

# THE RULE OF THE LAY FRATERNITIES OF SAINT DOMINIC

## I. THE FUNDAMENTAL CONSTITUTION FOR THE DOMINICAN LAITY

### Laity in the Church

#### Paragraph 1

1. Among the disciples of Christ, men and women living in the world, have in virtue of Baptism and Confirmation, been made sharers in the prophetic, priestly and royal office of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They are called to this so that Christ's presence may be brought to life in the midst of peoples and that "the divine message of salvation be made known and accepted by all people throughout the world". (Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 4, par. 3).

### Dominican Laity

#### Paragraph 2

2. Some of them, moved by the Holy Spirit to live a life according to the spirit and charism of Saint Dominic, are incorporated into the Order by a special promise according to statutes proper to them.

### Dominican Family

#### Paragraph 3

3. They are united in communities, and they constitute with other groups of the Order, one Family. (Book of the Constitutions and Ordinations of the Friars of the Order of Preachers, LCO, 141)

### Special Character of the Dominican Laity

#### Paragraph 4

4. They are accordingly marked out both by their own kind of spiritual life and by their service to God and neighbour in the Church. As members of the Order, they share its apostolic mission, by study, prayer and preaching according to the state proper to lay persons.

### Apostolic Mission

#### Paragraph 5

5. They follow the example of Saint Dominic, Saint Catherine of Siena and our forbears who illumined the life of the Order and the Church, and strengthened by their fraternal communion, bear witness above all to their own faith, listen to the needs of their contemporaries, and serve the truth.

#### Paragraph 6

6. They pay careful attention to the principal goals of the church's present-day apostolate, driven in a special way to show real compassion to all who are troubled, to defend liberty and to promote justice and peace.

#### Paragraph 7

7. Inspired by the charism of the Order, they are mindful that apostolic activity comes out of an abundance of contemplation.

## II. LIFE OF THE FRATERNITIES

### Life of the Fraternities

#### Paragraph 8

8. They are, to the best of their ability, to live in true fraternal communion inspired by the beatitudes, and to express this in all circumstances by exercising the works of mercy and by sharing what they have with members of the fraternities, especially the poor and the sick; by offering suffrages for the deceased; so that all may ever have one heart and one mind in God. (Acts, 4:32).

#### Paragraph 9

9. Whilst taking part in the apostolate with the brothers and sisters of the Order, members of the fraternities are to share actively in the life of the Church, always prepared to work with other apostolic associations.

#### Paragraph 10

10. The following are the chief sources from which the lay members of Saint Dominic draw strength to advance in their proper vocation, which combines at one and the same time the contemplative and the apostolic:

- a. listening to the Word of God and reading the Sacred Scripture, especially the New Testament;
- b. daily participation (as far as possible) in the celebration of the liturgy and participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice;
- c. frequent celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation;
- d. celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours in union with the entire Dominican Family, as well

- as prayer in private, such as meditation and the Marian Rosary;
- e. conversion of heart according to the spirit and practice of evangelical penance;
- f. assiduous study of revealed truth and constant reflection on contemporary problems under the light of faith;
- g. devotion to the blessed Virgin Mary, according to the tradition of the Order, to our holy father Saint Dominic and to Saint Catherine of Siena;
- h. periodic spiritual retreats.

## Formation

### Paragraph 11

11. The purpose of Dominican formation is to provide for true adults in the Faith, so that they may be ready to welcome, celebrate and proclaim the Word of God. It belongs to each province to draw up a program:

- a. whether of progressive formation for beginners;
- b. or of permanent formation for all, even for members living apart from a fraternity.

### Paragraph 12

12. Every Dominican must be prepared to preach the Word of God. It is in this preaching that Christians, baptised and strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation, exercise the prophetic office.

In today's world, the preaching of the Word of God must extend in a special way to defending the dignity of the human person, as well as life and the family. Promoting Christian unity and dialogue with non-Christians and non-believers is also part of the Dominican vocation. <sup>1</sup>

### Paragraph 13

13. These are the principal sources to advance Dominican formation:

- a. the Word of God and theological reflection;
- b. liturgical prayer;
- c. the history and tradition of the Order;
- d. more recent documents of the Church and the Order;
- e. awareness of the signs of our times.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: By a mistake this paragraph 12 in its second part is missing from Analecta SOP 1987 pp. 82-87, but substantial part of the only official Latin version approved by the Holy See on January 15, 1987 – Prot.#D.27-1-87

## Profession or Promise

### Paragraph 14

14. In order to be incorporated into the Order, members are bound to make profession, that is a promise in which they formally promise to live a life according to the spirit of Saint Dominic and the way of life prescribed by the Rule.

This profession or promise is either temporary or perpetual.

The following or a substantially similar formula is to be used for making profession:

**To the honour of almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of Saint Dominic, I, \_\_\_\_\_, promise before you \_\_\_\_\_, the President of this Fraternity/Chapter, and \_\_\_\_\_, the Religious Assistant, in place of the Master of the Order of Friars Preachers, that I will live according to the Rule of the Laity of Saint Dominic [for three years] or [for my entire life].**

## III. ORGANISATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE FRATERNITIES

### Paragraph 15

15. The Fraternity is the suitable means for the dedication of each person to the nourishment and growth of his or her own vocation. The frequency of meetings differs with fraternities. Each member's fidelity is indicated by his or her assiduity.

### Paragraph 16

16. The admission of candidates, given that the prescriptions of the `Directory in regard to the state of persons and the time for admission have been observed, is committed to the lay person responsible, who after having taken a decisive vote of the Council of the Fraternity, proceeds with the Religious Assistant to the reception of the candidate in a rite determined by the Directory.

### Paragraph 17

17. After the time of probation determined by the Directory and with a favorable vote of the Council of the Fraternity, the lay person responsible, together with the Religious Assistant, receives the profession, either temporary or perpetual.

## Jurisdiction of the Order and Autonomy of the Fraternities

### Paragraph 18

18. Lay Fraternities are under the jurisdiction of the Order; however, they enjoy that autonomy proper to the laity, by which they may govern themselves.

(In the Whole Order)

Paragraph 19

19. a. The Master of the Order, as successor of Saint Dominic and head of the entire Dominican Family, presides over all the fraternities in the world. It is his responsibility to preserve the integral spirit of the Order in them, to establish practical norms in accordance with the needs of specific times and places and to promote the spiritual good and apostolic zeal of the members.

b. The Promoter General represents the Master of the Order for all the fraternities, and transmits their desires to the Master or the General Chapter.

(In the Province)

Paragraph 20

20. a) The Prior Provincial presides over the fraternities within the territorial limits of his province, and, with the consent of the local Bishop, establishes new fraternities.

b) The Provincial Promoter (brother or sister) represents the Prior Provincial, and is by right (*pleno iure*) a member of the Provincial Lay Council. He/she is appointed by the Provincial Chapter, or by the Prior Provincial with his Council, after the Provincial Lay Council of the Dominican Laity has been heard.

c) A Provincial President and a Provincial Council of Lay Dominicans is to be elected by the fraternities, in accordance with the norms of their particular directory.

(Governance in Fraternities)

Paragraph 21

21. a) A local Fraternity is governed by a President with his or her Council, who assume the full responsibility for direction and administration.

b) The president and the council of the fraternity are elected for a set time and in accordance with the manner established by the particular directory.

c) The Religious Assistant (brother or sister) assists members in doctrinal matters and the spiritual life. He or she is nominated by the Prior Provincial, after he has first heard the Provincial Promoter and the local Laity Council.

(National and International Councils)

Paragraph 22

a) Where there are several Provinces of the Order within the territory of the same nation, a National Council can be instituted, according to the norms established by particular

Directories.

b) An International Council can be formed in a similar way if it seems opportune, after the fraternities of the entire Order have been consulted.

Paragraph 23

23. Fraternity Councils can send their proposals and petitions to a Provincial Chapter of the Friars Preachers; Provincial and National Councils to a General Chapter. To these Chapters some representative members of the fraternities are to be readily invited for treating matters which concern the laity.

Statutes of the Fraternities

Paragraph 24

24. The statutes proper to the lay fraternities of St Dominic are:

- a) The Rule of the Fraternities (Fundamental Constitution of the OP Laity, the norms of life, the governance of the fraternities)
- b) General Declarations, whether of the Master of the Order, or of General Chapters.
- c) Particular Directories

*All parts of the above Rule, except for Paragraph numbers 20 c) and 21 b), are taken from the English translation of The Rule of the Lay Fraternities of St. Dominic formerly proposed by the Dominican Laity of the Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, which Rule was given by the Master of the Order, Fr. Damian Byrne, O.P., on February 16, 1987. The English translation of the above Paragraph numbers 20 c) and 21 b) are taken from the Fraternities OP: Lay Dominican Fraternities internet posting by Fr. Rui Carlos Antunes e Almeida Lopes, O.P., General Promoter of the Laity, dated April 6, 2019, as found at <https://www.fraternitiesop.com/promoter-general/rui-lopes-principles/#.XiErcOjYrks> retrieved on January 16, 2020.*