



# Why Dominican?

## Presentation Notes for Candidacy Module 7: Dominican Community and Governance

**Objectives:** At the end of this session, the Candidate will be able to:

1. Better understand the place of obedience and primacy of conscience in Dominican government for all branches of the Order.
2. Understand that the structure of government in the different branches of the Order necessarily vary, but the structure is based on some common and fundamental principles in a “layered democracy”.
3. Understand that an elected position within the Order is based on the concept of shared responsibility rather than a separation of the “governors and the governed”.
4. Understand that effective Dominican government is primarily concerned with the needs of the mission to preach.
5. Assess the general effectiveness of the governance of his/her local group/chapter and lay province according to the principles of Dominican government and the Directory of the lay province in which he/she lives.

**Materials:** chalk/chalk board or markers/poster board; Presentation Handout 1 which lists the quotes from which the discussion is to be based

**Prayer/Contemplation:** Romans 13: 1

**Note:** The primary purpose of this module is to obtain a good understanding of the principles of Dominican government as they apply to the Dominican Laity. Be sure to emphasize the principles rather than the structure of the government especially when the other branches of the Order are discussed. All sub-topics of the discussion are important to include so you may decide to extend the usual time for discussion or continue part of it at a second meeting or through an on-line chat. Make these decisions and inform the participants ahead of time. Distribute Presentation Handout 1 when the participants arrive and allow a few minutes for them to read the quotes silently.

**Study:**

1. Remind the participants that fr. Timothy's letter/article on "Freedom and Responsibility" was addressed to the friars and that specific accommodations for the laity are necessary. Use the Presentation Handout 1 for reference.
2. Begin the discussion with a general question such as "What is meant by fr. Timothy's term a "spirituality of government"? As the participants share their thoughts, list key words on the board or poster. This part of the discussion should focus on familiar concepts and terminology such as mission, common good, attitude, rationale, "servant leadership", and stewardship.
3. Continue the discussion by asking the participants to respond to fr. Timothy's statement: "The beginning of all good government is attentiveness, listening together for the Word of God, opening our ears to the needs of the people." How do the participants view the individual/group/Chapter's response to Dominican government being based on the changing needs of the times? Try to solicit some specific examples of apostolates and how they may need to take a different direction. Consider both consistency and flexibility.
4. fr. Timothy says that "Good government depends upon a right living of our relationships of power, authority and responsibility." Discuss each of these concepts in relationship to living in formed community as Dominican Laity. Be sure to include responses to:
  - a. "Every brother (member) has power in what he (she) says or does not say, and by what he/she does or does not do."
  - b. "Good government works well when we acknowledge and respect the authority that each brother (member) has, and refuse to absolutise any single form of authority."
  - c. "Fundamental to our democracy is that we dare to speak truthfully to each other, that we dare to bring to word the tensions and conflicts that hurt the common life and impede the common mission."
5. Briefly discuss "obedience" in the Order, contrasting the different obligations of the friars, nuns, sisters, and laity. Discuss the term "primacy of conscience" especially as it applies to the laity.
6. Ask participants to investigate how democracy and "disputatio" need to be combined based on fr. Timothy's two statements
  - a. "Democracy for us is more than voting to discover what is the will of the majority. It also involves discovering what is the will of God."
  - b. "Our tradition of giving each brother (member) a voice and a vote is not always the most efficient at arriving at the best decisions, but it is a witness to evangelical values that we offer to the Church, and which the Church needs now more than ever."

7. In the two sections on Democracy and Voting, fr. Timothy reminds us that Dominicans must make decisions for the common good/mission based on a simple majority and that, once made, each person whether or not that was the person's final vote, must strive to implement it, even if later on, one has to campaign for its reversal. How does this view of Dominican community match other organizations to which the participants belong? How can newcomers be brought closer to this ideal of unity?
8. fr. Timothy states: "If we are to be truly the heirs of Dominic's freedom, then we must identify the responsibility that is properly ours and grasp it. We must articulate the relationship between the different levels of government in the Order." How do the participants feel about their responsibility to the group/Chapter, lay province, and Order?
9. Discuss the term "the mystery of disappearing responsibility" in light of a "something must be done" mentality. Ask for concrete examples of ways the Dominican community formed by this group/Chapter grasps proper responsibility as a whole and how this process can be strengthened. Be careful that this sharing does not turn into finger-pointing and blame, but rather focuses on a positive direction both for individuals and for the group.

**Community:** Ask the participants to contribute some of the positive qualities that they cited in their journals to a common list of qualities all should strive for within the group/Chapter. List these on the board or poster. Make a copy of the list and distribute it to the participants as soon after the meeting as possible or at the next meeting.

**Apostolate:** Ask the participants to contribute some items they listed in their journals about the ways in which they have seen Dominican government working to fulfill the mission of the Order. List these on the board or poster. Make and distribute a copy of this list for all to use as a reference for future discussions about an apostolate.

**Conclusion:** All branches of the Order follow a "layered democracy". The specific structure of the Dominican Laity will be studied in subsequent modules.

**Follow-up:** Check the web site [www.op.org](http://www.op.org) to skim other works by fr. Timothy. Click on Library, Document Library, Letters and texts of the Masters of the Order, and then Bro. Timothy Radcliffe, OP. We shall read some of these works in other modules!

**Assignment:** Distribute the Study Guide for the next session.