

Towards a Better Understanding of Dominican Spirituality: The Dominican Way of Life

Tony W. A. Rivera, PhD

Pastoral counselor at Kindling Resilience
revdrtony@kindlingresilience.com

Abstract

This essay explores the essential dispositions and dynamics of Dominican spirituality, arguing that the “Dominican Way” is an integrated method of living where spiritual growth and everyday action are one. By analyzing the life of St. Dominic and the foundational structures of the Order of Preachers, the author identifies key practices - communal life, liturgical prayer, and disciplined study - that foster a “Grace of the Word.” Moving beyond abstract “truth-seeking,” the paper demonstrates how this spirituality engages with the existential realities of the human condition, offering a practical framework for both religious and secular individuals to seek maturity, find meaning in dialogue, and live with greater intensity.

Keywords: Dominican Spirituality, St. Dominic, Way of Life, Existential Dialogue, Grace of the Word

St Dominic and the Order of Preachers

Much has been written about the life of St. Dominic and the history of the Order of Preachers; therefore, this brief article will only highlight the key elements as they pertain to the spirituality and, therefore, the *way* of life of the Order and its members. By making this statement this author is taking the position that for a religious order in general, and for the Dominicans in particular, the spiritual life of its members is their *way* of life, their *way* of life is how they live out their spirituality. This article contends that Dominican spirituality is not a static set of theological principles but a dynamic “way of life” where the spiritual and the practical are indistinguishable. I argue that the maturity of the Dominican vocation is found in the imitation of St. Dominic’s “Grace of the Word” - a disposition that requires both internal contemplative depth and an external, dialogical engagement with the world. By centering on specific dispositions such as communal life, study, and prayer, the Dominican method provides a structured pathway for any individual - member of the Order or not - to navigate the complexities of existence and move toward a more integrated, holy life.

Secondly, the focus on certain dispositions and dynamics of the Dominican spiritual life is meant to help members of the Order prayerfully consider where they are in their spiritual growth and in their imitation of Christ through following the example of St. Dominic. Thirdly, this article will lay out some practical considerations for maturing one’s spiritual life along the Dominican *way*. And, lastly, this essay will conclude with considerations of a broader application of this *way* of life for non-members of the Order who would, no doubt, benefit from this method.

To apply this theory concretely, and frame the rest of this paper, please consider two illustrative cases where the Dominican method meets the search for purpose in lived experience. First, in the crisis of modern professional life, the disposition of *Studium* (Study) acts as a disciplined attempt to look beneath the surface of daily labor to find where one’s work intersects with the common good and leads to practical engagement with others. Second, in contexts of extreme adversity, the *Common Life* provides a template for resilience. Rather than an individualistic struggle, the Dominican way suggests that life is survived

through the “unity of heart” found in communal support - imitating Dominic’s own practice of selling his books to feed the poor during a famine. To better ground these observations, the next section offers a brief biographical sketch of our beloved Father Dominic.

A Brief Biographical Sketch

St. Dominic de Guzmán (1170–1221), founder of the Order of Preachers, remains an important model of Christian holiness and evangelization. Spiritual biographies - such as “Saint Dominic’s Way of Life,” “Saint Dominic: The Grace of the Word,” and works like “The Spirit of Saint Dominic” and “The Life of Saint Dominic” - highlight how his spirituality weaves together love of God, Scripture, and neighbor into a unified path of holiness.¹ As one author succinctly put it, “St. Dominic made of his soul an ordered unity.”² This unity is predicated on the depth of his intellectual life, prayer, and love of neighbor, each a way to grow in unity with Christ and each based on his profound love and devotion to Scripture. “The man lived in intimacy with the Word of God”³ Central to this path is the reality of dialogue. While the Dominican tradition is often associated with the rigorous pursuit of “Veritas” (Truth), the historical example of St. Dominic suggests this was never a purely academic exercise. Dominic “along the paths” did not simply lecture; he entered into a deep, existential dialogue with the people he encountered, often those struggling with profound questions of survival and identity. This approach suggests that we do not seek truth in a vacuum, but rather through the intensity of understanding life as it is lived.

This is the essence of St. Dominic’s spirituality. He strove for unity between the dispositions he had to love of Scripture, neighbor, prayer. This unity, of course, was centered on God, through a more perfect modeling of Christ. But there is another very important aspect to St. Dominic’s life, work, and spirituality. He was devoted to seeking, understanding, and preaching Truth. While this article is not a deep philosophical exploration into the nature of Truth, it is important to note what Truth

means in this all-too-important context.

Human beings naturally desire truth. This desire is satisfied in Christ, who is at once the *way* to arrive at truth and truth itself. In John’s Gospel, Christ says, ‘I am the *way*, the truth, and the light’ (14:6). Truth is not just an abstract idea or a set of principles. Knowers of the truth adhere to the truth; Christ is the truth to which every Christian must conform. Truth is living. Truth is a person. Truth is Jesus Christ (emphasis added).⁴ Therefore, followers of Christ, who follow Dominic’s example, must cleave to the Truth, must seek Christ in Scripture, prayer, and *in service* to their neighbor. Clearly, love of Christ must mean love of Truth, and vice versa. It is critical to understand that “The Science of the Order of Preachers, the light Saint Dominic bestows, is the science of wisdom. Divine truth - pursued, investigated, preached, and loved - is the object and aim of Saint Dominic’s order.”⁵ Or, put another way, “The genius of the Order is Truth.”⁶ For Clerissac, Dominicans are not only dedicated to Truth as doctrine, “but the very idea of truth as being the primordial character of the divine Life and of the Christian Revelation.”⁷

Truth, thusly understood, is the star which illuminates our path and enables our following of Christ. Truth is the *way*. The object of study, prayer, and service is to know, live by, and share the Truth. The very name of the Order speaks to the need to preach Truth, which requires knowing it, living by it, and loving it, in order to share it properly. Thus, truth is not an abstract intellectual construct, it is the end and the means to loving God, self, and others.

Love of God, Scripture, and Neighbor

For the Christian, in general, and most certainly for the Dominican, the goal of this life is to grow in love of God, in union with God. We seek God in and through Christ, the way and the life (Jn 14:6), that we may be able to truly know and love God. This was what drove Dominic’s study, prayer, and ultimately his preaching Christ to others. As noted, “Saint Dominic certainly is an example of a life given to Christ and a life flourish-

¹ Clerissac, H., O.P., *The Spirit of St. Dominic* (Providence, RI: Cluny Media, LLC, 2015); Bedouelle, G., O.P., *Saint Dominic: The Grace of the Word* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1987); Briscoe, P. M., O.P. and Janczyk, J. B., O.P., *Saint Dominic’s Way of Life: A Path to Knowing and Loving God* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2021); Drane, A. T., *The Life of Saint Dominic* (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 1857).

² Clerissac, *The Spirit of St. Dominic*, 11.

³ Bedouelle, *Saint Dominic: The Grace of the Word*, 19.

⁴ Briscoe and Janczyk, *Saint Dominic’s Way of Life: A Path to Knowing and Loving God*, 37.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶ Clerissac, *The Spirit of St. Dominic*, 41.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

ing in Christ... Dominic is also a powerful example of how a life ordered to contemplation and union with God changes the world.”⁸

In other words, to get to know God, Dominic immersed himself in Scripture, studying it, and taking it to heart. His intellectual gift and God’s grace unpacked the mysteries of the Scripture, which enabled a greater knowledge and understanding of God, which, in turn, culminated in a deep union with God. This union with God drove Dominic to preach the Gospel because love of God, union with God, inevitably leads to charity to all of God’s children, as Jesus said to Peter, he said to Dominic, and to all of Dominic’s followers, “If you love me, feed my sheep” (JN 21:15-17).

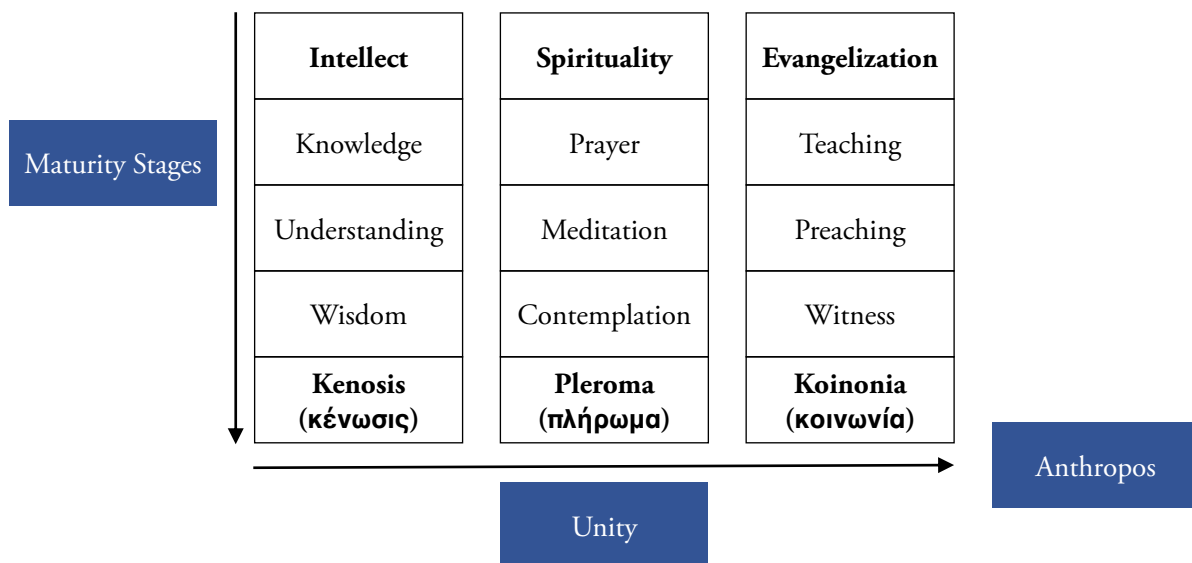
However, before Dominic evangelized the world through preaching, his journey began with God’s grace calling him to greater understanding and love of Scripture. “...Dominic knew that in order to preach the Gospel, one must first live with the Word and in the Word.”⁹ He carried the Gospel of Matthew and the Letters of St. Paul with him wherever he went, spending countless hours reading and penetrating the mysteries therein contained. He prayed, meditated, and contemplated the word growing from knowledge to understanding to wisdom, and therefore being able to teach, preach, and bear witness to the Word and bring souls to greater unity with God.

Dominicans are likewise called, and the world should know a Dominican by these attributes. “Hence we know what characteristics to look for in St. Dominic’s Order. His true children will bear the family likeness. They will be contemplatives, teachers, and apostles.”¹⁰ That this is so to this day is evidenced by the Order’s motto, “*Lau-*

dare, Benedicere, Praedicare,” which means “To Praise, To Bless, To Preach.” To praise God is the way our love of God is manifested; our love of neighbor is manifested through blessing others, and by bringing them the Gospel of Christ through preaching. However, this article is not intended to be an analytic or historical account. Rather, it is meant to identify the key dispositions and dynamics to aid in the perpetual formation that all members of the Order are called to and to serve the spiritual needs for those who choose to follow this Way of Life.

Dispositions and dynamics

Both within the Dominican tradition and more broadly among disciples of Christ, the love of God, Scripture, and Neighbor are critical dispositions that interact, increasing the power of each, through a powerful dynamic of unity in service of God’s Truth. First, note that these dispositions are rooted in Christ’s commandment to love our Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mt 22:37-38, Mk 12:30, Lk 10:27). Second, note that these dispositions: intellect, spirituality, and evangelization are each meant to mature as the Dominican matures in imitation of Christ through the imitation of Dominic, and that they are meant to grow in unity as Dominic exemplified. These combined dynamics of maturity and unity, rooted in Love of Truth are essential in Dominican formation, but more, they are essential in the development of the human person, whether a friar or lay disciple. The chart below is designed to depict these dispositions and dynamics in order to further this effort.



⁸ Briscoe and Janczyk, *Saint Dominic’s Way of Life: A Path to Knowing and Loving God*, 70–71.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁰ Clerissac, *The Spirit of St. Dominic*, 12.

First, a word on form. The tabular structure is meant to convey the vertical flow of maturity and horizontal flow of unity, where the ultimate end is the fullness of the human person, the fulfilment of the human purpose - unity with God. The three columns represent dimensions of the way of life for the Dominican seeking a mature union with God. The three dimensions interact according to the row's dynamic, e.g. the more one knows, the more one prays, the better one teaches, etc. This represents unity of disposition, the example of St. Dominic and the goal of the Christian life. Here it is very important to remember that formation, through the grace of God, builds on nature. Thus, the individual selected to be formed in this way must have the natural disposition (inclination) in intellect, spirituality, and evangelization. They must be drawn (grace) to that way of life, and they must want it (nature). Given these elements a proper formation program builds across each row, even as it deepens in maturity by each column.

Within the column, each phase (level, step) represents a stage of maturity. For the first two, Intellect and Spirituality, the maturity flow should be well known and understood. The third, Evangelization, may be less clear. As the Dominican's intellectual life matures, they experience shifts from simple knowledge, by which is typically meant familiarity of facts such as key events in the life of Christ, Dominic, the Order; names and dates; etc. But what those things mean, comes through study and grace and results in an understanding of the calling, the mission, the purpose of the Dominican way of life. Likewise, in their prayer life, they grow from simple prayers, repetitions, entreaties, praise to meditation on the mysteries of the life of Christ. Meditation need not be sung or recited, be done in common, or be articulated in words at all. It is found in the silence of the heart before Christ. This can lead to ecstatic visions, movement by the Holy Spirit within to levels of seeing God that surpass the expectation, experience. This erases the veil and enables seeing God face-to-face. This is what is meant by contemplation, to be able to contemplate the face of our Beloved and bask in that love.

In the final column we begin with teaching, which requires a knowledge of facts and a strong prayer life that we may teach what is true and good. But when we are preaching, we must bring a deep understanding of purpose and a deep meditative power that each word be flung as if from a bow. And, finally, when in that grace-filled wisdom and contemplation the Dominican experiences God in their very soul, they grow resplendent with his grace and we need not teach, nor preach, for their very lives, movement, their very selves bear witness to love of Truth, love of God, love of Others. This is a light that leads others to Christ; this is an example that evangelizes others to follow Christ.

The telos (end) of each column is given in the final, bolded cell. The end of intellect is *kenosis*;¹¹ the end of spirituality is *pleroma*;¹² the end of evangelization is *koinonia*.¹³ In the intellectual disposition the natural end (telos) is the realization one must die to self that God may live through one, just as Jesus forsook his equality with God to take on the form of a slave (Phil 2:5-11). Or, as St. Paul puts it elsewhere, "I have been crucified with Christ and the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:19-20).

In the spiritual dimension, prayer can (should) lead to meditation, which can (should) lead to contemplation. The end (telos) of spirituality is *pleroma*, the fullness of God, abiding in the individual—the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, unity with God. In the evangelization dimension, teaching, preaching, and bearing witness in how one lives, in what example one sets, the telos is unity with others in and through God - *koinonia*.¹⁴ As Dominicans grow in this unity, it leads not only to their union with God, but, of course, to their unity as a family, as disciples of Christ, as an Order. For this to happen each disposition must be formed by grace building on nature through a formation dedicated to Sacred Truth.

¹¹ Kenosis (κένωσις) is a theological term that means "the act of emptying" or "self-emptying." It comes from the verb kenōō (κενῶω), which means "to empty." The term is famously used in Philippians 2:7 to describe Jesus Christ's act of "emptying himself" by taking on the form of a human.

¹² Pleroma (πλήρωμα) literally means «fullness,» «completion,» or «that which fills.» In a theological context, particularly in Gnosticism and some Christian writings, it refers to the totality of divine powers or the fullness of the Godhead. The word is used in various ways in the New Testament to describe concepts like the «fullness of time» or the «fullness of God.»

¹³ Koinonia (κοινωνία) is a very significant term, especially in a religious context, and refers to concepts like fellowship, communion, joint participation, and sharing. Its often used to describe the intimate bond that unites Christians with each other and with God.

¹⁴ Note: kenosis + indwelling + fellowship = church; put another way, love the Lord your God, love you neighbor as yourself.

Intellect

By intellect I do not mean publishing articles, books, etc., although these are certainly desirable. Rather, what I mean is a love of Truth which produces an intense curiosity about the Word of God and the lived experience of following the way of Christ. Whether that curiosity results in an academic life or excellent preaching, it is rooted in the example of St. Dominic. “The reading and study of Sacred Scripture was the height of Dominic’s learning. Jordan of Saxony describes Dominic as a granary, storing up the seeds of the Word of God. But Jourdan is quick to tell us that Dominic did not simply store in his mind the wisdom he gained from Scripture, he lived it”¹⁵ Following the rule of St. Augustine the friars gather for meals, read the Scripture, ensuring that they are always talking to God in prayer or about God in fellowship, bearing in mind, always, that “The Scriptures are the center of the relationship a friar has with God”¹⁶ The intellect is the faculty, the disposition, through which curiosity becomes wisdom through study.

This curiosity, this drive to know and understand more, is the one passion that defines the Dominican, and it is all consuming. “The life of the student - the intellectual life, as we call it - is by itself all-absorbing and exclusive. It will not even brook interference from the higher reaches of the soul - from the affective part, as we call it; and it cannot bear interruptions from the noisy world outside; it must not be distracted either from within or without”¹⁷ St. Dominic spent hours reading scripture and contemplating its mysteries. Today, his descendants can do no less. To don the habit is to commit to a life of study, a development of the intellectual life, because it is only through this development that they can truly honor their founder, serve God’s children, and grow in unity with God. This is our sacred duty. “So we are bound, in virtue of our doctrinal mission, to present every object of our teaching in the first place as *true*; and our own lives ought to be governed rather by the influence of the true than even by the attraction of the good, and our external activity should appear as principally directed towards the diffusion of light.”¹⁸

The ultimate end of the intellectual life is wisdom. It is the realization that knowing God is why we were created,

why we were given reason, why we are charged with being stewards of our earth and siblings. But it is also the realization that we came from dust and to dust we will return except for the Spirit that is breathed within us, giving us life, giving us the seed of eternal life (Gen 2:6-7). This realization, more than a simple acknowledgement of the words, but the realization of this is the beginning of true wisdom—we are but nothing without God. This is the kenotic moment; with the grace of God the Dominican should empty themselves before God to receive grace upon grace in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Spirituality

As our intellect grows through deliberate study, through dedicated time, so should our spirituality grow. Time before the Eucharist, time in silent prayer and meditation, and ultimately time contemplating the great mysteries of God. As we empty ourselves of ego, self, we make room for God to live in and through us. Thus, the telos of spirituality is *pleroma*. That is, the goal is to have the fullness of God to live within, even as we know no person can ever contain God’s immensity. But, rather, their very selves radically transform so that it is God who lives within and through them and they are no longer what they once were. The path to this glorious end is prayer, meditation, and contemplation.

Where prayer is the recitation of formal texts, and meditation is the silent musing on an aspect of our Lord’s life, roughly speaking, contemplation is about participating in the life of God. As such, it is grace acting on the person, drawing them closer to holiness. “No, Dominic realized that the life of contemplation is a gift, an invitation to share in the divine life of God, to which we are all called. It is a response to God’s grace that is offered to each of us, uniquely and particularly. This calls for perseverance and regular discipline in prayer, as is required by Dominican life, but also the freedom to dive into that prayer as men and women uniquely created and called by God”¹⁹

It is certainly true that all progress in the spiritual life is given by God’s grace. “Growth in the spiritual life comes about by responding to God’s grace given in prayer”²⁰ And for all Christians the call is the same, “The whole of the

¹⁵ Briscoe and Janczyk, *Saint Dominic’s Way of Life: A Path to Knowing and Loving God*, 26.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷ Clerissac, *The Spirit of St. Dominic*, 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁹ Briscoe and Janczyk, *Saint Dominic’s Way of Life: A Path to Knowing and Loving God*, 67.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

Christian life is a preparation for this union with God, which is brought to perfection in the beatific vision in heaven”²¹ Yet, for a Dominican there is an added dimension and definition. “For a Dominican, prayer can be categorized according to its three main settings. First, there is the public liturgical prayer, which includes the Mass and the Divine Office, accompanied by the Rosary. Second, there is meditation, or silent prayer. Sometimes we call this ‘private’ prayer, but it is often done at a common time in the chapel. And for Dominicans in particular, we have our sacred study, which, though not always mystical and rarely glamorous, is part of our prayer and contemplative life.”²² Please note, for a Dominican there can be no separation between sacred study (intellect) and the contemplative life to which we are called (spirituality). This is the essential core of what it means to be a Dominican.

Thus, the intellectual life, that curiosity that propels an ever-deepening study of Scripture feeds into and inspires greater depth of the spiritual life. The Dominican studies that they may know God better, love God more, and grow in unity with God more fully. Through *kenosis* we reach *pleroma*. But that cannot be the end of it, as Jesus has commanded us all not only to love our Lord and God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, but also to love our neighbor as ourselves. This final piece is essential for the Dominican Order as Dominicans are given the charism of bringing the Gospel to the four corners of the earth.

Evangelization

Evangelization is the outcome of the deep spirituality and intellectual life to which the Dominican is called. In other words, the study of Truth and the contemplation of Truth, leads to living that Truth, and sharing that Truth. It becomes the *way* in which Dominicans form relationships. The *way* they show true love. “Time and again Dominic’s love for Christ, for the brethren, for his religious life, and for preaching defined and gave shape to his relationships. And as his sphere of influence began to grow, it shaped the *way* in which his friars and sisters would live the Dominican life” (Emphasis added).²³ Dominicans are called to a spiritual friendship that “originates in the common pursuit of Christ and of preaching the Gospel... that together, as brothers or as sisters, we

arrive at that for which each of us is made: union with Christ, to worship and adore him together, with one heart and one mind”²⁴ Thus, unity in Christian friendship builds unity with Christ.

This is the charge and charism of the Dominican Order and it is also a call to evangelize the world. It is a call to bring this Truth wherever and whenever God so places one. All are brought to a time and place that first through their example and then through their words they can share the Truth and help people find their path to Christ. Preaching is the logical and necessary outcome of the intellectual and spiritual life, union with God, necessitates sharing God’s love with others. We preach as an act of love. We preach to bring consolation to a weary world. We preach to bring God’s justice, but above all we preach to bring God’s loving mercy. “Men and women are broken and have their wounds and crosses. Any relationship, any friendship, is predicated on mercy – God’s and our own”²⁵ This is the call, this is the nature, this is the responsibility, this is how Dominicans should follow Dominic’s way of imitating Christ.

The end, then, of evangelization is *koinonia*, a divine calling to unity with God in communion within the Order, and then more broadly to God’s children. The Dominican order, properly formed and lived, is a communal life where resources are shared in common. Today, that may have a new dimension given through the mediation of technology, but it is still a significant part of the calling. Dominicans are called to live the life they preach. To preach unity with God but to live in disunity does violence to the very fabric of the Order. Of course, modern times present various challenges to this ideal, which makes living the ideal all the more important. This must be communicated and reinforced during formation, to which we now turn.

Maturing on the Path

While this writing is not meant to be a fully developed formation program, such would be redundant and presumptuous, it is meant to offer a focus based on the dispositions and dynamics discussed above. It must be clear and believed in the heart that being a Dominican requires deep study, fervent prayer, and spreading the Gospel. Therefore, Dominicans at every stage of perpet-

²¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

²² *Ibid.*, 67.

²³ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

ual formation must make time for these activities. One way of thinking about this is that there is no such thing as a fully formed Dominican, all are on the path, all are in perpetual formation, finding their *way*.

It is certainly true that in modern times Dominicans face new challenges. The frenetic energy of our times when one is expected to do more and more with fewer and fewer resources does not escape the monastery, even if the monastery is the home, a priory, or a local church. Praying the office in common is a challenge when an order is spread geographically and/or across time zones. To some degree this can be mitigated by technology. And it also means that local priors must be given great latitude in establishing rules and practices that conform to the Constitution of the Order.²⁶ The same is true of receiving the Holy Eucharist. Accommodation must be made without ever compromising the Order's call to community, to *koinonia*.

To create these spiritually mature Dominicans, formation must inculcate Dominic's example of unity of soul. Remember, again, the words of Jesus' Great Commandment, we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This is a call to unity, to love God properly requires the entire heart, mind, soul, and strength. No part of the individual can be withheld. To love God requires unity of soul and purpose. And St. Dominic was a great example of this *way* of life. "In St. Dominic equilibrium did not mean the neutralizing but the intensifying of the forces at work. His different qualities, controlled and brought under the sway of reason and grace, reached the absolute fullness of their natural and supernatural impetus."²⁷ The reason and grace needed to achieve this unity corresponds to the life of the intellect and the life of prayer.

Having said these preliminary words, it should be clear that formation is the function by which Dominicans grow in both unity and maturity across the intellectual, spiritual, and evangelical lives, the essence of the Dispositions and Dynamics Model. Full attention to the nature of the Dominican in question must be paid, each Dominican must be formed according to their nature, their gifts, their challenges. This implies a strong recruitment program, part of which is identifying where the subject is in terms of their maturity and unity, which, in turn, should shape the material substance of the formation.

There is no shortage of material for Dominican formation. One could derive a full program from the four

texts cited here. The key is not what texts to use. The key is to identify where the individual is and where the order needs them to be, given time and place. Even if for exigent reasons the Order chooses to do away with the postulancy, the novitiate, and temporary vows. This must be based on the same rubric of maturity and unity in the intellectual and spiritual life of the individual. But in normal circumstances the postulant is vetted mostly for the desire to live such a life; the novice for the dispositions even if in early formation; the simple vows to the first row in our chart above, they must have consistent and sincere sacred studies, a devout prayer life, and the ability to teach and preach. Formation is about helping the Dominican move from one level to the other based on the need of the individual. Keeping in mind that formation is grace building on nature, maturity in the spiritual life must be approached from two perspectives. In addition to the academic formation the member is receiving, the member should be in spiritual direction or pastoral counseling.

Further, we do know from the example of St. Dominic that the study of Scripture is both the foundation and summit of intellectual and spiritual maturity. Therefore, any curriculum design must pair academic sources, like the four used in this article, with scriptural studies. This integration not only supports the intellectual growth needed to mature from knowledge, to understanding, to wisdom, it also helps build the unity between the intellectual and spiritual dispositions. This, in broad sketch, is a solid plan for formation for a new province that does not have the resources of an established order.

Broader Application

What we saw in the diagram above, what has been the main driver of this article, is the dispositions and dynamics that make for a great disciple of Jesus. For Dominicans that takes on a special character due to the example of St. Dominic; the history of the Order; the Rule of St. Augustine; and the Constitution of the Order, which should at least be a guide for all. However, as has been said repeatedly the call in and of itself is applicable more broadly to all who seek to be disciples of Christ.

The call to follow Christ as secular clergy, as Third Order Dominicans, or as lay people always requires at least an understanding of Scripture, meditative prayer, and to some the ability to proclaim the Gospel and to others the ability to bear Witness. The more Christians are educated in Scripture and taught proper prayer and meditation

²⁶ Constitution of the Order of Preachers, 2024: https://www.op.org/documents/#810-860-wpfd-1_lco-book-of-constitutions-and-ordinations-home-doc-en-5fbf8ea66d4ae

²⁷ Clerissac, *The Spirit of St. Dominic*, 10.

the holier our Church as a whole will be. Therefore, one objective of this approach to formation is also to produce Dominicans who can teach this method, albeit significantly modified, to others. Modifications can come in the form of length of training, sequence, depth of study, etc. What cannot be modified is the overall structure that calls for maturity and unity for that is what our Lord called us to be and what St. Dominic exemplified, as we have seen.

Conclusion

The “Dominican Way of Life” is ultimately a method for maturing the human person in the imitation of Christ. Through the foundational elements of the Rule of St. Augustine and the specific charisms of the Order, members develop a spirituality that is both contemplative and profoundly active. My findings suggest that the efficacy of this method lies in its “Grace of the Word”—the ability to speak *to* God or *about* God in a way that resonates with the real-world questions of those around us. Whether within the cloister or in the broader world, the Dominican approach offers a structured yet flexible path toward spiritual maturity and a life lived in service to the Gospel.

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