



DOMINICANS OF MARY
MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

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ARTICLE I - IDENTITY

Before all else, live together in harmony (Ps.67:7) being of one mind and one heart (Acts 4:32) on the way to God. For, is it not precisely for this reason that you have come to live together?"

(Augustine, Rule I.1)

Inspired by the life and ministry of St. Dominic de Guzman, the members of the Dominicans of Mary, Mother of the Church strive to re-envision his charism for the present day. The Order is comprised of both men and women who are drawn to the charism of Sacred Preaching built upon the four pillars of Dominican spirituality: prayer, community, study and the Sacred Preaching.

ARTICLE II – MISSION

Before all else, dear brothers and sisters, love God and then your neighbor, because these are the chief commandments given to us.

(Augustine, Rule I)

Responding to our Savior's command to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19), the members of the Dominicans of Mary, Mother of the Church strive to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all through words and actions.

ARTICLE III – WAY OF LIFE

As members of the Dominicans of Mary, Mother of the Church, our lives are guided by the Four Pillars of Dominican Spirituality; prayer, community, study, and the Sacred Preaching.

1. Prayer

*Be assiduous in prayer (Col 4:2),
at the hours and times appointed.
(Augustine, Rule II.1)*

As Dominicans we center our lives on Jesus Christ, and are moved by the Holy Spirit who radiates God's presence in the world today. We celebrate the Word in daily prayer and meditation, for it is from our individual and corporate prayer that all life and ministry arises.¹ Our lives are nourished by God's Word as spoken in sacred scripture, celebrated in the Holy Eucharist, and encountered in everyday life. According to the desire of St. Dominic, the solemn and common celebration of worship must be maintained among the principal duties of our vocation.² When we gather as community, we seek to celebrate the entire range of prayer and worship expressing the unique gifts and relationship of each brother and sister with God.³ Each Dominican is called to balance in their own life the two dimensions of our practice, the contemplative and the active, aware that this is something for which we strive, it is not something that we achieve once and for all.

¹ John 15:7, ² 1 Thes 5:17, ³ 1 Cor 12:7 – 11

2. Community

Call nothing your own, but let everything be yours in common. (Augustine, Rule I.3)

Community is not just people living together under one roof. Rather, community is the willingness to share common values and live our lives in mutual support with one another⁴ and in service to one another.⁵ For Dominicans, the communal dimension of our religious life challenges us to be of “one mind and one heart in God.” As such, members are called to be people of community.⁶ Although the members live dispersed from each other, members will strive to build and foster relationships with each other through social media, technology, and various forms of communication. We are reminded no one person is an island onto themselves but we are together the Body of Christ.⁷

⁴ Eccl 4:9 – 12, ⁵ 1 Peter 4:8 – 10, ⁶ Rom 12:15, ⁷ 1 Cor 12:25 – 27

3. Study

*When you come to table, listen until you leave to what is the custom to read, without disturbance or strife. Let not your mouths alone take nourishment but let your hearts too hunger for the words of God.
(Augustine, Rule III.2)*

St. Dominic said “Always Study!” Study is not one activity among others for a Dominican; it should permeate every aspect of our life to enable us to know our place in the world, to more closely follow God’s Holy Will, and empower us to hear, celebrate and proclaim the Word of God faithfully.⁸ St. Dominic sent the friars to the universities to study, to preach, and to establish places of learning; a dedication to study and teaching that continues today. The Dominican emphasis on study opens our hearts and minds more fully to the complexity of the human experience, to more fully discover God’s presence in our lives, and to search for and better understand God’s Truth. We continue to build on a rich history and tradition that ultimately effects our preaching and teaching.⁹ We encourage and challenge the members to engage in lifelong personal study of subjects that allow the member to gain a deeper knowledge in a field of study to benefit our community and the universal church.¹⁰

⁸ 2 Tim 2:15, ⁹ 1 Peter 3:15, ¹⁰ Prov 1:5

4. Sacred Preaching

*Let all of you then live together in oneness of mind and heart,
mutually honoring God in yourselves, whose temples you
have become.*

(Augustine, *Rule I.8*)

As Dominican brothers and sisters, we continue the work of St. Dominic today in an active and

contemplative life. We show others God by how we are and how we act as persons; we call this preaching.¹¹ Our mission includes proclaiming the Good News, teaching, and works of social justice in a variety of settings: congregations, ministries, service to those in need, and being present in communities.¹² We have chosen to live as Brothers and Sisters, yet we are free to go where ministry is needed and to live in the world serving God's people with our prayer, study, preaching and showing how we are all called to live in community. Our members whose work has a ministerial dimension should certainly consider that as a form of fulfilling the apostolate and those engaged in secular work should consecrate their work to making Christ present in the workplace as their proclamation.¹³

¹¹ 1 Cor 1:21, ¹² 1 Tim 4:13, ¹³ Mark 16:15

ARTICLE IV – FORMATION

The Lord grants that you may observe all these precepts in a spirit of charity as lovers of spiritual beauty, giving forth the good odor of Christ in the holiness of your lives: not as slaves living under the law but as people living in freedom under grace.
(Augustine, *Rule VIII.1*)

Becoming a member of the Dominicans of Mary, Mother of the Church is not an arduous or complicated task, however it does take some time, determination, an

abundance of study, a great deal of prayer, and perseverance.

The real beginning of the process takes place before one ever contacts us. It begins with the candidate's own struggle to discern if they received a call to the religious life or not. This can take place over a number of years, and always involves the help of others, especially a confessor or spiritual director.

The dynamic here should be noted: it is a personal call from God to the individual, but the recognition and understanding of that call requires the help of others. This dynamic continues throughout the following, more formal stages of formation: the candidate continues to struggle to understand and give shape to their call under the guidance and direction of others. Nor should it be surprising to us that this is the case. God always enlightens us, teaches us, and sanctifies us through the Body of Christ, the Church. God's grace for us, in other words, is always ministered to us through others. The grace of a vocation is made incarnate in the service, education, and training that others give in order to bring that vocation to life.

The following is a broad outline of how one moves forward from initial inquiry towards application to profession.

1. **Inquiry** - An Inquirer shall be any potential member of the Order, lay or ordained, who is discerning the call to religious life. During this period, the Inquirer should engage in a regular prayer life and seek the

guidance of a Spiritual Director and other trusted members of the Body of Christ to assist them in discerning their calling and the specific path of their life's journey with God. If the Inquirer prayerfully discerns a call to life as part of this particular religious community, they are strongly encouraged to meet with a diverse group of members of the Order and to physically attend and participate in a Chapter meeting to determine if the charism and mission of the Dominicans of Mary, Mother of the Church aligns with their perceived calling. An Inquirer must provide the Order with personal contact information and shall participate in a minimum of three meetings (physical or technology enabled) prior to formal application to the Novitiate.

2. **Novitiate** - After an individual has gathered sufficient information about the Dominicans of Mary, Mother of the Church and talked with its members such that they have enough information to begin thinking seriously about applying to enter the Novitiate, they must indicate that they wish to become a member of the Order by a formal letter of application. The following must be provided to the Order by the applicant, and at the applicant's cost:
 - At least 21 years of age and a high school graduate

- Letter of Intention describing your interest and intention to discern your vocation within the Dominicans of Mary, Mother of the Church.
- Transcripts and/or diplomas as proof of your educational background. These will need to be notarized or certified copies. They will need to include an English Translation, if applicable.
- A Criminal Background Check
- Letters of Recommendation from 4 individuals who know your spiritual journey and can attest to your discernment.
- Spiritual Autobiography
- Successful completion of Sexual Misconduct training.
- Attendance and participation at the Annual General Chapter.

Inquirers shall be advanced to the Novitiate after successful completion of the above requirements and the affirmation by consensus of all professed members in meeting at Chapter. By such consensus may the Order remain as St. Dominic wished, “that all may be of one heart and one mind.”

In the presence of the entire community during the General Chapter, an inquirer is accepted into the Order as a Novice, vested with the Dominican cross and officially begins their Novitiate.

During the Novitiate, the Novice works with the members to explore where they stand in relation to their own human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development. Novitiate shall be a time for the individual to learn basics about prayer, religious life, St. Dominic, and the charism and Constitution of the Dominicans of Mary, Mother of the Church. The novice shall complete a course of study approved by the Order.

The Novitiate is a time of intense prayer and discernment, and deep personal and spiritual growth. While the Novice is instructed in elements of religious life, adapting to and embracing in their core our charism as their own, this period allows the Novice to internalize the Four Pillars of Dominican Spirituality within the talents and gifts the Lord has bestowed on them individually that they might daily preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their words and actions.

During this time, the Novice will learn to celebrate the entire range of prayer, and develop their own regular prayer life while growing in the acknowledgement of St. Dominic's belief that the solemn and common celebration of worship is among the highest duties of our ministry. Progressing in their deepening understanding of the call they have from God, with the help of their sisters and brothers in the Order, the Novice learns how to live as part of this Dominican community.

At the same time, the professed members of the community are discerning whether the Novice truly has a call to the Dominican religious life. The Novitiate period concludes when the Novice, having completed all necessary requirements and prescribed courses of study, shall prayerfully discern their readiness to profess publically their willingness to live a life of prayer, study, community and the Sacred Preaching as faithful witnesses to all of the mission and way of life of the Order of St. Dominic. The readiness of a Novice to make Profession shall be subject to a consensus affirmation by the professed members at General Chapter.

3. **Profession** – Having completed the requisite course of study and discerned their readiness to commit to religious life, and having received the affirmation of the professed members, the Novice is invested with the habit of the Order and makes profession to the Dominicans of Mary, Mother of the Church during the General Chapter. Promises are made annually by each member of the Order during the General Chapter. Each member continues to study, learn and grow as a member of the Order, for the benefit of the Order and the People of God.

Profession Formula:

“I, brother/sister N.N., make profession and promise obedience to God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our holy father Saint Dominic, according

to the Constitution of the Dominicans of Mary, Mother of the Church. I will pray continuously, study fervently, build community, and celebrate fearlessly the love of God for all by faithfully proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the sacred preaching for one year.”

ARTICLE V – REGULAR OBSERVANCE

Regular observance, taken by St. Dominic from tradition or created by him, so governs our way of living that we are aided in our purpose of more closely following Christ and are able to carry out the apostolic life more effectively. In order, therefore, that we may remain faithful in our vocation, we should regard regular observance highly, cherish it in our heart, and strive to put it into effect.

All the elements that constitute and govern Dominican life through common discipline pertain to regular observance. Outstanding among these elements are the common life, the celebration of the liturgy and private prayer, the observance of the vows, the assiduous study of truth, and the apostolic ministry: to fulfill them faithfully we are helped by the community, silence and meditation, wearing the habit and penitential practices.

The habit of the Order consists of a white tunic with a white scapular and capuce, with a leather belt and rosary.

The members should wear the habit of the Order whenever appropriate as a sign of our profession.

ARTICLE VI – GOVERNANCE

Your superior must not think themselves fortunate in having power to lord it over you, but in the love with which they shall serve you.

(Augustine, *Rule VII.3*)

All authority of the Dominicans of Mary, Mother of the Church resides in the professed members through the General Chapter. Each professed member has the right and responsibility for the governance of the Order as voting members of the Chapter. No one member has greater voice over the entire Order.

Annually, all members will gather for the General Chapter whereby any official decisions of the Order, acceptance of new members, affirmation of Novices, and election of leadership is to be determined and decided upon by consensus. Throughout the year, if other matters arise, a simplified Chapter can be conducted using modern communications methods. In any event, the Chapter must have consensus among the Professed members in all matters, “that all may be of one heart and one mind.”

The General Chapter provides leadership to the Order by overseeing the affairs of the Order and managing its members. It is accountable to the Order’s membership for spiritual welfare, the oversight of its discipleship, and outreach to inquirers.

The General Chapter has the responsibility to elect the Prior/Prioress who is the public persona of the Order of St. Dominic. The Prior/Prioress shall be regarded as “first among equals”. The Prior/Prioress is elected for a 4-year

term, not to exceed two consecutive terms. The Prior/Prioress has responsibility for calling the General Chapter, representing the Order in liturgical and ecumenical functions, articulating the vision and mission of the Order, and in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE VII - DEPARTURE

You should either avoid quarrels altogether or else put an end to them as quickly as possible; otherwise, anger may grow into hatred. For so you read: Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer (1 Jn 3:15).

(Augustine, *Rule VI. 1*)

Aware that in this age there are myriad demands and changing life circumstances on each individual, a brother or sister may request to be released from his or her profession and the Order by written appeal to the Chapter, stating the reason(s) and need for dispensation from the Constitution. Upon receipt of such request, the Prior/Prioress will then expeditiously inform all professed members that the request has been granted and that the requesting member is no longer a member of the Order.

If a member is found to be living in direct conflict to the Constitution of the Dominicans of Mary, Mother of the Church, the members may take action to have the member involuntarily removed from the community. The Prior/Priorities will directly address the member and their actions, determine if reconciliation can be reached or take necessary action to have the member removed. If the Prior/Prioress deems that removal is required, the

Prior/Prioress will address the Chapter, identify the situation and the Chapter will come to a consensus as to a course of action.

ARTICLE VIII - AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this Constitution may originate from any member and be presented to the Chapter for consideration.

Proposed Legislation to amend the Constitution must be agreed upon by consensus of all professed members of the Chapter.

