

The Newsletter of the Dominican Friars Foundation



BLACKFRIARS

SPECIAL FRIARS FOR LIFE ISSUE

**Ministering to Women
Vulnerable to Abortion**

**Standing up for Life at
Brown University**

**A Dominican Exorcist in
Washington, DC**

Fr. Joseph Martin Hagan, O.P., baptizes the child of a woman in the care of the Sisters of Life (see page four). For over 20 years, the Dominican Friars have partnered with the Sisters of Life in ministering to women vulnerable to abortion.

Volume VIII, Issue I



**“Jesus, the new Adam,
gives us His heart in the
Eucharist. If we are prepared
for this tremendous gift,
it transforms us.”**

The Holy Family
St. Joseph's Church, Manhattan
Photo by Fr. Lawrence Lew, O.P.

Front cover photo by Christopher Mathews



Letter from the Director *Dear Friends,*

A friend once asked me, “Do you want to go to Mass with me this Sunday?”

“Sure,” I replied.

“Do you want to go to Communion?”

“Yeah” I answered, thinking to myself, ‘Didn’t you just ask me that?’

Without any guile, he inquired, “When was the last time you went to Confession?”

Struggling to remember, I guessed, “About twelve years ago.”

“You need to go to Confession. Trust me, it will be worth it.” Those three questions followed by a piece of advice changed my life.

There is a great need today for an army of preachers to teach about the necessity of being in the state of grace before receiving the Eucharist. When people begin to understand why they should not present themselves for Communion, they paradoxically enter into a deeper union with God. A contrite *mea culpa* (my fault) opens us up to the mystery of the *felix culpa* (O happy fault) of sin and redemption!

The Garden of Eden narrative tells the story of how our wounded human nature leads us to blame others for our problems. Adam claimed he was a victim of the woman God placed by his side. Adam’s heart was in danger of caving in on itself. His self justification started a path towards self enslavement. Tradition holds that our first parents moved out of this downward spiral by owning up to their faults and cooperating with God’s grace. Ancient icons depict Christ breaking down the gates of Hades to lead Adam and Eve to paradise.

Why do we begin every Mass with a *mea culpa*? Jesus answers this question with the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican who go to worship God. The former considers himself devout because he keeps the Sabbath, but he does not have the humility of the



Detail of an illumination by Fra Angelico.
Photo by Fr. Lawrence Lew, O.P.

Publican, who recognizes his own sin and begs God for mercy.

God wants to create a new heart in us. Jesus, the new Adam, gives us His heart in the Eucharist. If we are prepared for this tremendous gift, it transforms us. If not, we are like the man in the parable “praying to himself” to no avail.

St. Paul warns us that if we receive the Eucharist in an unworthy way, we eat and drink condemnation upon ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). This is why Catholic holders of public office should not present themselves for Communion if they contradict Church teaching on grave moral issues like abortion.

With your help, we are training a growing band of brothers to remedy errors that prevent our country and our Church from becoming all God has called us to be.

Yours in Christ,

Father Gabriel

Father Gabriel Gillen, O.P.
Executive Director
Dominican Friars Foundation



“These women have realized that one of the greatest things they can be is a mother, and yet society told them not to become that.”

Fr. Joseph Martin Hagan, O.P., prepares to baptize a child who resides with her mother in a home run by the Sisters of Life. Photo by Christopher Mathews

THE DOMINICAN FRIARS PARTNER WITH THE SISTERS OF LIFE TO MINISTER TO MOTHERS IN CRISIS

By *BlackFriars* staff

For over 20 years, the Dominican Friars have partnered with the Sisters of Life in ministering to women vulnerable to abortion, or who have given birth in the midst of crisis situations.

Fr. Joseph Martin Hagan, O.P., parochial vicar at St. Vincent Ferrer and St. Catherine of Siena parish in Manhattan, has baptized, heard confessions, catechized, and performed marriages for mothers in the care of the Sisters.

“They’re in a situation where they need, in a particular way, the help of Jesus Christ, especially through the grace of the sacraments,” says Fr. Joseph, who employs a delicate pastoral approach. “In many cases, I may be the first priest they talk to, at least as an adult.”

In addition to mothers returning to the practice of the faith, some convert to Catholicism as a result of their decision to give birth. According to Fr. Joseph, “These women have realized that one of the greatest things they can be is a mother, and yet society told them not to become that. If the Catholic Church seemed oppressive or irrelevant

before, they now recognize that we are one of the few groups willing to affirm the value of their motherhood, and not only affirm it abstractly, but actually serve them. That’s a powerful moment of evangelization.”

Fr. Joseph draws on his Dominican formation for this ministry, citing “the joy of St. Dominic in proclaiming God’s mercy” and incorporating the Rosary.

“The Rosary has a special role in proclaiming the dignity of motherhood. The early Dominicans proclaimed Mary’s divine motherhood to counter a heresy that dismissed the value of the body, even Christ’s body. The friars take seriously that we are a union of body and soul: both are good, made by a loving Father. This is a message that these women have not necessarily heard.”

While the friars provide sacramental and pastoral ministry, Fr. Joseph notes that it is the Sisters who bring the women into contact with the Church. “I’m just the alley-oop guy. They do the work, they throw up the big shot, and I just make sure it goes in the bucket.”



“I’ve always had a passion for the unborn and mothers who find themselves in crisis pregnancies.”

Fr. Patrick Briscoe, O.P., Giovanna Milano (front row, right), and students on a pilgrimage and missions trip to Lourdes, France

STANDING UP FOR LIFE AT BROWN

By *BlackFriars* staff



Giovanna Milano represents Brown Students for Life on campus.

Giovanna Milano, who is concentrating in Economics and Italian Studies at Brown University, founded Brown Students for Life when she realized there was no pro-life student group on the Ivy League campus.

“I’ve always had a passion for the unborn and mothers who find themselves in crisis pregnancies. This comes from the fact that my dad is a neonatologist. Seeing him wake up at four in the morning to take care of a baby that’s 22 weeks, a life that could [have been legally] aborted, is something that really hit me,” Giovanna says.

In recent months the group has brought pro-life speakers like cartoonist Pat Cross and author Stephanie Gray to campus via streaming video, sparking debate.

According to Giovanna, “We got both positive and negative feedback. People were talking about this on social media and email.”

The Dominican friars who serve at Brown, where Fr. Edmund McCullough, O.P., became the Catholic chaplain this year, support Giovanna and Brown Students for Life.

“The Dominican intellectual charism resonates with me and what I want to do, which is bring truth to Brown. Fr. Albert [Duggan, O.P., former chaplain] was a great support in starting the group,” Giovanna says.

Within the Catholic community at Brown, reception of the Church’s teaching on abortion is mixed, a divide that has grown since the 2020 presidential election.

Giovanna explains, “We live in a relativistic society where people say ‘it’s my truth but I can’t force it on you.’ Students fear rejection from this culture. Unfortunately our [presidential] administration has fallen into this, actively supporting and expanding abortion, something that directly violates our Catholic teaching. Yet this president claims to be Catholic.”

For Giovanna, a culture of life has practical implications for higher education. “On college campuses, there’s little support for students who find themselves pregnant and want to continue with the pregnancy, so it seems their only choice is to have an abortion. I hope that one day my university has dorms for mothers and leave for mothers who are students,” she says.



THE HILLBILLY THOMISTS ARE BACK

By Rod Dreher

A longer version of this interview appeared at theamericanconservative.com. Used with permission

The Hillbilly Thomists [an all-Dominican Friar bluegrass band] released their second album, the exhilarating *Living For The Other Side*, which, if the first album didn't convince you, proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that these preachers are not a novelty act, but true artists and evangelists via the medium of American folk music.

For those who don't know, explain the origin of the name "Hillbilly Thomists."

FR. AUSTIN LITKE, O.P.: The name comes from a passage in the letters of Flannery O'Connor where in 1955 she wrote: "Everybody who has read *Wise Blood* thinks I'm a hillbilly nihilist, whereas . . . I'm a hillbilly Thomist."

One of my favorite tracks, "Keep Your Lamps Trimmed," exhorts the listener to be ready for the Lord's coming. How does preaching intersect with performance in the Hillbilly Thomists' work?

FR. JUSTIN BOLGER, O.P.: The lyrics to "Keep Your Lamps Trimmed" are right from Scripture. In preaching we share the fruits of our contemplation. Songwriting is another mode of this fundamental Dominican activity.

One can pray with the Word and write a song as well as a sermon. We preach and sing the Word. In this I think we follow St. Dominic who loved to sing and pray and encouraged his brothers to do the same.

"Chasing Money No More" is about turning away from the world in search of something more truthful to live for. How does your experience as Dominicans inform that song?

FR. JONAH TELLER, O.P.: Man, I love that song! I have to say, after almost every time we finished a take on one of the songs, someone in the group would say, "That's the best song on the album," and everyone would be inclined to agree. But to your question—Fr. Thomas Joseph [White, O.P.] puts it well in that song:

Well they dressed me in the ancient cloak / and let me tell you that it ain't no joke. I spend as much time alone with angels as with common folk. But it's a life of sweet confection / supernatural connection / and as far as I can tell, it's headed in the proper direction.

Become a monthly supporter of Dominican Formation using the enclosed envelope or online at dominicanfriars.org/monthly and receive a free CD of *Living for the Other Side* (\$35 or more.)



LETTER FROM THE PRIOR PROVINCIAL



On February 6, I had the privilege of receiving the solemn vows of nine of our student brothers. With these vows our brothers commit themselves, as the profession formula says, “until death” to Jesus in the Order of Preachers. They will now continue their studies and move forward to diaconate, priesthood, and first assignments.

On December 8, Pope Francis proclaimed 2021 the year of St. Joseph. For that reason and because we belong to the Province of St. Joseph, I chose in my homily to show how the foster father of Jesus serves as a model of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

The gospel of Luke reveals Joseph’s poverty when he offers “the sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,”

(Lk 2:25) at Jesus’ presentation in the temple. The vow of poverty makes Jesus the true treasure of a friar’s life.

St. Joseph is, of course, the chaste spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the vow of chastity, our friars follow his example and devote themselves entirely to the love of Jesus, the Blessed Mother, and those whom they will serve.

St. Joseph’s obedience to God is manifested in his response to God’s “dream commands.” In his apostolic letter announcing the Year of St. Joseph, Pope Francis suggests that Jesus’ obedience until death, “not my will but yours be done” (Lk 22:42), reflects the obedience He witnessed in Joseph.

As we enter Holy Week, may St. Joseph’s example and intercession strengthen us to accept the crosses in our life with the confidence that, in and through them, Jesus will call us to a new and transformed life.

St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, pray for our newly vowed brothers and each one of us. Amen.

Very Rev. Kenneth R. Letoile, O.P.

Very Rev. Kenneth R. Letoile, O.P.
Prior Provincial



Help the Dominican Friars preach the Gospel in season and out.

As a token of our gratitude, monthly supporters receive unlimited online access to Dominican content, remembrance in a special daily Mass at the Dominican House of Studies, a CD of the latest release from the Hillbilly Thomists (\$35 or more per month), and a handmade St. Dominic relic rosary (\$50 or more per month).

Visit dominicanfriars.org/monthly, dial (212) 744-2410, or use the enclosed envelope to enroll.

INTERVIEW WITH AN EXORCIST: FR. LUKE CLARK, O.P.

By *BlackFriars* staff



Fr. Luke Clark, O.P., was recently named chief exorcist of the Archdiocese of Washington, DC, by Archbishop Wilton Cardinal Gregory. He is also cofounder of the St. Michael Center for Spiritual Renewal (catholicexorcism.org), a Catholic organization that trains clergy, religious, and laity on spiritual deliverance.

What is exorcism?

The Catechism defines exorcism as when “the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or object be protected against the power of the Evil One and withdrawn from his dominion.” We see Jesus liberating the possessed throughout the Gospels. The bishop properly carries on this ministry in the Church and can delegate a priest to act on his behalf in these matters.

How do you determine whether the demonic is involved, versus a mental illness?

Psychological illness and demonic possession present differently. Rarely do we find a case that is purely psychological or purely demonic. We examine the person’s history for some type of invitation or opening to the demonic, either explicit or implicit. Demons are opportunistic. If there’s an opening, they’re going to take it, if God allows.

Can abortion create an opening?

Abortion is an open door for the demonic, and we’ve had cases where that’s exactly how the demons were able to possess the individual. The effects of abortion are devastating. The killing of the child, the mother’s fear, despair, guilt, shame, self-hatred, and belief she has committed an unforgivable sin all point to the atmosphere of hell. Yet long as we live, we can repent and be forgiven of any sin, including abortion.

Washington is now home to a pro-abortion executive branch. Does this affect your ministry?

Demons are very clear on authority and are bound to obey it’s proper exercise. They exploit it for their purposes as well. The authority structure of a nation can open or close doors to the demonic. It’s like a father who can allow things into his house or not. When authority invites and supports things that are openings to the demonic, you can safely bet they will be exploited.

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