Badin Course 2015

**Preaching everywhere the name of our Lord Jesus Christ : the brothers**

**Vivian Boland OP**

In recent times it has been challenging for the general chapters of the Order to decide how to focus our preaching mission. Sometimes the kind of description given is a material one, talking about ***what*** we do. Sometimes the kind of description given is a formal one, talking about ***how*** we do what we do. Is there something specific to the way we undertake apostolic and pastoral engagement, our service of the Word of God in teaching and preaching, which characterizes it as ‘Dominican’? When we speak about ‘serving the mission of the Church in accordance with our charism’ what are we getting at? What is specific: kinds of preaching? contexts in which we preach? a context within which our preaching is born?

We can trace a certain oscillation about this question in the general chapters of the Order which have given different kinds of answer to the question ‘how is the preaching mission of the Order to be understood today?’

***Quezon City 1977***

It identified **four priorities** for Dominican preaching in the contemporary world (ACG 1977 15.4):

1. catechesis in de-Christianized societies and milieu
2. cultural strategy within the Order oriented towards philosophical and theological research about cultures, intellectual systems, social movements, religious traditions working outside historical Christianity
3. justice in the world: analyzing critically the origins, forms and structures of injustice in contemporary societies; evangelical praxis for the liberation and integral development of human beings
4. integrating the means of social communication within the preaching of the Word of God – these means reveal the fracture between human culture and the gospel message, as well as being privileged instruments for giving intelligible words and cultural effectiveness to a fruitful proclamation of the Gospel in its integrity.

***Avila 1986***

This chapter identified **five frontiers** on which the brothers of the Order are called to exercise their preaching mission:

1. The frontier of life and death – the great challenge of justice and peace in the world
2. The frontier of human and inhuman – the great challenge of the marginalized
3. The frontier of Christian experience – the challenge of the world religions
4. The frontier of religious experience – the challenge of secularizing ideologies
5. The frontier of the Church: the challenge of non-Catholic confessions and of sects

The chapter went on to speak about ***the kind of formation required for a mission on these frontiers***:

1. a complete openness to truth from wherever it comes to us
2. an attitude of profound reflection
3. profound compassion towards persons
4. to be men and women ‘on the move’ (mobile, itinerant)
5. a prophetic spirit
6. deep sensitivity to different conceptions of the world
7. an incarnational attitude
8. working always in community.

***1989-2007***

During these years the ***four priorities*** and the ***five frontiers*** continued to influence the reflection of the brothers at the general chapters. They move between giving a ‘material’ description of Dominican apostolic engagement (what we do) and looking for a ‘formal’ description of that engagement (how we do what we do). Recent general chapters offer reflections on ‘preaching’ and seek to relate all our activities to an understanding of what the preaching mission means (see Krakow 2004 and Bogotà 2007, for example). Always there is something said also about study and the intellectual life, with efforts being made to prevent a separation entering in between study on one side and preaching on the other (see Providence 2001, for example, or Bogotà 2007). Themes of the day are taken up, such as globalization at Providence in 2001, or the place of study and contemplation in our spirituality (also at Providence in 2001). Dominican common life is the setting in which preachers are continually formed, so there is much about silence, contemplation, study, common life, human formation, prayer and liturgy, about all aspects of our loving service of the Word of God. But my impression is that we often find it easier to speak about these aspects of our life than we do about the preaching mission itself: what do we do? how do we do it?

***Rome 2010***

The last elective general chapter identified **areas of mission** deserving of particular attention. Following on his initial experience of visiting the Order around the world, the Master, brother Bruno, subsequently added some other areas of mission to the general chapter’s list to arrive at the following ten areas of mission. They are not in any order of priority:

1. Parish ministry
2. Using the new means of communication
3. Pastoral care of migrants
4. Education and evangelization
5. Schools of preaching
6. Intercultural and interfaith dialogue
7. Presence among indigenous people
8. City Centre Pastoral Work
9. Rosary Pilgrimages and Devotions
10. The Salamanca Process

***Trogir 2013***

The last general chapter was, understandably, focused on the Jubilee celebration of the Order. How it wants the Jubilee to be celebrated gives a good insight into how the Order’s mission is being understood on the eve of our 800th anniversary. Having declared the Jubilee Year and given its theme as ‘Sent to preach the Gospel’, the general chapter continued as follows:

… in celebrating a Jubilee the Order seeks to renew itself by entering into a dynamic process that culminates in sending the friars to preach anew, just as Dominic sent the first brethren. In preparing for the Jubilee we affirm that as Dominicans we are sent to preach the Good News of the Resurrection of Christ. As we prepare to be sent anew we ask ourselves: By whom are we sent? To whom are we sent? With whom are we sent? What do we bring with us in being sent? We are conscious that we will share the joy and the freedom of being sent, following Saint Dominic, with the whole Dominican Family (AGC 2013 n.51).

*By whom are we sent?* The mission that has taken over our lives is a mission that originates in God. The Father sent the Son and the Son breathes the Spirit and sends the apostles and disciples, and we are sent by the Church and by Dominic, by the Order and our Congregation. And so the mission we receive in becoming Dominicans in a province or a congregation reaches all the way back to this mission which has its roots in God, in God loving the world so much that he sent his only Son so that everyone who believes in him might not be lost but might have eternal life. In being sent by the Order or the Congregation we believe we are sent also by the Church and, ultimately, by God working His purpose out even in our lives.

*To whom are we sent?* It is clear from the mission Jesus gives the apostles after his Resurrection: ‘go out to the whole world, proclaim the good news to all creation’. We are sent to everybody and anybody, here, there and everywhere, at any time, in any place. Like the sower in the parable we are to cast the seeds of the gospel everywhere, all the time. There is no particular group or class of people to whom we are sent, no discrimination among those who might hear and believe, it is not for any particular race, class, color or nation. We are sent simply to everybody, everywhere, at all times.

*With whom are we sent?* We are sent with the companions and colleagues, brothers and sisters, who happen to receive the same mission as we do in the same place and at the same time. We live together not because we would naturally have been friends if we had met in some other circumstances. We live together because we share the same mission and have received the same call, to be preachers of the gospel as Dominicans in this province or congregation at this time. The basis, the ground, of our shared life is the vocation each of us has received to follow Christ in this way, as Dominicans. And that shared life is part of our preaching. Our fraternity – sorority – is not something we do before we preach or after we preach. Our common life is itself the first part of our preaching, part of the ‘sancta praedicatio’, the holy preaching which is in the first place simply our life together. This is because our life together is centred on the Word of God which we contemplate and study, which we celebrate in our liturgies, which we seek to live out in our common life, and which we then share through our preaching and teaching. Our sorority gives us companionship on the way but it also keeps our preaching grounded and realistic. In living closely with others we experience limitation and routine, likes and dislikes, we learn about virtues and vices, in ourselves and in others, and we hope that this will inform our preaching, to incarnate it in the ordinary difficulties and rewards of building communion.

*What do we bring with us in being sent*? The answer is simple: we bring the joyful news of the resurrection. We bring the gospel message, that God loved the world so much that he sent his only Son to be its Savior. We bring the news that ‘Christ is truly risen from the dead’ and that this news changes everything. We are to preach the end of the old and the beginning of the new, a new creation, a new day, a new life – all that is opened up in the joy and promise of the Resurrection. We are heralds of this good news, bearers of this message.

What more is there to say about it that has not already been said?