

Contemplation Enables Us to be Preachers Who Do Justice

By Mary Ann Wiesemann-Mills, OP (Akron, Ohio)

St. Dominic intended every member of his Order, men and women alike, to be “for the preaching.” At the time of the Order’s foundation, the women and the lay brothers, though not involved in public proclamation of the Gospel, embodied the material and spiritual foundations of The Holy Preaching. To preach, God requires a deep knowing of God – a knowing only learned through contemplative prayer. Believing the Body of Christ to be a unified organism, Dominic established the women as the contemplative counterpart of the Order. The women studied and prayed, giving the fruits of these to the friars upon their return from itinerant preaching. The Dominican women expressed the charism differently from the friars, as befitted their times. Yet these early Dominican women knew very well that they were The Holy Preaching.

Profession into the Order identifies us as preachers. Mary O’Driscoll, OP states that “to belong to the Order of Preachers and not to be a preacher is an untenable situation.” The emphasis is on *being*. We *are* public proclamations of the Word of God dwelling within us. Theologian Karl Rahner says that each of us is “an event of the absolute, radical, free self-communication of God.” An event is a happening; therefore each of us is a specific happening of God. Wherever we are and in every situation in which we find out selves, God happens (or does not happen!) through us. What we are doing – teaching, ministering in a parish or a hospital, sculpting, painting, writing, lobbying for justice – is not as important as *how we are being in all the doing*. The purpose of Dominican life is to go through the whole world as living proclamations of the Gospel. Wherever we are is our pulpit.

We have named ourselves *Dominican Sisters of Peace*. In so doing, we call ourselves *to be a preaching of the peace of the Risen Christ*. Doing follows being. Our brother Meister Eckhart says pointedly: “People should not worry so much about what they should do; rather about what they should be. If we and our ways are good, then what we do will be radiant.” Our first call, then, in this new congregation is to contemplation of the Peace that is the Risen Christ. Jesus reveals that the peace he bestows is different from the world’s understanding. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid” (John 14:27). The peace Jesus brings is *shalom*, which means *completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord*. How do we translate this abundance into our being – into our doing? Such an endeavor is God’s doing. All our works of justice, no matter how grand, will be empty and fruitless unless they flow from hearts and minds steeped in the Word of God.