

FUTURING QUESTIONS RESPONSES

Question #1: What engages and inspires me about our Dominican mission today is...

Gleanings from US Dominican Women Afire (DWA):

Our common prayer and contemplative prayer life gives strength, support and awareness of world issues. It sets a tone for discernment when responding to a call from God. There has been continued growth in the congregation to broaden the understanding of the ministry of education. We have a sense of claiming our past, who we are now and looking forward to what surprises God has for our future

Our continuous efforts to study and share the fruits of our studies and contemplation in our communities and ministries in our preaching.

The call to remain faithful to God wherever we might be or might be doing. Being prepared to use my talents to support my congregation and be a witness to God's people both within our schools and other catholic schools.

To see life with fresh eyes, to live out of a grateful attitude, and to continue to preach God's love, joy and forgiveness with our lives.

Its resonance with the original emergence of the Order. We know that the structures that defined Dominican Religious Life in the 20th Century are falling away, and we cannot "see" what the future form of our life will be. Neither could Dominic in the 13th century. We are newly conscious of the ways in which charism is evolving through us in response to the hungers for truth in our world today and we are free to obey God's beckoning spirit.

God's spirit inspires me and his grace allows me to respond in everyday opportunities whether I'm prepared or not. I have a responsibility to allow God to work through me. Daily, I'm inspired by seeing and hearing about the many lives my sisters have touched by their very being.

Even in retirement we still continue to minister to the needs of the people. We are vibrant and involved women who witness Dominican life~ to serve others with our varied gifts.

Our widening inter-congregational collaboration and connections along with our lay partners. It's exciting that we are going beyond our cultural boundaries in embracing Dominican life. I'm also inspired by our growing consciousness of the benefits of contemplative listening and dialogue which deepens our ability to listen and become more conscious of our experiences and encounters with others and the world. It enables us to give voice to the disadvantage.

How our charism is alive today and how greatly needed is our mission to preach the truth of God's love. Dominican Preaching, as with Dominic, must pacify wounded relationships and bring peace to the world." Paragraph 72 of Acts of the General Chapter. Living and speaking truth is at the heart of our life. We are continually called to discern truth as it relates to the message of love, compassion, mercy, and inclusion.

The Dominican Order came into existence because Dominic was called to preach the truth to the heretics and in order to be effective in preaching/teaching they had to have quality study, prayer and community. 800 years later we still continue to preach through our prayer, study and life in community.

FUTURING QUESTIONS RESPONSES

That we have moved beyond the model of mission that would have us filling slots in institutions, that we are doing much more than just trying to keep things going the way they are and that we have a new model of mission that is collaborative, creative and globally interconnected. That the boundaries between congregations, nations, generations and religions are being renegotiated.

We can share our preaching mission without congregational boundaries. As national leaders talk of building walls, we fly over them, break them down or go around them for the sake of mission.

We are a world- wide order extending our life and charism to the four corners of the world and encompassing both lay men and women, sisters, brothers and priests all working together to bring the Good News to a world in need of it.

The joy of our sisters as we engage in various aspects of our mission~ they are fully alive, engaged and compassionate as they face the challenges, difficulties and joys of the work they are called to do. Each day in my life, I experience God's love, forgiveness, and healing. This gives me deep joy and impels me to want to share that love and that truth with others.

We are out there on the margins with those we are called to serve, the young, the poor and the vulnerable. We are interested in the political scene and how we can make a positive difference in the lives of those who are being underserved.

We start a conversation about MISSION... it is always followed up by an encouragement or a challenge to take an ACTION. I am INSPIRED by the many ways I see God's Love at work in our world...through the hands, hearts, and contemplative prayer of our Dominican Family.

Living life to the fullest with other women in community and ministering with women and men in the service of preaching and teaching the Good News.

Living a life grounded in God, rooted in the charism of our 4 pillars and the call to preach today.

The OP family of preachers works for justice and peace in many diverse ways. We are becoming more interconnected as Dominicans as we face current justice issues of our time

Our 800 year history and preaching to the signs of the times never gets old! We continue to be engaged in shaping our Church and Society.

"Here and now" is a new understanding of this foundation that is re-awakening the capacity that we human beings have to "do something" for the salvation of the other.

We are consciously rekindling our contemplative tradition both personally and communally.

Gleanings from additional Dominican sisters:

Our mission coincides with the expanding social phenomena of a shared "power-base" where Dominicans invite others to minister with us in service / influence for world's betterment.....

As Dominicans, we bring an "intelligent edge to the emotional and devotional... we bring critical analysis"

Our continued efforts to be disciples of the Word, missionaries of HOPE for the Kingdom.

FUTURING QUESTIONS RESPONSES

The world's continued need of our preaching. Truth never loses its relevance and our contemplative approach is a witness to the centrality of God.

We walk together preaching justice...offering spiritual guidance & unconditional love... daring to speak truth to power... living in the example of Jesus.

Our true desire to collaborate with other Sister Congregations of Dominicans (eg: ForMission, retirement collaboration, peer supervision).

Our concerted, collaborative efforts among congregations to the Dominican Call to Justice.

Our response to the great need in our world (especially the USA) to bring people to an awareness of God's presence in our lives.... requires we share our faith, actively strive to be with others, welcome them, engage them, listen to them, affirm them, challenge them... share our values and be open to hear theirs.

Dominic's vision is as relevant today as it was 800+ years ago! It's about the power of TRUTH.... Listening to the Gospel... "I believe our preaching the truth, seeking and ongoing search for the truth is as vital today as it ever was."

Gleanings from lay partners of congregations:

The JOY of the Dominican charism / JOYFUL spirituality

Flexibility to adapt to needs of the times... respond to cries of the poor in varied ministries... to listen to what the world needs and respond / serve needs of suffering

Consciousness of UNIVERSE Story / expanded knowledge and understanding of new cosmology / making "greening" and sustainability a priority

Committed to PREACH the Gospel by our lives

Committed to tackle root causes of social & environmental injustices, investing time and resources to address challenges (among those named: immigration, climate change, sustainability, poverty, racism, nuclear war, genocide, pollution)

Desire and courage to search for truth and justice

An openness to look ahead, despite diminishment and despite serious world conditions and challenges ... to exude positivity, acceptance, love in the face of difficulties (ie: HOPE)

Dominican mission is welcoming and inclusive bridging differences, creating community, and affirming VERITAS, living the truth with love

That Dominicans provide opportunities for lay persons to be empowered to join them in contributing to the church, following in the footsteps of Dominic

Commitment to prayer / study / community / ministry

FUTURING QUESTIONS RESPONSES

Dominican mission is clear and empowering and purposeful.

The opportunity to be part of something so much bigger than oneself, to be a partner in mission.

QUESTION # 2: A DREAM I HAVE FOR THE FUTURE OF DOMINICAN LIFE AND MISSION IS...

Gleanings from US Dominican Women Afire (DWA):

My dream is to widen the vision of inclusivity even if that means being independent from those who govern us in the United States and those who lead us in an institutional/hierarchical church. This vision would always be pastoral, sensitive, and loving. It would be realized in the compassion of Jesus, Dominic, Pope Francis and us. We need to keep asking, "what do the people of God, especially those who are poor and oppressed, need right now? Who is not at the table. This may be calling us to different church.

That we get to know each other better in the US. As a vocation director, I could better refer someone to if she is more compatible with another US congregation other than my own. How are the newer members of other congregations preparing to carry on when our older sisters pass away?

To have an increase in vocations, both men and women willing to share God's joy, love and forgiveness with our world which is thirsting for meaning and justice

I hope that all our Dominican congregations will attract more vocations to religious life or some other Dominican way of living. We have to invite people to collaborate with us. Perhaps a Young Adult's Conference with preaching, praying and socializing.

We continue to witness to our church and the people of God that love and caring of our congregations are ongoing as long as we are here.

To expand our network of collaboration with our lay supporters and involve them in our discernment processes. Our association with others requires of us to listen the voices of all who participate and join us. Let the listening and learning from one another support and provide us with creativity and dynamism to needed for our life and mission.

That we will grow in relationship across the congregations and encounter each other's realities, collaborate in study and the Holy Preaching and that we live a global sisterhood engaged with other charism families offering the gifts of our Dominican life to meet the needs of the world.

That we pay attention to the quality of our life in study, prayer and community; that we should work and mission together.

That we will adhere to the essential truth of our tradition that we are preachers of a loving God who is continually incarnated in our daily lives, we take the time to understand our own history, learn from it and evaluate our current station in the world with honesty and humility. Find new ways to listen to people on the margins so as to transform the world.

A dream I have for the future is more collaboration with our lay partners and congregations throughout the world and that through our working together others will join our mission.

FUTURING QUESTIONS RESPONSES

We equip the youngest members to take on the challenges of tomorrow... We need to give them the skills, patients and time to discern the future of Dominican life. Holding all doors open so that they can clearly see the need as time moves on.

That we can empower the laity to join us and together we can make a difference.

I think that it might be that we could find more ways for young people to experience mission with us. I could give energy to a dream that gives our world's future generations a holy purpose to their living, to see their lives as mission for God.

Is for the mission to continue to witness to the truth of God's love for all creation and bring peace and healing to our world.

Be in union and collaboration with the greater Dominican family to heal the world and promote the kingdom of God NOW through our Mission of Preaching!

We continuously reevaluate our mission to be frontiers again and take necessary risks to meet the needs of the world.

To risk more, to love more, to be fully engaged in contemplation, study and preaching.

To form core small communities for preaching and working for justice.

To join all Dominican woman into Dominican Sisters USA or Dominican Sisters WORLD

That the Dominican Family have a world-wide communication network for preaching and teaching

Gleanings from additional Dominican sisters:

That we'd be stronger communities contemplating the Word of God in Scripture, reflecting in groups on the life / work of people around us as we minister

Better keep in mind Care for the Earth

Find a way to communicate with all our Sisters / Brothers world-wide

That the women of the Order obtain from the pope the explicit permission to use the preaching canon allowing laity to preach

That we encourage creative ways to more fully embrace the invitation to be disciples of the Word, missionaries of HOPE for the Kingdom

That we create a narrative of communion among us and with the world; we are world-wide and need to more strongly unite in our efforts for the world

Greater understanding and appreciation for the global reality of who we are and how we are meant to be universal and interdependent

That we support and form theologians dedicated to developing a strong theology based on the new Cosmology and help integrate it into Church spirituality, religious education, beliefs, practices

FUTURING QUESTIONS RESPONSES

That we OPEN ourselves to others, walking streets, malls, neighborhoods / engaging others, listening, getting to know them / invite them into our lives

That we never lose sight of the fact that our primary home is the Word of God... that we continually return home to stay... that we speak truth, be present and authentic to others, recognize truth in their lives, name the grace that is present in the compassion and mercy of God

Gleanings from lay partners of congregations:

That Dominicans engage the laity in all aspects of a spiritual life (justice work, understanding of New Cosmology, deeper levels of inclusivity etc.)

That Dominicans take a stance that is welcoming (rather than operating out of the belief that there's only one "right" way to be Catholic)

That Dominicans exemplify joy, preach the Gospel, live radically in outreach to new spaces, new needs

That Dominican ministries continue for many years to come and effect substantive changes for the better in our world

That Dominicans broaden the ways people are connected to and live our charism in the spirit of Dominic (eg: soul searching gatherings who can share hearts together in spirituality ...such as an Adrian group called "Companions in the Dominican Crossthreads")

That we realize "as our imaginations grow, so do our way of being Dominican" ---no limits!

To develop new models that honor the Dominican "pillars" in new ways (there is an urgency to break down circles that define and divide us).

To translate our mission to address today's needs and opportunities (eg: in SF Bay Area, "embrace the energy and creativity of a diverse high tech region that's overly connected and spiritually impoverished"...

That Dominicans continue to work closely and involve lay partners in ministry to better share the charism

To do whatever it takes to form more leaders who are led by Mission, who listen deeply, are unafraid of taking a long loving look at what is real, and answer the call to do what is necessary

That hearts and eyes be opened to the needs of community / world and that the invitation to partner with others in outreach is received and responded to

To spread the word about Dominican Sisters in the area (eg: Adrian) so the wealth of knowledge and voices that are present can be used as a powerhouse for issues and insights (eg: at voting time).

FUTURING QUESTIONS RESPONSES

QUESTION 3: I BELIEVE THE SPIRIT IS CALLING US, DOMINICAN WOMEN TO...

Gleanings from US Dominican Women Afire (DWA)

To be open to questions and possibilities. This allows for creative responses to new invitation of ministry. We hold new ventures with total trust in our God. A great example would be this new project with our Sisters in East Africa. We join together with the intention of living our Dominican Charism and to design concrete actions, especially for the poor and the oppressed.

The Spirit is calling us to be more collaborative and inclusive. Are there ministries we can work together? Are there things we can learn from each other?

The Spirit is calling Dominican women to preach the truth in the face of fragmenting heresies of our time, to claim for ourselves the unprecedented global magistrates authority that the order was granted in Toulouse and to exercise it in braiding a bridge between the church and world peripheries and ecclesial center.

Set the world on fire with our enthusiasm, creativity and zest for religious life.

To be engaged in all aspects of the church no matter how small it may seem. We must be inclusive of those who work alongside us, especially our Dominican Associates who with their gifts, talents and willingness to serve want to be a part of our on-going charisms.

I believe the Spirit is calling us to continue to be involved in the education of the poor and vulnerable and to preach using words and deeds. The paths of Dominican life lead us to cities, countries and the world~ It is important that this tradition is shared with newer members.

To spear head the movement to "Oneness." A way of raising one's consciousness...intentional awareness of all our neighbors and the earth~ this will sustain our efforts to do justice and work for peace and have an impact on our church, economic and political realities.

I believe the Spirit is calling us to encounter Christ in contemplation, in our relationships with our Dominican Family and with a wounded world.

I believe the Spirit is calling us to be "in action together!" Perhaps open a Dominican International English language Learner and Ministry Centers in the US. That we serve the under- served youth through institutes and learning centers.

Help others identify their God given talents and find creative ways to use them to meet the needs of the people in our areas, encourage others to keep a positive attitude and hold on to hope and to listen to the cry of the poor and the call to justice.

To become one in organization, continue our life and pass it on to the next generation of people, lay or religious and care for the earth.

To be united and work together sharing our gifts, resources and talents to the marginalized.

To care of the earth and all her inhabitants today and into future generations.

FUTURING QUESTIONS RESPONSES

I believe our world today greatly needs to know God's love, compassion, forgiveness and healing. Our Dominican mission is freedom.

Remain open to change, and not worry about dwindling numbers and no one entering, and be willing to serve wherever we are called.

Be faithful stewards of our preaching charism.... By building relationships that not only share the fruit of our reflective living with others, but also to build relationships which mentor and empower future generations to respond to God's Word in a world which is ever changing.

Be attentive to the tides of change.. be grounded in our relationship with God as we preach the Good News in our world.

To collaborate and maximize our relationships to bring forth God's kingdom.

Hang in there as new ways of Dominican life are emerging

Not to be the workforce in the Church

To become small communities of mustard seeds or leaven that witness to something small and new that can lead to great change.

Our gift is in our essence

To deepen our sisterhood

To develop means to communicate mission with one another

A new level of unity among all Dominicans worldwide-- Dominican Sisters International

To be committed to outreach to the Poor and the Earth

To be less focus on aging and more focus on our life together in mission

To bring leadership in the Church, Schools, government, business

To ongoing conversion into the peace of Christ, holding all as sacred

To loving beyond our current capability, and living the Gospel fully

We are called to use the best of technology, systems thinking, and intercultural living skills to be present to each other, to those around us, and to Earth.

To look beyond the present

To be stronger preachers of truth

To be a sign, a sacrament of God's presence now

To remain true to who we are as religious—our vows, simple lifestyle,

FUTURING QUESTIONS RESPONSES

To give birth to a new form of religious life

To commit to collaboration

To grow in communion with the whole

To preach, to preach, to preach... about Jesus' love for us, about peace, about nonviolence

Gleanings from additional Dominican sisters:

Encourage and nurture each other's gifts so that voices not heard up to now may be heard, gifts not fully used up to now tapped

Witness to greater "loving" outside the boundaries of religious traditions and dogmas

To look beyond our local reality for the vitality of the Order to better embrace the mystery of our future

To embrace the decline of our historic congregations and the rise of the laity as a positive evolution, doing all we can to promote the mission and leadership of a "lay Church"

More fully embrace the invitation to be disciples of the Word, missionaries of HOPE for the Kingdom

To give witness to our communion in Christ Jesus, be women of peace / justice in world

Creatively unite using our voice globally

Spend more time in study, community prayer, contemplative prayer --- keeping our minds and hearts open to the Spirit

Allow ourselves to be led to a variety of people, sharing with them, conversing, listening

We are being called to a radical transformation, personally and communally, and we must be willing to risk our lives (literally!) for what we know is true. We do this so that the world will come to understand and experience God's compassion / mercy so violence / hatred cannot survive In midst of that LOVE!

Gleanings from lay partners of congregations

Model and embrace an entirely new reality outside of what is anticipated or even desired!

Respond with joy, gratitude, faith to whatever happens next!

Work together collaboratively with others --- open to the new and the diverse --- going out to the margins (after identifying "margins" in many realities).

With our lay partners, look beyond our local realities to embrace the mystery of our future.

Listen without judgment / share our dreams, concerns, ideas, desires of our souls to foster ongoing imagination and creativity collaboratively for the future.

FUTURING QUESTIONS RESPONSES

(from Teilard de Chardin) “Our duty, as men and women, is to proceed as if limits to our ability did not exist. We are collaborators in creation.”

Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate! Take risks, apply technology, create new models. Walk the journey on new ground. Be fearless leaders who bring love to life.

not be fearful of embracing a future not confined to one congregation’s founding mission if that mission fails to meet today’s needs.

Fully invest in VERITAS... welcome the Spirit into our hearts to guide us into truth.

(from Fr. TJ Martinez, SJ) “We do the impossible immediately and the difficult shortly thereafter.”

To transform our way of thinking / to be intentional in the ways we partner and minister together (religious and lay) and creatively share leadership

To voice the importance of collaborative partnership to continue to seek truth in a world that is in need of God’s light and love

To continue to spread the mission through collaboration, partnership, educational efforts

(from Ghandi) “BE the change we wish to see in the world.” ...we have a responsibility to leave this world a better place and we will get there a lot faster if we work together.

To be a unified voice in engaging the leaders of today (public officials / business leaders) to effect change in issues like homelessness, drug abuse, immigration pollution etc.

For congregations of Sisters / lay partners to collaborate together with other congregations to confront injustices... to partner in mission and ministry to effect change.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

SOME REPEATED VALUES contained in the responses to all 3 questions:

1. **COLLABORATION** -- DWA responses showed much appreciation for belonging to the “Dominican Family” and a desire to collaborate among OP Congregations in the USA as well as internationally; implicit in responses was gratitude for stronger collaboration with our lay partners as well (with reference to our responsibility to empower the laity to join us in mission)
2. **PREACHING MISSION** – was another strong value named in DWA responses; it was cited many times that our Mission in varied ministries and our relationship to the people of God is to Preach by word and action the message of God’s love to a hurting world.... a world in need of healing just as it was in Dominic’s time. Implicit in this was the concept of Preaching TRUTH, the truth of the

FUTURING QUESTIONS RESPONSES

values Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God (justice, love, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, inclusivity etc.)

3. **A STRONG JUSTICE FOCUS** – was expressed in many ways in DWA responses ---- addressing the inequities of our world, speaking Truth to Power, being politically active for the poor, the suffering, the marginalized, those affected by racism etc.; in this regard, there were statements of hope that Dominicans would not be afraid to embrace new frontiers in our efforts to further the reign of God and help bring peace and justice to our world.

Within this JUSTICE FOCUS (or, perhaps, a separate focus) was the concept of leading others in our efforts to have “right relationships” with the EARTH, an emphasis on promoting “CARE OF CREATION,” preaching the theology of the cosmos by word and example.

4. **THE VALUE OF OUR LEGACY** – many responses alluded to our Dominican legacy of 800+ years -- a rich past that gives hope for our future! In this regard, the continuity of our life since Dominic’s time with the four pillars of study / ministry / prayer / and community as vital dimensions of our everyday living were named. Implicit in this was the challenge of “Giving to others the fruits of our contemplation” and speaking Truth in the face of the “heresies” of our times.

COMPARISONS of DWA responses with the lay partner and additional Dominican sister responses:

Generally, the DWA responses along with the LAY PARTNER and WIDER DOMINICAN SISTER responses contained many similar elements, even if expressed differently. The main two similarities being COLLABORATION and continuing our strong JUSTICE FOCUS to promote God’s love, compassion, mercy for our world --- perhaps in new models!

Special thanks to Sisters Mary Virginia Leach, Rebecca Hodge and Wanda Szymanko for their work gathering together the 63 responses, studying the content and preparing these summaries for us!