



Why Dominican?

Presentation Notes for “Come and See: The Active Contemplative Dominican”

Purpose

The purpose of the “Come and See” is to provide an overview of life as a member of the Dominican Laity. There are many successful ways to accomplish this task ranging from an all day retreat format to a two hour session. Experience suggests that longer formats tend to overwhelm anyone who is completely unfamiliar with the Order of Preachers while a shorter format barely tends to skim the surface of some critical formation. What is important to remember in choosing a time-based format is that this overview is designed to whet the appetite of the genuinely curious inquirer with enough content to quench an immediate thirst for knowledge but also to provide the assurance that drinking more deeply will occur in each of the sessions that follow.

Suggested Procedures

The timeline on the next page is for about a three hour session that includes time for praying the Liturgy of the Hours. Having one of the members of the Formation Team act as a timekeeper will encourage a smooth flow to the session. Ask the participants to use index cards to list questions that might surface as the mini-presentations continue. This will prevent any lengthy interruptions or discussions. Collect these cards prior to the Question and Answer section near the end of the meeting. The members of the Formation Team should mingle with the participants during the break as a beginning step in modeling Dominican Community.

If at all possible, have different members of the Formation Team present each of the different sections. This methodology will reinforce the concept that the members of the Dominican Family have a family resemblance but do not have a “cookie-cutter” image. It will also help to foster the acceptance of diversity and equality.

20 minutes	Scripture Reading and Introductions
15 minutes	Active Contemplative Prayer
15 minutes	Prayer / Contemplation
15 minutes	Study
15 minutes	Community
15 minutes	Mission/Apostolate
15 minutes	Break
15 minutes	The Active Contemplative Dominican
15 minutes	Formation Program Highlights
15 minutes	Questions and Answers
30 minutes	Liturgy of the Hours

The timeline assumes that “Come and See” is being offered in the afternoon or evening. If it is being offered in the morning, the Liturgy of the Hours should be used at the beginning of the meeting and the Scripture Reading below at the end of the meeting.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 5:1-12a

Have a member of the Formation Team share the scripture reading, allowing time for reflection.

(Leader prays aloud) Heavenly Father, You promised that where two or more are gathered in your name, there shall You also be. Bless us + as we gather to begin our journey to discover and discern the Dominican way of living as an active contemplative layperson. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Group Introductions

Have the formation team introduce themselves, then have the participants do the same. Decide beforehand what information is to be shared depending on the size of the group. If you did not include a sign-in sheet to collect each participant’s name, phone number, mailing address, and email address as the participants arrived, circulate one now.

Active Contemplative Prayer

ACTIVE prayer is the most common understanding of prayer. It includes adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. These types of prayer are active because they engage the mind, heart, and whole person in these various types of prayer. Fasting is another example of active prayer.

During **CONTEMPLATIVE** prayer, we center our full attention on the presence of God, on the will of God, and on the love of God. Contemplative prayer is centered on *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ, by which we can know the presence of God in very real

ways. We come before God and see Jesus with the eyes of our heart as we adore and worship God in quiet, silent prayer. When we practice contemplative prayer, we stay quiet before the Lord and wait longingly for God.

Ask the participants to make a list of the different types of prayer that they experience in their personal life and to decide if these experiences are active, contemplative, or both. Allow time for voluntary discussion of the different types of prayer experienced by inquirers. Make a list on a chalkboard or large notepad. Note which prayer experiences are active, contemplative, or both. You may even consider making three different lists, one for each heading. Remember that some inquirers may learn through the visual method rather than an auditory method, so they will need to “see” something to understand it better or more easily.

The Four Pillars

As Dominicans, we form our life based on four foundations, or pillars:

- Prayer/Contemplation
- Study
- Community
- Mission / Apostolate

Prayer/Contemplation

Prayer for a Dominican takes many forms, and can be defined under two categories: liturgical and personal.

Liturgical prayer is celebrated within the context of a liturgy, such as the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is usually experienced in community, such as a parish Mass. What are other examples of liturgical prayer?

- ❖ List these examples on a chalkboard, poster board or large notepad.

Personal Prayer is basically any prayer form that does not require the participation of others, such as the recitation of the Rosary, chaplets, prayers from a missal or prayer book, etc. What are other examples of personal prayer?

- ❖ List these examples on a chalkboard, poster board or notepad.

Study

Assiduous (constant, unremitting) study is not optional but is required of all Dominicans. It is pursued in conjunction with one’s other obligations. Study is the way Dominicans search for Truth (Veritas). Dominicans approach study through “disputatio” (looking at multiple aspects of a topic or question.) The purposes of Dominican study include:

- Gaining a better understanding of the material world;
- Growth in friendship with God (as a way to conversion of heart);
- Reaching out to and communicating with those who are different in various ways;
- Informing oneself so as to become a support and counsel to others in the Dominican community and to receive support and counsel from the community;
- Being a bridge connecting Community and Apostolate
- Being able to give to others what one does have/understand.

Study is integral to Dominican life. Study should be performed individually and with the Dominican Community. The duty to preach requires study as a foundation. It is so important that Dominic allowed dispensation from all duties within the Order to attend to study. What are some examples of study that you currently experience? Do any of these experiences have a contemplative dimension to them?

- ❖ List these experiences on a chalkboard or notepad. Mark those with contemplative dimensions.

Community

Although Dominican Laity do not live in community, they form a community much like a familial group and they live according to a common Rule. This Rule lays out the way Dominican life is to be lived by the laity and has to be approved by the Pope.

Governance in the Dominican Order is democratic, one aspect that differs from some of the other religious orders. The governance of the Order of Preachers and some of its traditions such as disputation rely heavily upon the pillar of Community to work smoothly. Belonging to a Dominican community has particular responsibilities and benefits.

What are some of the groups you currently belong to or find within our local community? How do these groups differ from this definition of community?

- ❖ List the groups and differences on a chalkboard or notepad. Note that many of the groups (if not all) invite the members to participate in meetings as they are able rather than commit to living a certain way of life as does the Dominican Laity.

Mission / Apostolate

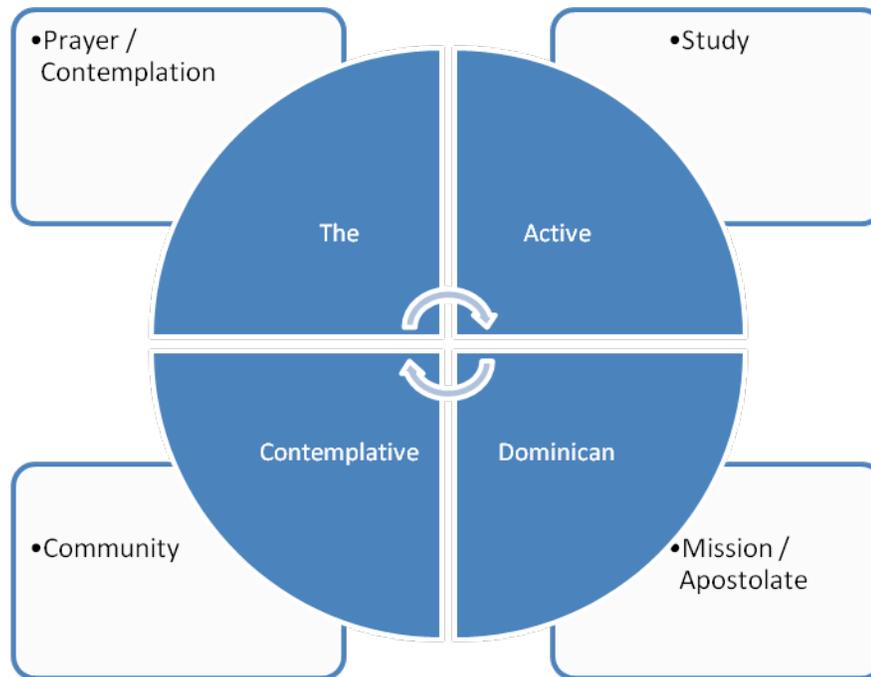
The Mission or Apostolate of the Order of Friars Preachers is to preach. This is often referred to as “the holy preaching.” Cultivating trust in God, humility, freedom of living within God’s embrace, mercy and compassion, charity, and perseverance are necessary to predispose one to preach effectively from the heart. There are many options approved by the Church that are available for the laity to preach.

- ❖ List the ways the local Dominican Community has participated in “the holy preaching” on a chalkboard or notepad.

Discuss some of the activities in which the participants are currently involved. Could any of these be considered opportunities for “the holy preaching?”

The Active Contemplative Dominican

The Active Contemplative Dominican utilizes all four Pillars in order to prepare properly for his/her holy preaching. It is more accurate to describe a Dominican as a *Contemplative Active*.



All Dominicans have their life grounded in Prayer (personal and liturgical) that leads to Contemplation. Our Study not only supports our Mission/Apostolate, but drives us towards a more intense prayer life, which leads to Contemplation. Our participation in Community, in what is required of us and what is bestowed upon us through our life in common, supports our assiduous Study, which in turn fuels our Prayer life that leads us to Contemplation. The fruit of this contemplation then allows us to engage in Mission, sharing with others that which we have learned through our Prayer, Study, life in common, and our Contemplation, our practice of placing ourselves in the presence of God.

The Formation Program

Dominican Laity do not make solemn vows, as do the friars and nuns, nor simple vows as do the apostolic sisters. According to our state of life, we make promises that allow us to pursue a life in common with the other branches of the Order and still fulfill our obligations in the secular world and to our families.

Becoming a Dominican requires one to participate in a formation program designed to assist one to discern a **vocation** to Dominican life. In the Southern Dominican Lay Province, this formation program consists of a 12 month Inquiry Phase (previously referred to as Postulancy), a 12 month Candidacy Phase (previously referred to as Novitiate), and a three year Temporary Promise Phase. At the end of this three year phase, one has the choice to extend the Temporary Phase for up to three additional years, after which one would make Permanent Promises. The Rule sets the minimum requirements for formation. Each province, however, can determine if more time is needed for each stage.

Each participant will receive an information package at the end of the session which includes additional information on “For Inquirers and Candidates: Before You Get Started” and details concerning the schedule of upcoming Inquiry sessions.

Questions and Answers

Collect the index cards with the questions that the participants have been writing during the mini-presentations. Skim them and combine similar questions as you proceed. During the question and answer session, have someone from the Formation Team available to take note of the questions discussed. After the meeting, prepare a list of the questions with appropriate answers to send out to the new inquirers as part of your follow up process. This follow up procedure will help refresh memories and also may help answer questions that arise after the “Come and See”. You may also wish to provide contact phone numbers or email addresses of one person or all of the members of the Formation Team. Decide ahead of time how the participants will inform the Formation Team of the desire to attend the first formal Inquiry session and mention this procedure at this time.

Closing Prayer

The Liturgy of the Hours should be used to close the meeting. Prepare the LOH in advance. If possible, utilize colored text (left side one color, right side another color to create a “choir”, and first lines of each psalm in different colors for side leaders, etc...) to help facilitate the praying of the hours, since most of the participants will probably not have much experience in this ritual. If you have questions, contact your Provincial Executive Council mentor.