



ORDO PRAEDICATORUM

RATIO FORMATIONIS ET STUDIORUM  
AD USUM FRATERNITATUM LAICORUM  
ORDINIS PRAEDICATORUM

*In dulcedine societatis, quaerere veritatem*  
Albertus Magnus, *Liber politicorum*, VIII, 6

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## FOREWORD

The idea of drafting a *Ratio Formationis ad usum Fraternitatum Laicorum Ordinis Praedicatorum* was born during the International Congress of Lay Dominican Fraternities in Fatima in 2018, following the recommendation of Brother Vivian Boland, Socius of the Master of the Order for Formation and Intellectual Life.

Work began immediately with the formation of a commission dedicated to formation at the Fatima Congress and continued under the leadership of Gabriel Silva, ICLDF Coordinator. These efforts were interrupted by the Covid pandemic and resumed after it subsided. Numerous brothers and sisters of the Lay Fraternities of St. Dominic from all five continents contributed to drafting, amending, and shaping this document. It is, by its very nature, a synodal document, and since my election as ICLDF Coordinator in 2023, I have overseen its progress and completion. I would like to thank my predecessor Gabriel Silva for initiating this work; it is now my responsibility to bring it to a close so that the document may be officially submitted to the Master of the Order for approval and dissemination.

The ICLDF unanimously approved the *Ratio Formationis* on April 5, 2025, in Rome. In a spirit faithful to the Order's ethics of deliberation, I deemed it appropriate to propose that an ad hoc commission review the document. This commission was composed of Willy Rafael Rivero, Cécile Thépot-Olagne, Anna Tatar, and fr. Cristóbal Torres Iglesias. We can therefore say that this document is the result of a collaborative effort that adheres to the norms of Church law, Catholic theology, and the historiographical tradition of the Order, while respecting the identities of each province and the genius of each culture.

Within the hierarchy of legal norms — namely, (1) the Code of Canon Law, (2) the Rule of the Lay Dominicans, and (3) the General Declarations of 2019 — the *Ratio Formationis* comes next. Therefore, this document holds no juridical or binding authority over the provinces but rather seeks to provide a propositional framework that Provincial Directories may integrate according to their contexts and possibilities. Its purpose is to serve more as a source of proposals — always amendable, as is Dominican constitutional law — than as a juridically binding document. In line with other *Rationes Formationis* for religious or laity, this document is general, not particular: it is not intended to define specific practical or pedagogical modalities, which fall under the responsibility of each province's Directory.

May this *Ratio Formationis ad usum Fraternitatum Laicorum Ordinis Praedicatorum* be a valuable tool for promoting an ever more adult and mature Lay Dominican vocation.

May all those who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the *Ratio Formationis* be generously thanked, especially:

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## 1. OBJECTIVE

To draw up the Programme of Formation for Lay Dominicans, based on the orientations and directives of the Rule of the Lay Dominican Fraternities, the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, and the Order of Preachers, as proposed for human, Christian, and Dominican formation.

## 2. PROPOSAL

### 2.1. The Laity in the Church

The Christian is one who has been anointed and sealed in Christ, a follower of Jesus' teaching marked with His name, with a committed adherence that flows from the grace of baptism. This grace is nourished, lives and points toward Christ, and seeks to be for others a reflection of the living God. Lay Christians claim no hierarchy; we have received grace through baptism, live our faith under the impulse of the Spirit of Confirmation, and are nourished with the bread of the Eucharist.

Etymologically, the word *lay* derives from the Latin *laicus*, meaning one who is not a cleric. Yet *laicus* itself comes from the Greek *laos* (people) and *laikos*, meaning "of the people," "one of the people." When we understand *laos* as referring to the People of God, we can conclude that all Christians, lay and ordained, are fundamentally God's People. We all form an integral part of the Church.

As *Lumen Gentium* 31 clearly expresses, a layperson is any Christian "...except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church." In other words, the Christian faithful, incorporated into Christ through baptism, and constituted as the People of God, participate in their own way in the priestly, prophetic, and royal mission of Jesus Christ, even before some are called to the Sacrament of Orders and the ministerial priesthood. They thus exercise the priestly mission of the entire Christian people both in the Church and in the world. Both the priestly mission of God's people and the ministry of Holy Orders are participations in the one mystery of Christ's sacrificial self-gift to the Father.

All Christians begin their journey at baptism, as laypersons—there is no member of the Church whose origin is not essentially lay. Even Christ, described in Hebrews as the eternal High Priest and the model of all, who was incarnated in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the grace and working of the Holy Spirit and born of the line of David, descended from a non-priestly Jewish family. He became man, with a human genealogy, and was known among the people as "the carpenter's son." Thus, Jesus, by becoming "one among many," walked with the people, understanding and embracing their sufferings and their political, economic, social, cultural, and religious realities.

This is precisely what Pope Pius XII affirmed on February 20, 1946, in his address to the new Cardinals:

“The faithful, more precisely the lay faithful, find themselves on the front lines of the Church’s life; for them the Church is the animating principle of for human society. Therefore they in particular, ought to have an ever clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church...” (quoted in *Christifideles Laici* I, 9 §3)

He later added:

“According to the biblical image of the vineyard, the lay faithful, together with all the members of the Church, are branches engrafted to Christ the true vine, and from him derive their life and fruitfulness.” (cf. *Christifideles Laici* I, 9 §4)

It is precisely by virtue of our lay condition that our evangelizing mission can reach where priests, deacons, and religious often cannot.

In the light of the message of Pope Pius XII and the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* of Pope John Paul II, we may affirm that the Spirit instills in us a deep sense of belonging to the holy People of God. All the baptized constitute the Church. We are an essential part of that mystical Body whose head is Jesus Christ, from whom we receive our Christian identity through the sacrament of baptism.

We become branches filled with the sap of the Vine, which is Christ. Being part of the Church allows us to enjoy the same rights and responsibilities in participating in the sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation—as well as the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick. Before Christ, we are all equal: children of God and temples of the Holy Spirit. In a Church that has been strongly clericalized over the centuries, we are now reclaiming the vital role of the laity as builders of the Kingdom of God—a task to be carried out with humility, discernment, understanding, and true commitment in communion with the Church.

Recently, His Holiness Pope Francis, during an audience on April 30, 2021, addressed to the members of Italian Catholic Action, declared:

“[You] should not become anything other than what [you] are called to be through Baptism. Your secularity is richness for the catholicity of the Church, which wants to be leaven, salt of the earth and light of the world.”

Thus, we are called to imitate Jesus: to walk with the people, to live and share their realities from within, in all spheres of life. To be truly lay is not simply to be born or reside in a town, but to be interwoven with it—to establish communion from individuality, not separation by selfishness. The greater our decision to give of ourselves, the more authentic becomes our

relationship with others. When this self-gift is rooted in the Self-gift of God in Jesus Christ, we follow Jesus more closely and the world more faithfully reflects the kingdom of God.

The layperson is born of water and the Spirit (Jn 3:5), begins a new life (Rom 6:4), joins a Church that is purified, holy, and immaculate (Eph 5:26–27), and becomes part of this family. From our origin, we are all the same. Through baptism, we are welcomed into the Church; we are born anew. The Holy Spirit is poured upon us, freeing us from original sin and incorporating us into the Church as children of God.

“He who does not live to serve, does not serve to live.” The attitude of offering oneself to others breaks all patterns of death: selfishness, greed, arrogance, isolation, egotism, and all that stands in opposition to values that promote human growth, such as solidarity, empathy, and the pursuit of the common good. These are the values by which the laity is called to realize the Kingdom of God.

## **2.2. The Laity in the Dominican Family**

### **2.2.1 What Is It to Be a Lay Dominican?**

To be a Lay Dominican is to receive an unmerited grace—a call that stirs the heart and aligns with the deepest yearnings of the soul: the desire for communion with the ardent heart of Jesus, through the intercession of Mary and devotion to the holy Rosary, lived in the spirit and example of Saint Dominic de Guzmán, founder of the Order of Preachers.

Within the heart of the Holy Catholic Church are Religious Orders, associations of pontifical right, and apostolic movements, each animated by distinct charisms. Within these diverse expressions of ecclesial life, millions of the faithful seek to respond to the inner stirring that God awakens at particular moments in their journey. A Venezuelan sister, Iraida Urbano, of the Dominican Missionary Sisters of the Holy Family, once expressed it beautifully: *“The Church is like a great shoe store—each one looking for the latest and the model of footwear that best suits them.”* To her words we add: *“But we all walk in the same direction, following the footsteps of Jesus.”*

Thus, each person chooses to follow a particular spirituality that resonates with their desires, questions, and life perspective, in communion with the One and Triune God. As Lay Dominicans, we embrace the ideal of sanctity set forth by Saint Dominic de Guzmán, whose Order of Preachers has served the Church for over eight centuries. To echo Sister Iraida’s metaphor, we don the black and white shoes of purity and penance—the colors of the Dominican Order.

The Dominican Family is comprised of the various branches of the Order of Preachers - the nuns, the friars, the apostolic sisters, the Dominican laity, Secular Institutes, and the priestly

fraternities – as well as movements and associations sharing in the Order’s charism and mission, chief among them the Dominican Youth Movement. The visible sign of unity of the Order of Preachers and the Dominican Family is the Master of the Order. As fr. Damian Byrne, O.P., a former Master, affirmed: *“The laity are no longer mere recipients of our mission; they share with us—and we with them—the same responsibility in the Christian community.”*

The Dominican charism is entirely compatible with lay life. We are men and women—married or single—who, from our own spheres of life and action, contemplate and strive to share with others the fruits of that contemplation. As lay members, we do not profess vows of obedience, chastity, or poverty. Rather, we make a profession—a formal promise made before the Master of the Order—by which we deepen our baptismal commitment and choose to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Dominic, fulfilling the Gospel mandate: *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15).

Lay Dominicans are descended from the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of Saint Dominic, later referred to as the Third Order of St. Dominic. Today, we call ourselves Lay Fraternities of Saint Dominic. Regarding our postnominal designation, the Master of the Order, with the agreement of his General Council and on the recommendation of the International Council of Lay Dominican Fraternities (ICLDF), the Promoter General of the Priestly Fraternities of Saint Dominic, and the Promoter General of the Dominican Laity, issued a letter on November 9, 2021, affirming that, if postnominal initials are to be used at all, they must be “O.P.”

In the Middle Ages, Christian perfection was often understood as the imitation of religious life. Those who wished to walk this path of sanctification entered third orders and wore the habit associated with their order’s particular spirituality. It is important to highlight that within our Order we find extraordinary examples of lay holiness—saints and blessed who bear witness that sanctity is not the sole preserve of religious life. Among them are Saint Catherine of Siena (1347–1380), Doctor of the Church and co-patroness of Europe; Saint Rose of Lima (1586–1617), Peruvian lay Dominican and first canonized saint of the Americas, patroness of the Americas and the Philippines; Saint Margaret of Castello (1287–1320); Blessed Bartolo Longo (1841–1926), apostle of the Holy Rosary and devotee of the Virgin Mary; Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901–1925), a lay Dominican, mountaineer, and member of Catholic Action; and Giorgio La Pira (1904–1977), a lay Dominican, politician, and ardent defender of peace, human rights, and the poor. These holy men and women remind us that sanctity is open to all who follow Christ.

### **2.2.2 Where Are We Going?**

Throughout the centuries, the Dominican Family has been a voice for the voiceless, the marginalized, and the poor. In this same spirit, we, the Lay Dominicans, do not remain passive regarding our role and mission within the Order of Preachers, the Church, and the world—a world presently afflicted by evil, relativism, disbelief, and structural sin.

The Dominican Laity, as regular and canonical members of the Order of Preachers, collaborate from our own spheres of life and action with other branches of the Dominican Family in apostolic work. This requires a solid foundation in human formation, theological study, and a robust spiritual life, all of which equip us for our mission: to bear witness to the hope that is in us in a rapidly secularized world impacted by totalitarian ideologies.

Confronting today's many moral challenges to the defense of human rights requires a laity committed to study, one of the essential pillars of our Order. As fr. Vivian Boland, O.P., former Socius of the Master of the Order for Fraternal Life and Formation, reminds us:

*"Study is established as a mission of the Order. It is important that our formation is aligned with the apostolic concerns of the Order of Preachers today and the first force of the mission is fraternity. The formation of the laity must be comprehensive, holistic. It must be undertaken in community for the apostolic mission of the Order, to proclaim the Word."*

Today we face pressing questions, such as:

- How can families become bearers of the Lord's grace and witnesses of that grace in the world?
- How can we contribute meaningfully to the Order and to the Church?
- How can we preach grace not only in words but in deeds?
- How do we accompany the divorced and remarried?
- How can we engage the youth and cultivate lifelong commitment within the Order?
- How do we foster interreligious dialogue?
- How do we bear witness to our hope amid agnosticism and militant atheism?

We can only respond to these questions through dedicated study and ongoing formation. Lay Dominicans are formed for life—in the family, in the Church, and in the world. The Dominican Family is a vital space from which we may enlighten others.

As fr. Ángel Fariña, O.P., affirms:

"Dominican study, as we know well, is not limited to an academic function; it is an analysis of reality in which the questions of who, what, where, when, how, and why must prevail in order to respond effectively to the challenges of each situation. This task, which is our specific calling, would be impossible to fully accomplish without deep thought and reflection—fruits of an intense life of prayer and works of compassionate love. We could conclude by saying that Dominican compassion, intellectual compassion, is called to build a culture of truth and human relationships that replaces the culture of lies, falsehood, and corruption. And it must be said, without hesitation, that Dominican compassion, as intellectual compassion, compels us conscientiously to denounce injustice."

In conclusion, as Lay Dominicans, we are called to deep study and contemplation, for only through our intellectual compassion can we raise the banner of hope. Despite the turmoil of

today's world and the seeming absence of a horizon for life, theology rooted in hope remains possible—not as naïve optimism, but as firm faith in Christ Jesus, the expectation of the resurrection, and the certainty that all things to come are good.

This enables us to fulfill the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas: "*Contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere*" – "to contemplate and to give to others the fruits of contemplation". As Lay Dominicans, we too are called to be a prophetic voice in service to the Gospel. From our unique spaces in the world and through our apostolic action, we are called to be leaven, awaken consciences and take action for the transformation of society.

### **2.3. Guidelines for Formation**

Formation is always at the service of the mission of the Order. Thus, in every time and place, the formation of the Dominican Laity must draw its character and content from the missionary context of that time and place.

#### **The emphasis on the role of the Community**

The individual Lay Dominican is accompanied by the Fraternity Formator and the Council, together with the brothers and sisters of the fraternity. Fellowship with the Community during meetings forms a cornerstone of Dominican life. Formation must be integral and holistic, encompassing the human, spiritual, intellectual, and apostolic dimensions. The community project of the lay fraternity is the concrete expression of its apostolic mission. Each Lay Dominican is called to continual renewal: embracing a lifestyle that supports preaching, engaging in a generous, courageous, and creative service of the Word, and remaining attentive to the many "languages" in which the Word is to be communicated - language understood also in terms of music, art, and cultural expression.

#### **Encounter**

Encounter is the form that preaching must take today more than ever, following the example of Jesus and of Dominic, who met people where they were, listened to them, questioned them, gave time and attention, and remained with them through difficulty in their search for truth. (fr. Vivian Boland, OP, "Different Aspects of Formation in the Order: The New Ratio and the Dominican Laity")

#### **Permanent Formation**

Permanent formation, and not solely initial formation, is necessary. To be a disciple is to be "forever in the school of Jesus."

### **2.3.1. Criteria and Tools for Discerning Human (Personal, Professional, Family) and Religious Maturity**

To live as a Lay Dominican requires deep personal conviction and mature commitment. Those entering formation must be mature adults committed to following Christ along the way devised by St. Dominic.

Formation progressively initiates the candidate into the ‘Dominican culture’ characterized by responsible freedom, balanced with a sense of the interests of the brothers and sisters of the fraternity fundamental to Dominican democracy.

Another important element of the culture fostered by Dominican formation includes the ability to listen and dialogue with others whose perspectives may differ from one’s own.

It is essential that candidates understand the time required for discernment and the unique vocation of the Lay Dominican life. This is not a personal achievement, but an invitation to enter a vibrant family, united in the charism of St. Dominic.

Formators should guide candidates through a process of self-evaluation, prompting reflection with questions such as:

- What are my motivations for becoming a Lay Dominican?
- Do I understand the depth and breadth of the commitment required?
- Have I previously made promises or commitments to other religious groups? If so, am I still a member of another community?
- What is my vision of community life as a Lay Dominican?
- How do I respond to challenges of various kinds within a community?
- Am I committed to prayer and discipleship in the Church?

Provinces are encouraged to adapt and expand these discernment questions according to their pastoral realities and cultural contexts. The ultimate goal is to help the candidate reflect honestly on their desire and readiness to live the Lay Dominican vocation.

### **2.3.2. Theological Formation**

Theological formation must accompany and support the growth of an individual into the community of lay Dominicans. Lay Dominicans need not have a theological degree but should have some grounding in Biblical studies and interpretation, Church History, Trinitarian theology, Eucharistic theology, the sacraments, modes of Christian living, Catholic Social Teaching, the Lives of the Saints, and theologies of proclamation and ministry.

Provinces are encouraged to develop repositories of resources (for example, electronic resources including written materials, videos, or audio books) that can be easily accessed by all members.

The goal of theological formation is to ensure that all Dominican laity can understand, reflect upon, and speak about theological issues in a manner that enables them to engage in fruitful dialogue with other branches of the Dominican family and the world.

### **2.3.2.1 Sacred Scripture**

*Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (1965)

As members of the Order of Preachers, Dominican Laity are called to hear and proclaim the Word of God. St. Jerome's timeless insight, "ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ" (cf. DV 25), highlights the necessity of developing a deep familiarity with Sacred Scripture.

Candidates should be introduced during initial formation to *Dei Verbum* (DV), with particular emphasis on the inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit (DV 11), and on Scripture's expression of "the words of God in human language" (DV 13). The document presents Sacred Scripture as a divine-human collaboration, inviting reverence for both its spiritual depth and its historical formation.

Moreover, DV insists that Scripture is not merely an object of study, but a living means of receiving divine revelation. Thus, engagement with Sacred Scripture must occur not only through study, but also in the Church's liturgical life and in personal prayer.

### **2.3.2.2. Theology**

#### **2.3.2.2.1. General Guidelines for Theological Formation**

Sharing in the common priesthood of the baptized, Lay Dominicans bring an essential witness from within the world, engaging the daily realities of life with their talents and skills in close collaboration with the Order and the Church.

Following the charism of Saint Dominic, Lay Dominicans must be as leaven in the dough, nurturing their brothers and sisters in a world increasingly secularized and marked by materialism and unbelief. The motto *Contemplare et contemplata aliis trader* - to contemplate and to hand on to others the fruits of contemplation - compels Lay Dominicans to enter the complexities of the world, armed with the truth of the Gospel.

As fr. Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., affirmed: "Lay Dominicans are the secular armor of the world." For this reason, a solid theological formation is necessary: to interact with the world in the service of Truth, and to embrace study as a vital dimension of our vocation as preachers.

Theological formation for Lay Dominicans should follow a general outline. It begins after temporary profession, continues through perpetual profession, and must then be sustained as part of permanent formation.

Each Province will define the appropriate contents and bibliography for the development of formation topics. The following themes are proposed for consideration in provincial formation manuals. These themes should be firmly rooted in the Dominican tradition. The Provincial Promoter of the Laity, together with formators and their councils, should discern how to present these topics, accounting for the academic levels and backgrounds of their members.

#### **2.3.2.2.2. Formation Topics**

##### **2.3.2.2.2.1. Mystery of God (Trinity)**

This subject explores a theological synthesis of the Trinity, the mystery of the Triune God, beginning with the fullness of God's revelation in Christ, as well as the living Tradition and significant contributions from theology. Emphasis is placed on the salvific dimension of God's self-revelation and on the intervention of the Most Holy Trinity in the history of salvation.

##### **2.3.2.2.2.2. Theological Anthropology. Humanity as the Center of Creation**

This subject focuses on the relationship of love and paternity that God desires to establish with all people through Jesus Christ, His Son, "by grace" of divine favor. It explores the call to divine filiation and the invitation to participate in the Holy Spirit as free creatures, living in communion with God, the Church, and one another.

##### **2.3.2.2.2.3. Grace and Eschatology**

In the context of today's world, this theme enables us to "give a reason for our hope" in a society often seemingly deprived of hope due to the environment of relativism and religious indifferentism prevailing in many places. This hope is not simply announced by Jesus but is also granted to those who follow Him.

##### **2.3.2.2.2.4. Incarnation, Revelation and Salvation History**

This topic seeks to understand the incarnation as the pivotal event - the divine intervention in the history of humanity through the gift of grace. The history of salvation is oriented toward the promised Messiah and the fulfillment of that promise in the person of Jesus.

##### **2.3.2.2.2.5. The Problem of Evil and God's Action**

This topic reflects on the created condition of humanity in relation to the problem of evil, considering the question and debate surrounding the form of God's presence and action in the face of evil in the world.

### **2.3. Guidelines for Formation 2.3.2.2.2.6. The Existence of the Devil as Dogma of Faith**

The existence of the devil is a truth of Christian revelation that many today either deny or overemphasize - both of which serve to facilitate his action in the world. A proper theological formation on this topic requires a deep understanding of the teachings found in Scripture and the Church's magisterial tradition, including the response of the Fourth Lateran Council to the Manichean heresy, which was embraced by the Cathars and Albigensians. Dominican formation should approach theological reflection on hell and the devil from both a pastoral and canonical perspective, carefully distinguishing between the Church's official Rite of Exorcism and theologically sound deliverance prayers, on the one hand, and extreme, harmful, or theologically unsound deliverance practices, on the other.

### **2.3.2.2.2.7 Fundamental Theology**

This field seeks to understand the nature and epistemological claims of fundamental theology, examining its method, contents, and relationship with other areas of theological and secular knowledge. It aims to uncover the current relevance of fundamental theology in light of the questions and challenges posed by the contemporary world.

### **2.3.2.2.2.8. Systematic Theology**

The objective of this field is to formulate the Christian faith and doctrine in an orderly, coherent, and rational way. It considers not only Sacred Scripture but also history, ethics, philosophy, and science, addressing the issues that arise in recognizing and interpreting the presence of God in the contemporary world.

### **2.3.2.2.2.9. Sacramental Theology**

Sacramental theology is a foundational reflection on the Sacraments and the sacramentality of the Church. It examines the relationship between sacramentality, Christology, ecclesiology, and liturgy, emphasizing their anthropological and ecclesiological significance and their necessity for salvation.

### **2.3.2.2.2.10. Dogmatic Theology**

Seeks to understand the truths of the faith concerning God and His works (dogmata fidei), including the Triune God, creation, and redemption, and dogmatic theology's relationship with other disciplines.

#### **2.3.2.2.2.11. Moral Theology**

Moral theology considers the nature of good and evil, as well as the human person's freedom to live in right relationship with God, self, other persons, and with the rest of creation. It establishes general principles for exercising human freedom in accordance with God's will, by aligning it with right reason and the common good.

#### **2.3.2.2.2.12. Holy Scripture: Old Testament and New Testament**

This topic explores the unity of God's salvific plan, considering the Scriptures (the Bible) as a unified whole – the intelligible discourse of the Word of God. In this framework, the unity of Scripture is affirmed, with Christ recognized as the Logos (Word) of God, resonating through both the Old and New Testaments. Faithfulness to the Church's interpretive norms of Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium is essential to this understanding.

#### **2.3.2.2.2.13. Johannine Literature**

This theme presents the Gospel of John as the most theological of the four Gospels. The core theme of this Gospel is that Jesus is the Logos, the Word of God incarnate, who entered the world to reveal the Father. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus "bears witness" to the Truth he received from the Father, and His life is a revelation of the glory He possessed before the creation of the world. The evangelist develops themes that contain the fullness of the mystery of Christ, emphasizing their deeper meaning, which can only be fully grasped through faith. The Johannine witness invites us to believe.

#### **2.3.2.2.2.14. Apocryphal Gospels**

This area studies other religious texts centered on Jesus that the Church does not recognize as inspired by God or as normative for the faith. Consequently, they are not part of the biblical canon, although they sometimes confirm certain details found in the four canonical Gospels and offer additional insights into the reality of the first Christian communities.

#### **2.3.2.2.2.15. Christology**

This area focuses on understanding Jesus Christ through theological reflection, considering both his historical actions and the faith passed down by the Apostles and the early Christians, which has been strengthened through the living tradition of the Church over the centuries. Jesus reveals the human face of God, showing humanity its true vocation and the path to full humanization (Christification).

#### **2.3.2.2.2.16. Mariology**

Mariology systematically explores the Catholic Church's teachings about the Blessed Virgin Mary, her role in the mystery of Christ, in salvation history, and in the Church. This includes

understanding the meaning of Marian dogmas and magisterial affirmations, such as her divine maternity, perpetual virginity, immaculate conception, and assumption, as well as the reasons for the veneration and devotion to Mary.

#### **2.3.2.2.2.17. Catholic Social Teaching**

This topic examines Catholic Social Teaching, a set of principles and norms that address social, political, economic, cultural and ecological dimensions of the moral life, including international relations, based on the Gospel and the Church's Magisterium. It provides principles for the promotion of human rights, the family, democratic political institutions, an economy serving humanity, and an international order founded on justice, peace, and a responsible attitude toward creation. Justice and peace are key elements intrinsic to Dominican identity.

#### **2.3.2.2.2.18. Patristics: The Church Fathers**

This field covers the writings of Christian antiquity's leading figures, who were recognized for their orthodox doctrine and holy lives and came to be known as the Fathers of the Church. Patristics studies how early Christianity faced not only external challenges (persecutions and martyrdom) but also internal ones (heresies), as emerging questions and debates led to the historical development of dogmatic definitions about the Triune God, Christology, Mariology, and other foundational articulations of the faith of the Church.

#### **2.3.2.2.2.19. Ecclesiology**

This topic explores the Church's nature and its relationship to the Christian faith's foundation—the profession of belief in the one Triune God—according to the hierarchy of truths in Catholic doctrine. Studying the Church is like approaching a family, where Christians are formed and sent on mission. In the Church, we are born to Christ and receive the gift of faith; in her, we pray, seek Christ, and fulfill the mission entrusted to us of sharing the Good News.

#### **2.3.2.2.2.20. Church History**

Church history is the story of Christ's presence, mission, and apostolic mandate to his people: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:19-20). The mystery of the Church is a sacramental sign of the profound connection between the divine and human in Jesus Christ.

#### **2.3.2.2.2.21. Theological Method**

Theological method considers how theological reflection has developed over the centuries,

highlighting key elements that frame theological thought and support the methodologies used in its historical development. It focuses on how theological questions are posed within historical contexts and the vital role of Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium.

#### **2.3.2.2.22. The Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation**

This topic studies the schism that occurred in the Catholic Church in the 16th century, initiated by Martin Luther in Germany, and the subsequent Counter-Reformation, a spiritual renewal within the Church in response to Protestant criticisms and the concerns of Catholic Christians.

#### **2.3.2.2.23. Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue**

This topic explores ecumenism, the path toward unity promoted by the Church since the Second Vatican Council to overcome divisions among Christians, in response to Christ's desire that His followers gather into one flock. An equally important topic is interreligious dialogue, which aims to establish dialogue and cooperation between the major world religions to build a fraternal world of peace.

#### **2.3.2.2.24. Introduction to the Thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas**

This theme introduces the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who reconciled faith with reason and philosophy with theology. An important example of this is Aquinas's "Five Ways" to the existence of God, and his philosophical concept of human persons as finite creatures whose existence is contingent on God.

#### **2.3.2.2.25. Summa Contra Gentiles**

This topic delves into the apologetic nature of this philosophical work by Saint Thomas Aquinas, which presents a set of truths of natural theology and philosophical objections to them, ultimately demonstrating the reliability of the truths in question.

#### **2.3.2.2.26. Fundamental Aspects of the *Summa Theologiae***

This subject provides a general overview of the fundamental aspects of Saint Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, one of the greatest works of Christian theology, which shaped theological discourse in the West.

#### **2.3.2.2.27. Other Theologians of the Dominican Tradition. The *Nouvelle Théologie***

This topic examines the role of the Dominicans in the theological movement known as the *Nouvelle Théologie* and their contribution to the Second Vatican Council. It focuses on key

themes such as theology and catholicity, theology and history, the signs of the times, and ecclesiology and ecumenism from a Dominican perspective.

#### **2.3.2.2.28. Agnosticism, Relativism, Faith and Unbelief**

This topic explores the origins of agnosticism, atheism, and religious relativism in a secularized world, emphasizing the importance of providing a reason for our hope in the face of these challenges.

#### **2.3.2.2.29. The Challenge of Sects, Ideologies and New Religious Movements**

In every age, new sects, ideologies, and religious movements arise, presenting both challenges and opportunities for Dominican preaching. The formation of Lay Dominicans must address contemporary issues such as the de-Christianization of Europe and the rise of religious indifferentism, the persecution of Christians in many parts of Asia and Africa, and the "culture wars" that polarize Christians and distort the Gospel message along ideological lines. These challenges should also be viewed as opportunities to creatively fulfill the Order's mission of preaching the Gospel in dynamic and constantly changing contexts.

#### **2.3.2.2.230. Major World Religions: Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism**

This topic concerns the foundations of the major monotheistic Abrahamic religions as well as polytheistic and non-theistic philosophical systems. Religion is inherently tied to culture, and understanding the worldview and beliefs of a culture is essential to understanding the core values of individuals within it.

#### **2.3.2.2.231. Christian Proposal of the Kingdom of God**

This topic analyzes the mystery and experience of the Kingdom of God as revealed in the Gospels, delving into the various hermeneutical approaches that highlight the centrality and relevance of this dimension of Christian faith.

#### **2.3.2.2.232. Catholic Liturgy**

This topic explores the liturgical rites of the Catholic Church, aiming for a deep understanding of their salvific significance. Grace flows from the liturgy and is the source of life, as all liturgical actions are the work of Christ.

#### **2.3.2.2.233. Synodality, Path in Communion**

This subject explores the journey of all members of the People of God walking together in communion, in accordance with Pope Francis's teachings on "the need and beauty of walking

together.”

### 2.3.2.3. Spirituality and Liturgy

#### 2.3.2.3.1. The Eucharist

The Eucharist, as the "source and summit of the Christian life,"<sup>1</sup> is the inspiration for the lay Dominican, whose life is a prudent balance between contemplation and action. A lay Dominican is not either contemplative or active; rather, he or she is both simultaneously. To understand the sacrament of the Eucharist as a lay Dominican is to recognize one's vocation as "contemplative."

The everyday experiences that make up daily life fuel our worship and participation in the Eucharist, and conversely, our participation in the Eucharistic transforms the everyday and ordinary into a profound act of faith. In the Eucharistic mystery, we deepen both our intimate, personal relationship with Christ and our ecclesial communion with him, while also grounding the mission of our preaching in the world. The lay Dominican roots apostolic action in the Eucharist by offering the world to God and bringing God to the world. A Dominican theology of the Eucharist is inseparable from the call for compassion, mercy, and dialogue with the world in all its complexity and suffering.

Following Saint Thomas Aquinas, we will ask ourselves how Christ is "really, truly, and substantially present" in the Eucharist, thus considering in what manner the Eucharist truly makes Christ present in the world. With Saint Albert the Great<sup>2</sup>, we will recognize that Christians are invited to partake of three tables where Christ is truly present: 1) the table of the Word of God; 2) the table of the altar; and 3) the table of the poor. Christ is present at all three of these tables.

The call to social justice and the preferential option for the poor are not ancillary aspects of the faith; they are part of its very DNA. By making Himself present under the appearance of bread and wine, Christ comes to visit us in our poverty, offering us the hospitality of His life, grace, and eternity.

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<sup>1</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen gentium*, n°11 ; see also John Paul II, *Ecclesia de eucharistia vivit*, Encyclical on the Eucharist and its Relationship with the Church, 17 April 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Albertus Magnus, *Enarrationes in secunda partem evang. Lucam* (X-XXIV), Opera Omnia, Ed. Borgnet, t. 23, 1895, Paris, pp.556-560. In this text, Albert the Great offers a commentary on the house of Zacchaeus visited by Christ. He comments on the refectory or upper room of Zacchaeus's house with these words, evoking the Eucharist: "*In this upper room, there are indeed the table of Scripture, the table of the Eucharist, and the table of almsgiving. Regarding the table of Scripture, it is said in Luke 22:29-30: 'And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom,' that is, in the Church. Regarding the table of the Eucharist, Psalm 22:5 says: 'You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.' As for the table of the poor, which is carried out through almsgiving, Tobit 2:2 says: 'Go and bring some of our tribe who fear God, so that they may eat with us.' Job 31:17 says: 'Have I eaten my morsel alone without sharing it with the orphan?'"*

As beauty can be a more powerful vehicle for preaching than empty words, we will cultivate an appreciation for the beauty of the liturgy, sacred music, and sacred art—always with a view to teaching the Word of God and reflecting on Christ's action. Beauty elevates both contemplation and action.

### **2.3.2.3.2 The Rosary**

The Rosary is a Marian devotion that focuses on the mysteries of Christ's life—the pivotal moments in his life that shape the economy of salvation. Traditionally, there are three sets of mysteries:

1. The Joyful Mysteries: The Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth of Jesus, the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, the Finding of Jesus in the Temple.
2. The Sorrowful Mysteries: The Agony in the Garden, the Scourging, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, the Crucifixion.
3. The Glorious Mysteries: The Resurrection, the Ascension, Pentecost, the Assumption, the Coronation.

In the Year of the Rosary (2002/03), Pope John Paul II instituted a fourth, optional series of mysteries to be prayed on Thursdays: the Luminous Mysteries: The Baptism of Christ, the Wedding Feast at Cana, the Proclamation of the Kingdom, the Transfiguration, and the Institution of the Eucharist.

Though the repetitive nature of the Rosary may seem disconcerting or monotonous to some believers, it is important to rediscover the richness and fruitfulness of this devotion.

The Rosary is, first and foremost, the prayer of the poor—those who had no access to the Liturgy of the Hours because they could not read. While the Order of Preachers is deeply intellectual, it is also a mendicant order: we are, too, these poor people! At times, it is difficult for us to "read" God's will in our lives due to the stresses of family life, work, apostolate, and mental exhaustion. In such moments, the simplicity of the Rosary can serve as a prayer of rest and calm, rather than an additional burden a lay Dominican must take on.

The 150 Hail Marys of the Rosary are a metaphor for the 150 Psalms of the Liturgy of the Hours. Through the Rosary, we embrace popular piety in line with Pope Francis and recognize how this piety offers opportunities for preaching, reflection, and pastoral encounters. The Rosary is a real treasure of the Order, and care will be taken to help lay Dominicans in formation grow in their understanding of it.

We must be careful not to denigrate this act of Marian devotion in the name of reason, nor idolize it in the name of popular piety, but instead strive for a balanced approach rooted in Scripture and centered on Christ. The Rosary is not only a devotional act but also a genuine apostolate, as evidenced by the Order's many initiatives: Rosary teams, the Rosary pilgrimage to Lourdes, and the involvement of lay Dominicans in diocesan or national Marian

pilgrimages. Authentic Marian devotion always leads us to contemplate Christ, for Mariology must always be firmly rooted in Christology.

The repetitive nature of the Rosary fosters meditation and tranquility amidst the challenges of a lay Dominican's life. It can be prayed in all circumstances: on the road, in the metro, bus, train, plane, at home, alone or with family, or within the parish or fraternity. Mary is the "Advocata nostra" of humanity and of our Order. Praying and promoting the Rosary is a fitting acknowledgment of the central role Mary plays within our Order.

### 2.3.2.3.3. Lectio Divina

*Lectio divina* is a spiritual and prayerful reading of the Holy Scriptures, which can be done individually or as part of a shared biblical reflection within the fraternity. This practice, rooted in the great patristic (Origen, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo) and monastic (Benedictine, Cistercian) traditions, was adopted by the Order of Preachers from its inception.

The Acts of Saint Dominic's canonization process recount that he always carried the Gospel of Saint Matthew and the Epistles of Saint Paul<sup>3</sup> with him, encouraging the friars to study both the Old and New Testaments. As the reference for Divine Revelation, the Sacred Scriptures are vital nourishment for the preaching and spiritual life of the lay Dominican. Regular engagement with Holy Scripture allows the lay Dominican to focus more deeply on Divine Revelation as it relates to both life with God in the Church and the life-giving impact of the Word in personal life. Furthermore, frequent engagement with Scripture safeguards against any gnostic or elitist interpretation of the Church's universal Catholic faith. *Lectio divina* helps us to see the world with new eyes.

Monastic traditions, such as the school of Saint Victor, describe *lectio divina* in four stages:

- **Lectio:** Reading the Scriptures, understanding their literal meaning, and focusing on the sacred rhetoric of the text.
- **Meditatio:** Meditating inwardly on the Scriptures to draw out their spiritual or allegorical meaning.
- **Cogitatio:** Reflecting on the Scriptures using the tools of the Magisterium, theology, and historical-critical exegesis.
- **Contemplatio:** Contemplating God through the Scriptures during prayer or thanksgiving.

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<sup>3</sup> "Acta canonizationis S. Dominici", in *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica*, t. XVI, vol. 2, n°29, p. 146-147 : *Item dixit, quod dictus frater Dominicus sepe monebat et hortabatur fratres dicti ordinis verbis et litteris suis, quod semper studerent in novo et veteri testamento. Et hoc scit, quia audivit eum illa dicentem, et litteras eius vidit. Item dixit quod semper gestabat secum Matthei evangelium et epistolas Pauli. Et multum studebat in eis, ita quod fere sciebat eas cordetenus.* ("[John of Spain] also said that Brother Dominic often exhorted and encouraged the brothers of that Order, both by his words and by his letters, to always study the New and the Old Testament. And he knows this, for he heard him say these things and saw his letters. He also said that Dominic always carried with him the Gospel of Matthew and the epistles of Paul. And he studied them deeply, to the point of knowing them almost by heart.")

This technique for practicing *Lectio divina* was used by figures like Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great. In this exercise, the lay Dominican seeks an introspective engagement with the text ("How do I receive this text in my life?") while remembering that the Word of God also nourishes our preaching.

*Lectio divina* is both introspective and self-decentering. The contributions of historical-critical exegesis, pioneered in the Church and the Order by Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange O.P., help the lay Dominican to better understand the biblical texts in context, avoiding a split between the existential dimension of the Scriptures (how they speak to our lives) and the contextual dimension (their historical and critical interpretation).

#### **2.3.2.3.4. Liturgy of the Hours (its history and purpose and how to pray it)**

The Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office, is a precious treasure of the Church's prayer - an offering by the whole Christ, Head and members, interceding with God the Father on behalf of the world. It provides a unifying communion of prayer that spans the Church's diverse cultures and geographical regions. The history of the Liturgy of the Hours is long, fascinating, and complex. It is important to note that Saint Dominic's canonical formation included the Liturgy of the Hours, which he incorporated into the Order of Preachers. It is said that Saint Dominic remained steadfast in his observance of the Liturgy of the Hours, both within the convent and during his travels<sup>4</sup>. When Lay Dominicans pray the Divine Office—whether at home, on their travels, or in fraternity—they are in communion not only with the friars and nuns of the Order but with the entire Church.

It will be helpful for fraternities to explain the practical aspects of the Liturgy of the Hours: the different hours of the day, the rotation of the four weeks, and the solemnities, feasts, and

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<sup>4</sup> "Acta canonizationis S. Dominici", in *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica*, t. XVI, vol. 2, n°3, p. 124-125: *Item dixit, quod eundo per viam fere omnibus qui irent secum per viam, volebat proponere verbum Dei per se vel per alios. Et hoc scit, quia sepe vidit predicta. Et semper volebat disputare de Deo vel conferre vel legere, dum in via erat, vel orare. Et atiam eundo fere singulis diebus celebrabat missam, si ecclesiam inveniebat. Et quando missam cantabat, multas lacrimas effundebat, sicut ipse testis vidit. Et quando veniebat ad hospitium, si erat ibi ecclesia, semper ibat ad orandum in ecclesia. Et fere semper cum esset extra conventum, cum audiebat primam pulsationem matutini monasteriorum, surgebat et exciabat fratres et celebrat cum multa devotione totum divinum officium diurnum et nocturnum hors competentibus, it aquod nichil dimittebat. Et post completorium era et faciebat esse socios suos in silentio, eundo in itinere ac si essent in convenu. Et inde mane dum ibat, faciebat fratres servare silentium omni die fere usque ad tertiam. Et dum erat in itinere iacebat in palea vestitus et calciatus sicut ambulabat in die, tamen credit, quod extrahebat sotulares.* ("He said that on the road, he wanted to preach the Word of God—either for himself or for others—and to nearly everyone who walked with him. And he knows this, for he often witnessed such things. He always wanted to speak about God, to converse or to teach while traveling, or else to pray. Moreover, during his travels, he celebrated Mass almost every day if he found a church. And when he celebrated Mass, he shed many tears, as testified by the one reporting these facts. When he arrived at a guesthouse, if there was a church, he would always go there to pray. Almost always, when he was outside the convent, as soon as he heard the first bell for Matins in the monasteries, he would rise, wake his brothers, and celebrate the entire Divine Office with great devotion, by day or by night, at the appropriate times, omitting nothing. After Compline, he imposed silence on his companions, so that when walking on the road they would act as if they were in the convent. And thus, in the morning, as they resumed their journey, he would have them keep silence for almost the whole morning, until Terce. When traveling, he would sleep on straw, clothed and shod as he was during the day, although it is thought he took off his shoes.")

memorials of the saints. It is also essential to incorporate the Proper of the Order into the Liturgy of the Hours.

### **2.3.3. Dominican Formation (History and Spirituality)**

The political, cultural, and religious context of the late 12th century - particularly the environment of the Christian Reconquest on the Iberian Peninsula, the rise of cities, the emergence of artisan and merchant classes, greater access to culture and knowledge, and the development of universities - shaped the birth of the Dominican Order. Movements of religious renewal and contestation of the church's dual role as both a religious and civil power also influenced the Order's founding.

Getting to know Dominic: his family and origins, his years of study and service as a canon, his travels with his bishop, his confrontation with heresy and ignorance, the collaborative project with Diego, his founding of the first community of women, his appointment as Diego's successor in preaching, the establishment of the Order, its rapid expansion, and the formulation of its first laws. The Order's aim was to save souls through the preaching of the Word of God. It operated with a model of government based on preaching and communal life. Saint Dominic's death and subsequent canonization marked the triumph of his vision for the Order.

The Order: Its early history, rapid growth, first reforms, involvement in the Inquisition, missions, expansion into the Americas and Asia, the Reformation, the French Revolution and liberalism, the 20th century, and Vatican II.

The laity in the Order: The origins of the Order of Penance of Saint Dominic, its development and plural expressions until the end of the 18th century, its survival, restoration, and development in the 19th century, and its renewal in the 20th century.

Central figures in the Order: Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Martin de Porres, Saint Rose of Lima, Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati, Giorgio La Pira, Bartolomé de las Casas, Antonio de Montesinos.

Spirituality: Dominicans describe our life through four pillars: prayer, study, community, and ministry. We are called: "To Praise, To Bless, To Preach," to seek the truth, and to share the fruits of contemplation with others (*Contemplata aliis Tradere*).

### **2.3.4. Catholic Social Teaching**

#### **2.3.4.1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

The Catholic Church teaches that all human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is

the foundation of all her social teachings.

#### **2.3.4.2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation**

The human person is not only sacred but also social. A society's laws and its economic and political organization directly affect human dignity and the common good.

#### **2.3.4.3. Rights and Responsibilities**

Every person has a duty and responsibility to safeguard the rights of others, both for our families and for society at large.

#### **2.3.4.4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

Our world is marked by growing prosperity for some and increasing poverty for others. The basic moral test of a society is how its most vulnerable members are faring. Jesus' parable of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) commands all people to prioritize the needs of the poor and vulnerable.

#### **2.3.4.5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**

The economy must serve the people. Too often, the marketplace takes precedence over the rights of workers. Work is more than just a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. The right to productive work, decent wages, the organization of unions, private property, and economic initiative are essential to protecting the dignity of work and the rights of workers.

#### **2.3.4.6. Solidarity**

Every human being has a responsibility to our brothers and sisters, wherever they live. We are one human family, regardless of our national, racial, ethnic, economic, or ideological differences. Solidarity is about loving our neighbors locally, nationally, and internationally.

#### **2.3.4.7. Care for God's Creation**

Every human being shows respect for the Creator through stewardship of His creation. We are called to protect both people and the planet by living our faith in a way that respects God's creation.

### **2.4. The Lay Dominican Rule and the General Declarations**

### **2.4.1. Jurisdiction and Subsidiarity in the Order**

To foster a proper understanding of governance within the Lay Fraternities, in accordance with the Rule and the General Declarations, formation should emphasize the principle of subsidiarity across the different levels of the fraternities. This includes the local fraternity (with the functions of the fraternity council and fraternity president), provincial councils and their elected leadership, the five regional councils (ACLDF, APCLDF, COFALC, DLIPC and ECLDF), the International Council of Lay Dominican Fraternities (ICLDF), the General Curia, and the Master of the Order.

### **2.4.2. Saint Dominic, “Novus Legislator”: The Rule’s Intelligence for Preaching**

When Saint Dominic established the Order of Preachers, he chose to give the first communities the Rule of Saint Augustine, supplementing it with constitutions that would intelligently, practically, and spiritually serve the ultimate objective of the Order: the service of the Holy Preaching and the salvation of souls. For this reason, Saint Dominic is referred to in the early liturgies of the Order as the *novus legislator*<sup>5</sup>, a title that reflects both his spiritual and practical genius in shaping the law with the goal of Preaching and the salvation of souls (cf. *Constitutio fundamentalis*, 1, § 2).

The observance of the Rule of the Lay Fraternities of Saint Dominic and the General Declarations is solely aimed at what is beneficial for Preaching. The Rule, therefore, is a means of structuring the mission of the fraternities in an ecclesial and communal way: the Rule and the Declarations are at the service of the preaching, not the other way around.

In this context, new members will be introduced to the discerning and responsible use of Saint Dominic’s principle of dispensation in relation to their personal, family, and professional situations, ensuring that such dispensations do not compromise their fidelity to the Rule or the demands of Dominican life. The ethics of dispensation in Dominican life should be presented as a long journey of growth in responsible freedom, where fidelity to the Rule is placed at the service of preaching for the salvation of souls, always grounded in communal discernment of the duties of fraternal life and the obligations and life situations of each individual.

### **2.4.3. Dominican Democracy: An Ethic of Deliberation for Communion, or Listening as the First Virtue of the Preacher**

In the same vein, care must be taken to initiate new members into the responsible and discerning ethics of deliberation for the common good of the fraternity and of preaching, being mindful of the balance between speaking and listening. As the saying goes, *Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet*, "what concerns everyone must be

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<sup>5</sup> Sequence for the Solemnity of Our Holy Father Saint Dominic *In caelesti Hierarchia*.

discussed and approved by everyone,<sup>6</sup> and “[...] *why are you gathered together if not to dwell together in unanimity*<sup>7</sup>, *being of one heart and one soul in God*<sup>8</sup>.”<sup>9</sup>

It is crucial to incorporate the Dominican ethic of deliberation into our formation programmes: first, to position the new member not only as a recipient of the fraternity's benefits but also as a responsible contributor to its life; second, to direct all deliberations of the fraternity toward the common good; and third, to guard against what threatens the long-term health of any institutional body - namely, self-interest, the partisan spirit of one ideology against another, division, or the reduction of our charisms to a sociology of one group versus another.

We become Lay Dominicans because we desire to humbly follow Christ *verbo et exemplo*, to expand the intimate sanctuary of our compassion toward our fellow human beings - whoever they may be - working for mercy, preaching the Word, and seeking the Truth within the communion of the Catholic Church, while living in fraternity. Our unity is grounded in communion, rather than in partisan logic. The culture of our fraternity chapters is not that of a political party; it is fundamentally synodal and strives for maximum unanimity, ensuring no one is excluded.

This ethic demands genuine formation and a thorough understanding of our institutions, so that divergences may be transformed into points of convergence. It also requires the maturation of deliberation, thoughtful reflection, mastery of speech, and, above all, the Preacher's primary virtue before speaking: listening.

#### **2.4.4. Topics Concerning the Rule and the General Declarations**

Whenever possible, the various aspects of the Rule of the Lay Fraternities of Saint Dominic and the General Declarations should be studied through reading, commentary, and shared reflection during formation:

- **Rule:**
  - Fundamental constitution of the Dominican laity
  - Life of the fraternities
  - Principle sources
  - Formation
  - Profession/promise
  - Structure and governance
  - Local, provincial, and international councils

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<sup>6</sup> Yves-Marie Congar, “*Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet*”, *Revue historique de droit français et étranger*, 81, 1958, p. 210-259.

<sup>7</sup> Ps 67:7 : *Deus qui habitare facit unanimes in domo* (God who makes dwell in one house those who are united).

<sup>8</sup> Acts 4:32

<sup>9</sup> *Rule of Saint Augustine*, § 1

- Jurisdiction of the Order
- Statutes
- **General Declarations:**
  - Other Dominican lay groups
  - Life of the fraternities
  - Apostolate
  - Admission
  - Applicable law
  - Government of fraternities
  - Provincial government
  - Elections
  - Withdrawal and expulsion

## **2.5. Stages of Formation**

### **2.5.1. Admission Year**

- i. This period lasts at least one year, after which a temporary pledge may be made in accordance with the Directory.
- ii. Formation is the responsibility of the Fraternity/Chapter Formator.
- iii. During the admission period, candidates for the fraternity will receive special instruction in:
  - a. The Rule and Provincial Directory
  - b. The government and life of the Fraternity/Chapter
  - c. The history and spirit of the Dominican Order
  - d. The basic principles of Dominican spirituality
- iv. A bibliography and reading plan on these topics should be provided to each new member to deepen their formation.
- v. Those admitted will be introduced to the apostolate of the fraternity and given specific tasks.

## **2.5.2. Initial Formation (3 years)**

### **After Temporary Promise**

- a) During the validity of the temporary promise (normally three years), the formation programme outlined by the Fraternity Formator should be implemented.
- b) In addition to the Religious Assistant, and depending on the specific formative subjects, the Formator may call upon other members of the Fraternity or the Dominican Family.
- c) The times for formation must be agreed upon with the individual being formed, and specific formation meetings should be scheduled.
- d) Participation in Fraternity life, including regular attendance at meetings, engagement in apostolic activities, and fraternal conviviality, is a crucial aspect of the formation process.

It is understood that not every local fraternity will have the resources to implement the entire Formation Programme independently. Therefore, it is suggested that each province develop a competence or formation/study center to provide the fraternities with the necessary resources and initiatives for formation, especially through remote and digital means.

## **2.6. Those Responsible for Formation**

### **2.6.1. The Lay Dominican**

Being a Lay Dominican, a member of the Lay Fraternities of St. Dominic, is a vocation to which we are called. As such, it must be discovered personally, and once discovered, it must be perpetually nourished and lived. Therefore, every Dominican is called, from the outset, to know, deepen, and develop their faith, as well as their understanding of the Church and the needs of the people of their time. Study, then, is not merely an instrument; it is an essential and ongoing element of the life of every Dominican. To follow this vocation and remain faithful to it, the lay Dominican must continually foster the desire to study in order to serve better. In this regard, they are the first and primary stewards of their own formation.

### **2.6.2. The Formation Officer**

The Fraternity/Chapter formator is directly responsible for formation. This person should possess the following qualities: experience within the Order, enabling them to witness to and pass on its life; knowledge of the formation programme subjects and/or the ability to source

the necessary resources; availability to accompany and guide the formation journey, including regular meetings; and the ability to assess progress continuously and conclusively.

### **2.6.3. The Fraternity/Chapter**

Each Dominican fraternity/chapter should serve as both a school for preachers and a community in formation. A fraternity is most formative when it is living and functioning well, as it is through the life of the fraternity—its observance of the Rule, its Dominican spirit, its focus on Preaching—that formation takes place. This is evident in the fraternity's cycles of celebration, practices of sharing, apostolic activities, and methods of governance.

## **2.7. Criteria for Developing the Provincial Lay Dominican Formation Programme**

Provinces of the Lay Fraternities are encouraged to adapt and complement the directives of this *Ratio Formationis Laicorum* to suit their needs. Each Province may present its formation programme and Directory based on the human resources available, aligned with the standards presented in this document. The guidelines in this *Ratio Formationis* carry normative weight, offering strong recommendations while respecting the unique circumstances of each province.

Attention should be paid to distinguishing between initial formation (for new members at various stages, including the simply professed) and ongoing formation (for perpetually professed members).

### **2.7.1 Pedagogy and Adaptation**

Formation should be pedagogically sound and adaptable to varied needs, fostering a fraternal and relaxed atmosphere without compromising the quality of content. It is crucial not to discriminate based on academic background, titles, or professional background. Formation is offered by brothers and sisters for brothers and sisters, and efforts should be made to reassure members who may feel inadequate to follow the programme. Sessions can be shared across multiple fraternities or at the provincial level as needed.

### **2.7.2. Academic Quality**

The academic quality of formation must be of the highest standard. Provinces should not hesitate to engage professionals—religious brothers, sisters, diocesan priests, or laypeople—who can contribute. Each province should establish a network for scholarly resources useful in formation, possibly drawing from faculties of Catholic theology or training centers within the Order.

### **2.7.3 Usefulness for Apostolic Life**

The promotion of the intellectual life should always be connected to its usefulness for the mission, preaching, and apostolic life. The aim of formation is not simply intellectual enrichment but to serve the wider mission of the Church.

### **2.7.4 Resources for the Spiritual Life**

Formation will also nurture the spiritual life of lay Dominicans within the real context of their daily lives. It will aim to sustain and deepen their faith, prayer life, and understanding of Catholic liturgy and the sacraments.

### **2.7.5. Historical-Critical Consciousness**

Formation will also cultivate a historical-critical consciousness in the spirit of Friars Marie-Joseph Lagrange, Yves Congar, and Marie-Dominique Chenu, enabling the interpretation of the signs of the times with both discernment and prudence. This historical-critical consciousness entails a de-centered re-reading of biblical, ecclesial, and human events through which we seek, at the very least, the Truth—if not the *semina Verbi* of the Truth. This serves as an antidote to the gnostic and esoteric temptations that continue to assail the Church.

### **2.7.6. Interdisciplinary Theology and Other Areas of Knowledge**

Formation will not exist in isolation but will integrate disciplines from philosophy, the social sciences, and other fields to better understand the world to which we are sent to preach. As Yves Congar and Marie-Dominique Chenu often stated, quoting Lutheran theologian Karl Barth: “We preach with the Bible in one hand, the newspaper in the other.”

### **2.7.7. Interdisciplinary Collaboration of Lay Fraternities with Other Sectors of the Church**

Formation will also foster collaboration with other groups and sectors of the Church, including fraternities of other religious Orders, parishes, dioceses, and Catholic movements. The quality of our formation will contribute to the broader promotion of Dominican life across the local and universal Church.

### **2.7.8. Interdisciplinary Collaboration of Lay Fraternities with Other Sectors of Civil, Social, Economic, Legal, and Humanitarian Life**

Formation will integrate aspects of the Church's Social Teaching, enabling lay Dominicans to engage concretely in promoting justice and peace in various sectors of society, as well as in their social and professional lives.

### **2.7.9. Internal Governance of the Order (Master of the Order, General Curia, ICLDF, Continental Regional Councils, Provinces, Local Fraternities)**

Formation will also include training on the governance structures within the Order – the Master of the Order, the General Curia, the ICLDF and the regional councils, provinces, and local fraternities. This will foster constructive dialogue and information exchange between local, provincial, continental, and international fraternities. Provinces are encouraged to explore twinning arrangements for mutual sharing of resources, especially in formation.

The development of the provincial formation programme will be reviewed and approved by the Provincial Council of the Laity, following their established procedures, and will be published as an annex to the Provincial Directory.

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