



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS (DOMINICANS)***

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 4 August 2016*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we could describe this day as “A Jesuit among Friars”: the morning with you and the evening in Assisi with the Franciscans: among Friars.

I welcome you and I thank Fr Bruno Cadoré, Master of the Order, for the welcome that he addressed to me on his own behalf and that of all those present, while the General Chapter taking place in Bologna, is concluding, during which you have desired to revive your roots at the tomb of your holy Founder.

This year has a special meaning for your religious family as eight centuries have passed since Pope Honorius III approved the Order of Preachers. On the occasion of this Jubilee anniversary that you are celebrating, I join you in giving thanks for the abundant gifts you have received over the course of this time. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Order for the significant contribution it has made to the Church and for its collaboration with the Apostolic See, which, since the very beginning, it has maintained with a spirit of loyal service up to now.

This eighth centenary leads us to commemorate the men and women of faith, scholars, contemplatives, missionaries, martyrs and apostles of charity, who brought the kind gesture and the tenderness of God everywhere, enriching the Church and demonstrated new ways to incarnate the Gospel through *preaching*, *witness* and *charity*: the three pillars that guarantee the future of the Order and maintain the freshness of the founding charism.

God moved St Dominic to found an “Order of Preachers”, which has the mission of *preaching* that Jesus entrusted to the Apostles. It is the Word of God that burns within you and impels you to go forth to proclaim Jesus Christ to all peoples (cf. Mt 28:19-20). The Founding Father said: “First contemplate, then teach”. Evangelized by God, in order to evangelize. Without a strong union with Him, preaching might seem completely perfect, quite reasonable and even admirable, but it will not touch the heart, which is what has to change. The serious and assiduous study of theological matters is also essential, because it allows you to grow closer to reality and to listen to God’s people. The preacher contemplates the Word and also contemplates the people, who are waiting to be understood (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 154).

Effectively transmitting the Word of God requires *testimony*: faithful teachers of the truth and courageous witnesses of the Gospel. Witnesses embody the teaching, they make it tangible, attractive, and leave no one indifferent; they unite the joy of the Gospel to the truth, the joy of knowing we are loved by God and are objects of his infinite mercy (cf. *ibid.*, 142).

St Dominic told his followers: “Walking barefoot, let us go to preach”. He reminds us of the passage of the burning bush, when God said to Moses: “Put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground” (Ex 3:5). A good preacher is aware that he is moving on holy ground, because the Word he brings is holy, as are the people who are to receive it. The faithful not only need to receive the Word in its integrity, but they also need to experience the life witness of the preacher (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 171). The Saints brought forth abundant fruit because, by their life and their mission, they spoke with the language of the heart, which knows no barriers and can be understood by everyone.

Lastly, those who preach and bear witness must do so in *charity*. Without this, they will be suspect and disputable. St Dominic had a dilemma at the beginning of his life, which marked the whole of his existence: “How can I study on dead skins while the flesh of Christ suffers?”. The body of Christ, alive and suffering, cries out to the preacher and does not leave him in peace. The cry of the poor and the excluded awakens us and helps us to understand the compassion Jesus felt for the people (Mt 15:32).

Looking around us, we find that the men and women of today are thirsting for God. They are the living flesh of Christ which cries out: “I thirst” for an authentic and liberating word, for a fraternal and kind gesture. This cry beckons us and must constitute the backbone of the mission and give life to structures and pastoral programmes. Think about this when you reflect on the need to adjust the structure of the Order, so as to discern the answer you must give to this cry from God. The more we go to satiate the thirst of our neighbour, the more we will be preachers of truth, of that truth proclaimed with love and mercy, which St Catherine of Siena speaks of (cf. *The Book of Divine Doctrine*, 35). In the encounter with the living flesh of Christ we are evangelized and we rediscover the passion of being preachers and witnesses of his love; we free ourselves from the dangerous temptation of Gnosticism, which is so prevalent today.

Dear brothers and sisters, with a heart full of gratitude for the goods the Lord has given for your Order and for the Church, I encourage you to joyfully follow the charism inspired by St Dominic, which has been lived in various ways by many saints of the Dominican family. His example inspires us to face the future with hope, knowing that God always renews everything... and takes nothing away. May Our Mother, the Virgin of the Rosary, intercede for you and protect you, that you may be preachers and courageous witnesses of God's love. Thank you!