Challenges for Colleges and Universities in the New Millennium: A Dominican Perspective
The Center for Dominican Studies at Ohio Dominican University was created in 2003 through the generosity of the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs. The Center began its first programs in Summer, 2004 under the leadership of its founding director, Sr. Catherine Colby, O.P.

Ohio Dominican University is an institution steeped in its Dominican mission and replete with programs and services that demonstrate the Dominican values of study, prayer, community and service. The Center for Dominican Studies was created to provide additional resources that focus on the Catholic intellectual life, our Dominican commitment to contemplate the truth. Through lectures, symposia, colloquia, research and publications, the Centers hope to engage the Ohio Dominican campus community and the community beyond our campus in reflection, debate and dialogue about significant theological and social issues from a Dominican and Catholic perspective.

On February 10, 2005, The Center for Dominican Studies inaugurated the first presentation of the Dominican Lecture Series. The lecture topic was "Challenges for Colleges and Universities in the New Millennium: A Dominican Perspective." Fr. Donald J. Goergen, O.P., Dominican friar, theologian and lecturer, framed his inspiring and challenging comments around the mottoes of the Dominican Order. We are grateful to Fr. Goergen allowing the Center to share his extraordinary lecture to an even larger community through the publication of this booklet.

The Center will continue to provide special events on our campus on a regular basis. We invite you to check our website (www.ohiodominican.edu) for announcements of dates, topics and speakers. Even more, we encourage you to attend these events and join our community as we celebrate the life of the mind at Ohio Dominican University.

Donald Goergen, OP, is a Dominican friar of the Central Province of the Order of Preachers. He is a theologian, lecturer, teacher and author who has written and taught primarily in the areas of Christology and spirituality here in the States as well as in Africa and Asia.

Fr. Goergen, O.P., is a former prior provincial of the Dominican friars of the Central Province in the United States. He is a member of the Friends of God Dominican Ashram Community in Kenosha, Wisconsin, a community with intense spiritual practices, with particular emphasis on the practice of silence, simplistic living, and the value of interreligious practice and openness to all religious traditions.

Fr. Goergen has been a member of the ashram community from its beginning in 1999 and continues to teach and preach. His most recent writing is on the Holy Spirit. One can check his work further at http://www.op.org/don/
To ponder the challenges facing colleges and universities in this millennium from a Dominican perspective is in itself a challenge. So I have decided to proceed by taking up the three primary mottos of the Dominican Order in its 800 year history and asking what challenge each presents. These mottos, the wordings of which do not go back to Dominic himself, are: veritas or truth; contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere or to contemplate and to hand on the fruits of contemplation to others; and laudare, benedicere, praedicare or to praise, to bless, to preach. Truth undergirds all of them: the passionate pursuit of truth, the passion of the Western mind. (1)

Veritas

“What is truth?” of course, has been a foundational philosophical question in the West for centuries. In the Gospel of John the question is placed on the tongue of Pontius Pilate as he faced in retrospect the most important decision of his life (Jn 18:37-38). Gandhi entitled his autobiography, “The Story of My Experiment with Truth.” Universities are communities in search of truth. We recognize that there are different kinds of knowledge (objective knowledge, personal knowledge, symbolic knowledge) (2) and that knowledge and truth themselves are not to be simply equated. Knowledge is one of the paths that the pursuit of truth takes but truth itself transcends while at the same time includes various forms of knowledge. Some even distinguish between knowing the truth and doing the truth, wherein the pursuit of truth lies in orthopraxis, in praxis, and not simply in orthodoxy or correct understanding. But we cannot raise nor resolve all the questions that pertain to this word veritas which some see as ultimately God’s very Self.

If we place this pursuit within the context of a Dominican perspective, we must call to mind a little Dominican history. The Cathars (3) (or Albigensians), a 12th and 13th century heretical, dualist, Manichaean movement, first became an organized church in southern France in 1167 when Cathar bishops were appointed for Toulouse, Carcassonne, and Albi. A little over thirty years later, 1198, Innocent III became pope at the age of 37. In 1203 two Cistercian monks were sent to Languedoc in southern France by Innocent III on a mission of conversion. The next year the pope sent a third, Arnaud Amaury, the Abbot of Citeaux. In Spring of 1206, Dominic and his bishop, Diego, on their return to the Diocese

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FOOTNOTES


5 - Aubrey Burl, xv-xviii, 3-12.

6 - The suggestion that Dominic was present at the battle of Muret has no credible historical basis. Guy Bedouelle writes: “A reference made by Bernard Gui (1261-1331) in a Life of St. Dominic does not hesitate to claim for his Founder the title of First Inquisitor, following the ‘legendary’ texts of the thirteenth century. Nor has the author of the celebrated “Manual for Inquisitors” hesitated to interpolate on his own authority the Albigensian History of Pierre des Vaux de Cerain in order to prove Dominic’s presence at the Battle of Muret during the Albigensian Crusade on September 12, 1213: the Saint is pictured holding in his hands a crucifix riddled with wounds, which is still shown at St. Sernin in Toulouse.” Cf., Guy Bedouelle, “The Holy Inquisition: Dominic and Dominicans,” on line at the Order’s website. Cf. Guy Bedouelle, Saint Dominique. The Grace of the Word (Ignatius, 1987).


10 - Some accounts state that the war ended in 1224. This refers to the end of involvement on the part of the de Montforts. The siege of Avignon by King Louis VIII and its fall took place in 1226 and Louis died a couple months later. Some note the treaty in Paris of 1229 as the conclusion of the crusade. The siege and fall of Montségur (1243-44) was the end of any armed resistance by the Cathars.


14 - J.S. Cummins, 17: “It is ironical that an intellectual order, founded to correct error by reasoned persuasion, should have been chosen to suppress dissent by force.” Cf., M.-H. Vicaire, 483, n. 69.

15 - Aubrey Burl, xv-xviii, 3-12.


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Ohio Dominican University is a private Catholic liberal arts university, guided in its educational mission by the Dominican motto, “To contemplate truth and to share with others the fruits of this contemplation.”

Founded in 1911 as the College of Saint Mary of the Springs, Ohio Dominican offers a fully accredited, high quality, career-oriented education in a distinctive setting. The University spans 62 beautifully wooded acres. It is a place where diversity is embraced and individualism is celebrated. The Ohio Dominican University liberal arts curriculum teaches skills valuable in every career and life - the ability to think critically, write proficiently, and communicate clearly. The University’s nationally acclaimed Humanities program is at the core of every student’s academic study at Ohio Dominican.

We forge a new vision for Ohio Dominican based on the foundation of our enduring values.
of Osma in Spain, accidentally met the three papal legates in Montpellier and challenged their methods of preaching. A new form of preaching began to take shape which focused not on the content of the preaching but the manner in which one preached, preaching in a style of evangelical simplicity which came to be known as the Holy Preaching. In late December of 1207 Bishop Diego died and Dominic was on his own. The years 1207-1215 would find Dominic wrestling with many questions.

Diego died. Dominic settled in Fanjeaux, a Cathar stronghold, an “inferno of heresy,” as one writer describes it, (4) where Dominic and Diego had established a hospice or nunnery for some converted Cathar women. (5) On January 14, 1208, Pierre de Castlenu, one of the three Cistercian papal legates, was assassinated and the pope called for a crusade. The holy preaching was judged insufficient and ineffective. It would now be holy war and one of the most brutal religious wars in history. During the brutal holy war, where was Dominic? Dominic never joined the crusade. (6)

Arnaud Amaury, the Abbot of Citeaux, the third of the papal legates, had been appointed the spiritual leader of the crusade. On July 22, the feast of Mary Magdalene, in 1209, the massacre at Béziers took place. By mid-August of that same year, partly due to fear of another Béziers, Carcassonne surrendered to the crusaders after two weeks. (7) In that same month Simon de Montfort, from one of the aristocratic dynasties of northern France, was chosen to lead the crusade, a military genius, devout Catholic, but ruthless man. Dominic, however, limped along from town to town, unostentatiously, preaching, trusting in the power of truth, often unsuccessful, holding debates, some lasting for days, making a handful of conversions, fostering peace. He never followed the church’s lead from holy preaching to holy war.

In 1215, Dominic founded a diocesan order of preachers. War was ravaging the countryside, the pope had decided on a crusade, but Dominic continued his mission of preaching. In March of 1212 Arnaud Amaury had become Archbishop of Narbonne. Dominic had not joined the crusade. Nor did Dominic acquiesce to being made a bishop. (8) Dominic’s life itself had been threatened yet Dominic remained committed to a mendicant, itinerant, evangelical life, in a countryside ravaged by war, hatred, and greed. The crusade collapsed, more or less, by 1224. Dominic was then dead.

Between 1208 and 1215, what sustained Dominic day in and day out, month after month, year after year, when there were few conversions, when his program for preaching proved inadequate to the task at hand, when the church itself concluded that only war could accomplish the task? The passion for Dominic and the early Dominicans seems to have been a love of truth. This is the underlying Dominican passion. I do not know who said it anymore, I attribute it to Augustine, “Plato amicus, sed magis amica veritas” (I love Plato, but I love truth more).
drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” (Mk 10: 38; Mt 20:22; Lk 22:42). And in Gethsemen, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want” (Mt 26:39; Mk 14:36).

“Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given to me?” (Jn 18:11). The use is reminiscent of “cup” in the prophetic tradition around the time of the exile. “For thus says the Lord: If those who do not deserve to drink the cup still have to drink it, shall you be the one to go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished; you must drink it” (Jer 49: 12). At the same time one’s portion may be a cup of blessing (Ps 116:13) or the Lord himself: “The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup” (Ps 16:5). The cup is often, however, not a cup from which one wants to drink. The question is haunting: Are we able to drink the cup from which Jesus drank?

This haunting cup surfaces again in Jesus’ last festive meal with his disciples as it does for us when we celebrate Eucharist together. After the supper Jesus took the cup and interpreted for us an impending sequence of events. He even embraces the cup that he had prayed not long before to be spared: “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Lk 22:20; Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22; 1 Cor 10:16). And in the Christian Eucharist, of course, routinely and without thinking as we so often do, when the cup is passed we take it and drink oblivious of its significance, of what we are saying yes to by drinking it, for when we accept the cup, take and drink, we forget what it is to which we are saying yes. We forget that Jesus prayed, “Please, God, let this cup pass me by.”

Thich Nhat Hanh, the exiled VietNamese Buddhist monk, in reflecting on the tragedy of the tsunami in Asia, recalls how the French poet Victor Hugo lost his daughter when she was about twenty. He suffered deeply and asked God why this could have happened. She too had drowned in water. He went back to his birthplace Villequier and wrote a poem from there in which he wrote: “Mankind can see only one side of reality. The other side is plunged in the darkness of a frightening mystery. Mankind bears the yoke without knowing why.”

We do not want to get too somber, but we do want to be mindful of our world, its blessings and its challenges, its beauty and its wounds. Its tragedies are so clearly with us these days following the unprecedented tsunami, war, and terrorism. I recall a Jewish midrash on the Moses/Sinai story (Ex 31:8; 32:19; 34: 1, 29; 40:20; Deut 10: 1-5). After Moses had broken in anger the first tablets God had given him, what became of those broken, shattered tablets? The whole ones given later were placed in the Ark of the Covenant. The midrash narrates that so were the broken ones. Both sets of tablets were placed in the Ark. Each of us as well as our churches and world are both broken and whole. We do not always see our brokenness as a gift. We hide it and it remains unhealed. But it too is to be an offering to the Lord.

Our world today is quite pragmatic, and it is certainly true that usefulness is an important value. What good is something if it isn’t good for something? But a contemplative attitude cautions us lest we jump too quickly to the question of utility. It makes us pause, and think. It calls for a deeper level of awareness than what we might first encounter at a more surface level. We then ask “useful for what.” Are we speaking about material gain, material comforts, and if so for whom, and for how many? What is the kind of world we are hoping to create, to which we wish to contribute? What are our values? A Dominican search for truth is grounded in a life of study and prayer, while at the same time recognizing that in the end we find ourselves in the grips of what we thought we could grasp. There is a line from an Indian sage that I think captures the contemplative approach to life: It doesn’t make any difference how fast your going if you’re headed in the wrong direction.

Much in our modern and Western world today prefers that we not think, that we allow others to do the thinking for us, that we allow ourselves to be told what we need and want, that happiness consists in having more rather than becoming more, that we are entitled to our privileged place in the universe, that the universe is there for us, or for me, rather than my being a part of the universe, part of a bigger picture, part of something more than myself alone, that one’s getting ahead is what counts rather than the whole human community’s moving forward. It doesn’t make any difference in what direction one is headed, what makes the difference is how fast you get there. But a contemplative life does ask about the direction of one’s life, what one is doing with the one life one has been given, about the direction of one’s country and the planet earth, about the place of one’s faith tradition in the context of a plurality of religious traditions each with its spiritual wisdom.

Early in the twentieth century, Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit mystic and scientist, had already spoken about all of matter as having two sides: a “within” and a “without.” (25) They go together. There is no “within” without a “without,” and no “without” without a “within.” In some ways Teilhard can be seen as foreshadowing the spirituality still to come. For him, the “depths” of the person are a sacred adventure, but likewise incumbent upon us is our commitment to building the earth. The outer world and the inner world must move together in harmony. What difference does it make if we change the face of the earth, if the world loses its “soul”? In fact, is that what we are on the verge of doing - creating a technological world that has no soul? The modern West has an overdeveloped “without” and an underdeveloped “within”. We have lost our center, our purpose, our meaning. (26)
manifested the Dominican love of truth, mea amica veritas. This love more than anything helps us to understand Thomas as it did Dominic. Thomas did not live in an ivory tower. He was more than aware of the politics of his day, of the struggles between emperor and popes. His family lived on the conflict-stricken border between the papal states and the kingdom of Sicily and was involved in the tensions. There were also the power struggles within the theology faculty in Paris between diocesan clergy and the new friars of which Thomas was intimately a part. There were the conflicts with the Aristotelians and his contact with Muslim learning. Thomas by no means lived in a narrow world. Within that world and among those conflicts, however, Thomas remained a seeker. That truth was his concern is reflected in his own opening comments to the Summa Contra Gentiles.

I have set myself the task of making known, as far as my limited powers will allow, the truth that the Catholic faith professes, and of setting aside the errors that are opposed to it. To use the words of Hilary, "I am aware that I owe this to God as the chief duty of my life, that my every word and sense may speak of God." (19)

This pursuit of truth, this sense of duty toward God, is equally well reflected in Thomas' decision later in life to discontinue writing, not that what he had written was unworthy but that he now himself had come closer to Truth inexpressible: "I cannot do any more. Everything I have written seems to me so much straw compared with what I have seen." (20)

And so one of the first challenges to colleges and universities from a Dominican perspective is what is their commitment to truth. Does the pursuit of truth wherever it leads hold a place of primacy in the university? To some degree this requires the recognition of the value of a liberal education. Specialization is both important and necessary but do we promote compartmentalization in our education such that we rarely see the whole picture? And what about the dialogue between the sciences and the humanities, or between science and religion? Is the tenor of our work that these are such separate worlds that there is no need for them to meet? Does not the next millennium require a holistic approach to learning and understanding?

Contemplata aliis tradere

Another of the mottos of the Order of Preachers can be traced more directly back to Thomas Aquinas (21) who saw the purpose of the Order as twofold: to contemplate, and to hand on to others the fruits of that contemplation. Both sides of the coin are essential. As Eckhart (22), the fourteenth century Dominican mystic theologian, would later put them together, Martha is as essential to Mary as Mary is to Martha, (23) that each of us is called to be a virgin wife, (24) both a virgin who gives birth to the Word in the ground of the soul and a wife who bears fruit for others, for one cannot give birth without being pregnant nor I am also reminded of the Tibetan Buddhist prophecy of the Shambhala warriors. (29) At a time when the earth and the world hang in the balance by a thread and there is the danger of falling back into a state of barbarism with its increased capacity for annihilation, Shambhala warriors will come forth.

They will not be recognized. We will not know who among us may be one of them. Their only weapons will be mindfulness, egolessness, and compassion, (30) - the fruits of contemplation. They do not fear the pain of the world. Their mission is healing. I invite each of us to become a Shambhala warrior and accept our responsibility for the universe, for God's creation, for our human family, and to be a blessing to one another. We need a new way of thinking, of seeing, of understanding. Is this not one of the goals of education?

Teiilhard de Chardin saw the evolution of the universe moving both forward (albeit slowly, one hundred steps forward, ninety-nine backwards) and upwards, not simply in a linear progressive fashion, nor simply in a circular way, but more as a dynamic spiral, upward and forward. (31) He also saw one of the most significant social ministries or responsibilities as being that of education. (32) For it is particularly through education that consciousness evolves. We, seekers of Truth, active contemplative people, God's blessings in our midst, can we be midwives of a new consciousness? This is our challenge, and perhaps our destiny. I think the challenges our Dominican heritage brings to colleges and universities today might well be this challenge to contribute to the birthing of a new consciousness. But perhaps I can conclude by placing my reflections in the form of questions:

- Do you seek the Truth? Do you love the Truth? What understanding of Truth does your college or university hand on?
- Does our education prepare us in both scholarly and practical pursuits but also enable us to live more mindful, contemplative, caring lives? Is there nourishment for the soul as well as for the mind and an integration of the two? Are we concerned not only with what we can or will do but with who we become?
- Am I able to pick up the challenge of responsibility for our universe, to be a blessing in God's creation, to lead others both upward and forward, as wounded yes, but also as a guide, like a Shambhala warrior? Am I willing to offer my life to the universe that has given me life?
- In the midst of struggle and upheaval, Dominic left behind a movement, an Order, because he persevered in trusting that what God had entrusted to him would bear fruit – even in the midst of doubt, confusion and sadness. Am I able to set aside short-term gratifications in order to contribute my gifts and talents to a bigger picture which will not be of my making but of which I will be a part?
The world of matter, materiality, science, and technology, although all good in themselves, they do not have meaning in and of themselves. They are not ends in themselves. We are fools if we think that they contain the secret to life. Only as expressing human values do they acquire meaning. The earth has no future separated from the contemplative’s quest. Each of us is called to that contemplative journey, the journey to truth, the uprooting of egoism a life of genuine compassion.

The interior or contemplative journey will blossom as the dialogue among all the religions of the world deepens. We need not enter that dialog fearful, nor as Christians with a sense of superiority. We need not leave behind any conviction we hold dear. But we do have to enter it with the desire to learn, with the conviction that others have something to offer us, to teach us, that we learn more about the world of the spirit by sharing our gifts rather than by hoarding them or refusing to receive wisdom from others. The goal of dialogue is not to evaluate the various religious traditions, not even to compare them, although that may happen along the way, but the goal is simply that we might learn from one another.

This is one of the great challenges facing us in the next millennium. Can the religions get along with each other? Can they talk to each other? Just as it took the Christian Church centuries to forge a language for expressing its faith and understanding about the triune God (27), so likewise it will take a long time before we find the best or even an adequate way to state our conviction about the salvation present in all religious traditions while at the same time remain faithful to our belief in the pre-eminence of Christ. But we do not come together in order to agree, or to convert one another, but rather in order to understand each other, and love one another. It is from within the contemplative core of each religious tradition that dialog can most easily take place, harmony happen, and fear be set aside. The externality of the religions, their “withouts”, are valuable, but we do not come together on the basis of those, nor with the intention that there might be only one religion. We come together at the level of the “within” wherein souls can touch each other without losing their identities.

The Dominican commitment to the contemplative dimension of life raises another challenge for us. What matters in life? Few things in life are in the end significant. Are we attentive to these? What values do we inculcate in our education? Are we content with life on the surface or are we willing to explore the deeper recesses of the human mind, heart, soul and spirit? In the spiral of evolving consciousness, what is the role of a university?

**Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare**

We come now to the last of the three mottos: to praise, to bless, to preach. The preaching here can be seen as the bubbling over (ebullitio, traditio) of a mindful living as the Word of the living God reaches out to touch all of creation. A life of praise, laud, gratitude acknowledges the reality and grandeur of God: it is the soul of contemplation – the deep awareness that we are in the presence of Someone, something, that is sacred, to be revered. Let us focus on the word “bless,” benedicere, to speak or wish well. As God blesses us, so we are to be a blessing to one another and to the world. There is contained in this motto an element of hope. We can go back to that early blessing of the Hebrew people centuries before Christ recorded in the Book of Numbers (6:22-27):

> The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!

This reveals to us how profound a blessing can be. Who would not want to be blessed in this way? Who would not want to be such a blessing for others? The Lord is with you. You are wrapped up, embraced by God. God’s face shines on you and looks kindly upon you. God brings us peace. All that is wished here is seen later by Christians as embodied in Jesus, Immanuel, the One in whom God is with us. God is not only “the One Who Is” as so well pointed out in the Book of Exodos (3:14; 33:19), but also as pointed out there “the One Who Is With Us” (3:12), the one who led us out of the land of Egypt, the one who guides us on our way, the one who cannot not be present to us, the one whose very unfathomable transcendence is intimate presence at the core of who we are. (28)

> The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!

As God has blessed us, and promised to be with us, so likewise we must do or be for one another. We are to be a blessing, a sign of hope.

We get a glimpse of what hope is if we turn to St. Paul’s letter to the Romans. Paul writes: “Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (8:22-25). In other words, to hope is to wait for that which we do not see. Once it comes into the range of sight and is assured, it is no longer hope. Earlier in the same letter, hope marks the lives of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham is described as “hoping against hope” (4:18).

Hoping against hope is sheer hope, undiluted hope, not necessarily something comforting. Paul continues: suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope (5:3-4). Ultimately suffering produces hope. Paul’s rhetorical skills come into play, but we are clearly left with the impression that hope is both a gift as well as a disturbing companion. Hope is no guarantee. That which is certain is not the proper object of hope. For Thomas Aquinas, hope is, simply put, “leaning on God” (ST II-II, q 17, a 1 & 2).

We get a sense of what to expect from God by taking a look at the word cup as it is used by Jesus. “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to...
“Challenges for Colleges and Universities in the New Millennium: A Dominican Perspective”

Inaugural Lecture Presented by:

Donald J. Goergen, O.P.

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