

Solemnity of St. Dominic

We gather around the table of the Eucharist to celebrate the solemnity of our Father St. Dominic, *light of the Church* and *preacher of grace*. We gather in thanksgiving to the Lord for the grace of the General Chapter celebrated and concluded here in Krakow, the place where we find the relics of St. Hyacinth, one of the first friars of our Order who is depicted carrying the Eucharist and the Blessed Mother. In a sense, Dominican preaching is bringing the luminous presence of the Lord and the consolation of His Mother to a world that yearns for the light of Truth and the warmth of God's merciful love. We thank the Lord for the gift of Dominican vocation, the same vocation we share with our brothers Wojciech, Marcin, Mariusz, Maciej, and Grzegorz who will make their simple profession today. We thank the Lord for their parents and family, their "first formators" and "first formation community", for the Church calls the family a "school of life and love"¹. From this "school" of the domestic church, we all came to religious life, which St. Thomas calls a "school for the perfection of charity"². We also thank the Lord for the novice master and the formation community in Służew for their fraternal accompaniment.

Dear brother novices, you are blessed to make your first profession in the presence of the highest authority of our Order - the General Chapter (LCO 405) . Our Constitution defines the Order as a "communion of provinces" (LCO VII). And this universality and communion of our Order is not just a noble notion in the LCO, it is concrete and visible here in Krakow for the last three weeks. And this fraternal communion becomes eminently sacramental when the Chapter gathers to celebrate the Eucharist, the sacrament of our communion with God and with one another.

Words are powerful. A generous word of affirmation can encourage us to do better; on the other hand, a harsh criticism can make us lose confidence. Words are powerful when they are efficacious, when what is said, *happens*. Our brother capitulars worked hard to find the right words to express important decisions that will guide the Order to fulfil its mission in the coming years. But this is just the beginning because we need to make these words efficacious throughout the Order.

Dear brothers Wojciech, Marcin, Mariusz, Maciej, and Grzegorz, today, you will give your word, you will make a promise before God and God's people. You will do what is inconceivable for most of your contemporaries --- to promise a future that is not in your hands, to give that which you do not completely possess, your life, your future. Did not St. Augustine say, "you cannot give what you do not have?" But your decision to dedicate your life to the Lord as a Dominican will shape your future. (The same is true with our General Chapters, the decisions we take help shape the future of the Order.) You will dare to say "Yes" to a future that is not in your hands because you firmly believe that the future is in God's loving and merciful hands. In the General Chapter of 2004 celebrated here in Krakow, novices made their first profession at the conclusion of the Chapter. One of those who professed did not know that he will be the prior provincial of Poland when the General Chapter will

¹ Familiaris Consortio, 37.

² S. Th. II-IIae Q. 188, a. 1.

return to Krakow. Who knows where your “yes” to God’s call will bring you? You will dare to make a promise, not because you have proven yourselves faithful, but because you love God who keeps his word, who remains faithful even when we are not. God is powerful and faithful because what he promises, he fulfills. And God’s power shines through us when we keep our word, when we remain true to our vows. You will promise obedience to God, to the Blessed Mother, to St. Dominic, and to your superiors, while you place your hand on the book of Constitutions and Ordinations. Note that this book is not exactly the same book when the capitulars who are here made their professions years ago. In fact the book on which we placed our hands, was a book that is placed in the hands of capitulars of every chapter when they introduce changes in constitutions for the sake of adapting our laws to changing situations of preaching the Gospel! That is one of the gifts of St. Dominic who shaped the constitutions of the Order of Preachers which is acknowledged today as a comprehensive, prudential, and enduring testament to administrative genius.³

St. Dominic is *light of the Church* and *preacher of grace*. He is among the saintly bearers of the good news whom Isaiah praises: “*how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace!*” (Isaiah 52:7) And he dedicated his entire life to the preaching of the Gospel, “whether convenient or inconvenient, constantly teaching and never losing patience” (2 Timothy 4:2).

The Gospel reminds us that we are called to be salt of the earth and light of the world. God first created light and it is marvelous how the movement of many creatures is influenced by light. Scientists call this movement *phototaxis*, that is, a movement with respect to a light source. Positive phototaxis is movement towards the light, conversely, negative phototaxis is movement away from the light.

St. Dominic is *lumen ecclesiae* because his entire life was oriented towards Christ, *lumen gentium*. As light, Dominic is like the moon rather than the sun. Jesus is the only true light of the world, and just like all of us who are baptized in Christ, Dominic merely reflects the light of Christ. Interestingly, St. Dominic’s mother, Blessed Jane, saw in a dream that Dominic had a moon on his forehead, and his godmother saw a star on his forehead at his baptism (*Libellus*, 9). To radiate the light of Christ is what the fathers of the Church call *lunar ministry*, to reflect the light of Christ, as the moon reflects the light of the sun. And we know that the brightness of moonshine depends on the moon’s position in relation to the sun. **The brightness of the light we bear depends largely on our “relation” with Christ.** Dominic is a brilliant *lumen ecclesiae* because his entire life is oriented and “exposed” to Christ; there is nothing that blocks the light from Christ, and so Dominic reflected this light more fully and brilliantly. Thankfully, Dominic did not keep to himself the spark of divine inspiration, he founded an Order of Preachers, an order of men and women dedicated to the *study of truth*, the *preaching of grace*, and the *building of communities*, especially the Church.

³ Donald Prudlo, *Governing Perfection* (2024), p. 7.

If someone were to ask me if I am optimistic about the Order as we close our general chapter, my ready answer will be "I am not at all optimistic, but I am very *hopeful*!" **Hope is grounded on a certainty that God will never abandon us.** This is what Paul tells the Colossians: "**Christ in you, our hope of glory**". There are so many signs of hope around us, in our provinces, in our communities. In 2022, the Order established a new house dedicated to St. Dominic in Khmelnytskyi, Ukraine. Establishing a house within a country that is fighting for its survival --- that is a clear sign of courage and Hope! That is what Br. Bruno calls the "*audacity of the improbable*"; that with a firm faith and hope, even the improbable becomes possible, with God's grace. We see hope among our brothers. We have a Russian brother, Artiom, and a Ukrainian brother Igor, who are close friends. We come from countries that were or are at war but we come together as brothers. Last Sunday, I saw Peter and Pascal, provincials of India and Pakistan walking together, that, for me is also a sign of hope!

The Church calls us to be pilgrims of Hope. Our hymn to Dominic is a song of hope, "O Spem Miram!" God is the wonderful HOPE, promised by Dominic, as our constant Companion, in the holy endeavor of spreading and growing God's WORD, over lands, across the sea, beyond the horizons of our vision. **Christ among us, Christ within us, He is our hope of glory** (Col 1:27).

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8 August 2025 Krakow