at the Dominican Priory of Vittoriosa. The event was attended by the Rector of St. Albert the Great College, Br. Aaron Zahra O.P., and the Headmaster of the aforesaid college, Mr. Mario Mallia. This event is part of a week-long festivities in Vittoriosa to mark the opening of the Jubilee Year.

Contributor: Br. Alan Joseph Adami O.P. ■

Interview with Sr. Elisa



Sister Elisa, Happy Jubilee Year. You have pleasantly surprised us with the stickers for WhatsApp. We want to know more about you and more about your work in digital evangelism.

Who is Sister Elisa?

I am Sr. Elisa. I belong to the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of Saint Catherine of Siena,

Argentina. I was born in the city of Mar del Plata and I have been in the Order for thirteen years.

What does digital evangelization look like to you in this time of pandemic?

I think that this is a favorable moment during the pandemic to, first of all, assess the place of social networks and digital means of communication, which are often demonized and, on the other hand, to value the work that is done there, and the effort that it implies. I believe that digital preaching has experienced a boom, with multiple new projects, which has been a challenge to creativity, not to repeat or do more of the same.

What evangelization projects are you developing in your community?

Together with three other sisters from the Latin American province, we are part of the communication team of the province. We are in charge of the administration and creation for our social networks on Facebook and Instagram. Our objectives are to provide a preaching service based on the Dominican charism, to make known the Congregation and the mission of our Province, and to continue to strengthen and promote experiences of communion.

How did you come up with the idea of making the “Minguito” stickers for WhatsApp?

The project was born out of necessity. During a course on digital evangelization, we were asked to create a video with some concrete characteristics and thinking about the target audience of our choosing. My proposal was made with an online animation program, in which you load the information and you can choose the character, background, etc. As my audience was made up of young people from a group of Dominican missionaries, I started thinking: how nice it would be to be able to make this kind of video with a Dominican animation. to have something with a Dominican character! That’s how I started working on the creation of the character and looking for information on YouTube to be able to go further in the development of the animation project, to try to find an idea. And I saw that it was going to be more complicated than I thought. I stayed at the creation of the character, “Minguito”, and I would like the Dominican family to get to know him and to get to know him. That’s how the idea of the stickers was born: it’s a way to reach a lot of people and that this

message can become part of our daily life, like a WhatsApp message.

Where can we download them?

The stickers were launched on December 1, 2020, and for the last two weeks, we have been sending them to those who want them, to those who request them through our social networks. We have the idea of relaunching it during the course of the year, but we haven't quite defined it yet. Anyway, if someone doesn't have them, they can write to us through our social networks and we will send them the link. You can find us on Facebook as "Dominicas de Santa Catalina de Siena" and on Instagram as "dominicasdestacatalinadesiena".

How do you celebrate the jubilee of Saint Dominic? Do you have something to say to the Dominican family around the world?

Echoing the motto of the Jubilee: "At table with Saint Dominic". We wanted to frame the launch of the application in this "feast" of the Order, as a way of contributing and sharing this table of fraternity. I hope that during this time the Dominican Family will grow in the desire to sit together at the table, to share fraternally, to pray for one another, to study together. And, with our preaching, which is word and action (as the evangelists tell us about the mission of Jesus), to continue to proclaim to our brothers and sisters the love of God manifested in Jesus Christ. ■

The Solace of the Beatitudes: the Martyrdom of Sr. Maura Clarke and Sr. Ita Ford



It was a convent without walls in which Sr. Maura Clarke and Sr. Ita Ford lived. They were two sisters of Maryknoll, better known as the "Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic", who, from the beginning to the end of their religious life, immersed themselves in missionary life, alongside the poorest, to the point of martyrdom. Just over forty years have passed since their brutal assassination on December 2, 1980; since then their witness has gone far beyond the borders of El Salvador, the place where the two missionaries worked in the last months of their lives. Many people, even Pope Francis, have remembered the anniversary of the massacre. Also killed on 2 December were Sr. Dorothy Kasel, Sr. Ursuline, and the lay missionary Jean Donovan.

It was Bishop Oscar Romero, then Archbishop of San Salvador, who called Sr. Ita Ford to his diocese, soon to be joined by Sr. Maura Clarke. They arrived in El Salvador in March and August 1980. The situation in El Salvador was anything but peaceful: between the manipulated elections and the incessant *coups d'état*, the political context was very unstable. The persecution, torture, kidnapping and murder of political opponents, but especially of poor innocent people, continued unabated. It was precisely to support the latter that the four missionaries, who were later killed, arrived in this difficult country. In particular, Sr. Ita, and later Sr. Maura, arrived shortly after the deposing of President Carlo Humberto Romero (1979) and the rise of a military junta, with a new *coup d'état*.

Even today, what happened on 2 December is not very clear. What is certain is that Jean Donovan and Sr. Dorothy Kasel went to the airport of San Salvador to await the arrival of the two Maryknoll Sisters, returning from Nicaragua for a regional assembly of the congregation. Shortly after 9 p.m. the van carrying the four missionaries returned to their respective missions. At about 10:00 pm, as some local farmers testified, the van was passing through a rather isolated area and it was there that soldiers of the Salvadoran National Guard, rebels of the regime, intercepted the van and stopped it. The four missionaries were raped, then stabbed to death and thrown into a pit near the road. The bodies were found the next morning.

Despite the investigations carried out, many things remain unclear. However, it appears that high-

ranking members of the military junta ordered military personnel to follow the four missionaries. Why did this happen? The most well-founded hypothesis is that their work with the poor was viewed with great suspicion. In fact, working alongside the poor, helping them to organise themselves to fight against the dictatorial regime, creating a united front of opposition composed of exhausted and innocent needy people, presented itself as a considerable threat to the already unstable military junta. This was also in view of the precarious political situation that followed the *coup d'état*. The missionaries received many threats because of the work they were doing. It seems that Sr. Ita had somehow predicted her death.

During the last assembly of the congregation she attended in November 1980, she read a passage from a sermon by Bishop Romero, in which he stated: *"Christ invites us not to fear persecution because, believe me, brothers and sisters, whoever commits himself to the poor must suffer the same fate as the poor, and in El Salvador we know what the fate of the poor means: to disappear, to be tortured"*. In fact, a few days later, all four of them were martyred, just a few months after Bishop Romero.

I would now like to present some very brief biographical notes on the two Dominican sisters of Maryknoll.

Mary Elizabeth Clarke, later Sr. Maura, was born on January 13, 1931, in Queens, New York. She entered the Dominican Sisters of Maryknoll in 1950 at the age of nineteen. Before arriving in El Salvador, Sr. Maura spent much of her missionary life in Nicaragua, always at the side of the poor, providing in every way for their spiritual and material needs. In August 1980, she left for El Salvador: immersed in a situation of great tension, she did not hesitate to immediately put herself at the side of the poor to support them in their struggle against the dictatorship.

Sister Ita Ford was born in Brooklyn, New York, on April 23, 1940. After her first experience with the Maryknoll Sisters ended for health reasons, she re-entered the congregation in 1971 and remained there until her death. Her life as a missionary,

before responding to Bishop Romero's invitation to go to San Salvador, took place in Chile, in the mission of La Bandera in Santiago. There too, as she later did in El Salvador, her mission was immediately clear: to help the needy who were forced to live in the midst of great hardship, deprivation and persecution because of the regime.

The two missionaries, who arrived in El Salvador a few months apart, always worked side by side until their deaths.

Contemplating the lives of Ita and Maura, we can immediately see the missionary ardour that animated their religious life from the beginning. A life always lived in the cradle of selfless love, animated by a continuous thirst for justice. If we look closely, they fully embody this reversal of perspective inaugurated by the Beatitudes. This was the most beautiful gift they put in the hands of these poor people: the powerful and hidden hope of the Beatitudes. It is astonishing to read the well-known text of Matthew and to see - without a shadow of a doubt - that Sr. Ita and Sr. Maura fully embodied this spirit: they lived from the Gospel, they were nourished by the Gospel, they consoled by the Gospel, all this, as we have said, in the cradle of love. What does this mean? In this regard, there is a letter from Sr. Ita, written while she was in Chile, in 1977, where, speaking to herself and putting herself before the questioning candor of necessity, she said: *"I do not know the answers, but I will walk with you, I will seek with you, I will be with you. Can I allow myself to be evangelised by this opportunity? Can I look and accept my poverty as I learn from other poor people?"*». It is moving to read and reread this question: it says it all, in this sentence we savor the taste of doing everything with Christ, for Christ and in Christ. They were there to serve Christ in the last, weeping, rejoicing, sharing and living day and night with the least. The school of Sr. Ita and Sr. Maura was that of the Gospel lived to the point of total self-oblation, in martyrdom.

It is also beautiful to observe how Sr. Ita and Sr. Maura, as Dominican sisters, fully incarnated the charism of St. Dominic, who gave his name to their congregation. Dominic lived for God, he was an evangelical man, not only because he spoke of the Gospel, but because he embodied that

radicalism to those who no longer keep anything to themselves. He gave everything to follow him. That is why he was satisfied with everything, in all that, he gave thanks to God, he could not do otherwise, because he was never tired of living in that deepest place, of communion, in which day and night we prostrated ourselves in silent adoration. He couldn't help speaking with God and about God, wherever he was, because he couldn't help showing that path that, although present in everyone - Christ - some people are unable to find, allowing themselves to be deterred along the way.

In this mirror, if we look closely, we seem to see Sr. Ita and Sr. Maura, who have succeeded in embodying so wonderfully that great balance, difficult and mature, which the sons and daughters of Saint Dominic are called to live. Moreover, both martyrs learned greatness at the school of the poor and the little ones, they experienced what it means to be hungry and thirsty by sharing the famine of justice, they listened clearly to the voice of Christ amidst the groans of the oppressed, they experienced the human and immense difficulty of loving one's enemies and the wonder of loving one's neighbour, but they also discovered the difficulty of loving oneself after being reflected in the majesty of the little ones. They then touched the joyful threshold of Paradise by burying the innocent dead and, finally, they knew how to perceive, live and contemplate the presence of God even in the dark crevices into which man's brutality can lead.

Like Dominic, the one in which Sr. Ita and Sr. Maura lived was a convent "without walls", where the reversal of perspective inaugurated by the Gospel was embodied, in pain and suffering, but already marked with that joy, full of hope, which already sees victory.

We know, however, that the blood of the martyrs is not shed in vain: the eloquent cry of blood rises ceaselessly from the earth to God and He, moved by the joy of those who so wonderfully incarnated His Son, will fill this same earth with blessings. And this voice that the persecutors cruelly wanted to erase now resounds louder than ever in the echoes of the testimony that Sr. Ita and Sr. Maura transmitted through their martyrdom.

Contributor: Br. Simone Garavaglia, O.P. ■

Invitation to the table for all in friendship

Alessandro Rondoni | Avvenire BO7 Sunday 10 January 2021



It is surprising to start the year with an invitation to sit at the table. At a time when it is difficult to gather together because of the constraints of COVID, it is good to know that you are awaited, welcome guests at an appetising banquet of joyful conviviality. It is not a question of breaking the rules by adding a few places at the table according to the current rules in your region. There is no limit here, because the invitation is open to everyone, and for a whole year! And it is actually to sit at the table with a saint. Not bad in these times when we risk a life of isolation and solitude. The invitation to take part in a "tableful", together with many other different people, is new and enchanting. This, in fact, is the proposal for the Jubilee Year of the eighth centenary of the death of St. Dominic, which opened on January 6, 2021, in the Bologna Basilica where the co-patron saint of the city is buried. At a time when we are experiencing long-distance relationships on various online platforms—schools know something about this!—and when we are struggling to recover our social relations, knowing that we are "awaited" at the table, physically present and close to one another, prompts a motion of fraternity that overcomes pessimism and fear. The call to share food, both material and spiritual, prompts in us all not just a reflection but, as is appropriate for a kind invitation, a response and a willingness to come together.

Sitting at the table. In a world of loneliness and pandemics, it is important that there are those who

take the time to lay a place for others, to make community. The friars of the Order of Preachers have chosen as the title of their Jubilee "At Table with St. Dominic", inspired by the sacred image known as the "Mascarella" which shows him, in the first known painting of him, with twenty-four friars from all over Europe. In company, together with his brothers, eating. A holiness that is close at hand, not far away. Within reach... of the meal.

At table we can talk about anything and everything, exchange opinions and experiences, help each

other along the day's course. St. Dominic chose to come here to Bologna because it was the seat of the university, the oldest in Europe. Down the centuries the Dominicans have been a constant presence for the church and the city. A calendar of initiatives in 2021 will revive that heritage in the context of the present time, in a profoundly changed world in which people need to see and hear one another, in company. To be a saint today is to seek heaven through the use of reason, in the culture of encounter, in the relationships that arise precisely from good eating. ■



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