

The Newsletter of the Dominican Friars Foundation



BLACKFRIARS



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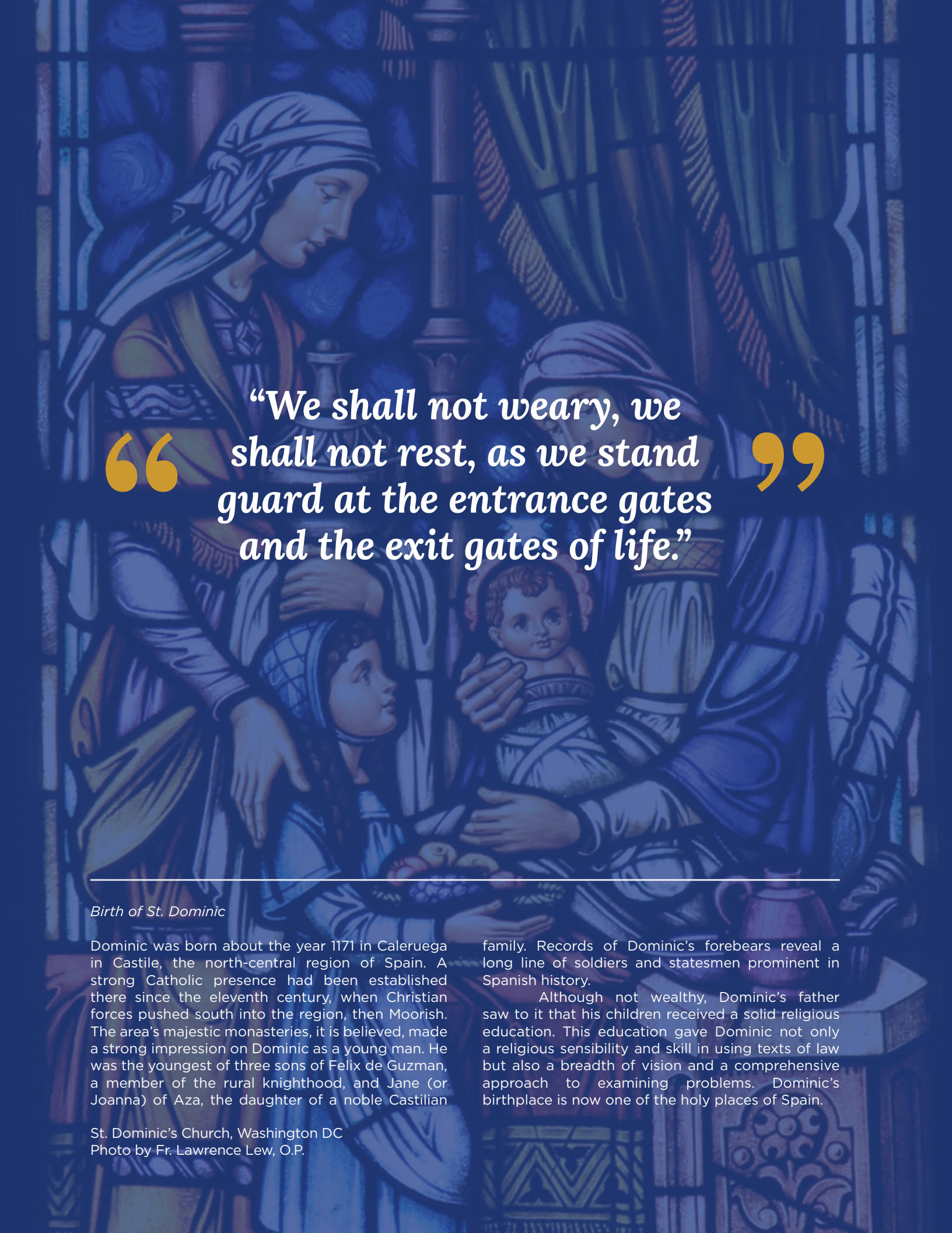
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The Dominican Friars stand for the legal protection of the unborn at the annual March for Life in Washington, DC. Photo by George Goss

Volume IX, Issue I



“We shall not weary, we shall not rest, as we stand guard at the entrance gates and the exit gates of life.”

Birth of St. Dominic

Dominic was born about the year 1171 in Caleruega in Castile, the north-central region of Spain. A strong Catholic presence had been established there since the eleventh century, when Christian forces pushed south into the region, then Moorish. The area's majestic monasteries, it is believed, made a strong impression on Dominic as a young man. He was the youngest of three sons of Felix de Guzman, a member of the rural knighthood, and Jane (or Joanna) of Aza, the daughter of a noble Castilian

family. Records of Dominic's forebears reveal a long line of soldiers and statesmen prominent in Spanish history.

Although not wealthy, Dominic's father saw to it that his children received a solid religious education. This education gave Dominic not only a religious sensibility and skill in using texts of law but also a breadth of vision and a comprehensive approach to examining problems. Dominic's birthplace is now one of the holy places of Spain.



Letter from the Director *Dear Friends,*

As he lay dying on a hospital bed, I administered Last Rites to Fr. Richard John Neuhaus. A fellow Dominican Friar, Fr. Aquinas Guilbeau, O.P., assisted with prayers. Sixteen years prior, almost to the day, Fr. Richard had a near death experience which he recalls in his book, *As I Lay Dying: Meditations Upon Returning*:

“I was sitting up in the bed staring intently into the darkness, although in fact I knew my body was lying flat. What I was staring at was a color like blue and purple, and vaguely in the form of hanging drapery. By the drapery were two ‘presences.’ I saw them and yet did not see them, and I cannot explain that. But they were there, and I knew that I was not tied to the bed. I was able and prepared to get up and go somewhere. And then the presences—one or both of them, I do not know—spoke. This I heard clearly. Not in an ordinary way, for I cannot remember anything about the voice. But the message was beyond mistaking: ‘Everything is ready now.’ It was not in the form of a command, nor was it an invitation to do anything. They were just letting me know. Then they were gone. They were angels, of course. Angelos simply means ‘messenger.’ There were no white robes or wings or anything of that sort. As I said, I did not see them in any ordinary sense. But there was a message; therefore there

were messengers. I understood that they were ready to get me ready to see God. It was obvious enough to me that I was not prepared, in my present physical and spiritual condition, for the beatific vision, for seeing God face to face. They were ready to get me ready. This comports with the doctrine of purgatory, that there is a process of purging and preparation to get us ready to meet God.”

Fr. Neuhaus was truly made ready, spending his remaining years as an active defender of the unborn. He once wrote, “We shall not weary, we shall not rest, as we stand guard at the entrance gates and the exit gates of life, and at every step along the way of life, bearing witness in word and deed to the dignity of the human person—of every human person.” It was an honor to salute this pro-life warrior as he exited this world.

In this issue of *BlackFriars*, you will read about how the Friars continue to stand guard at both gates of life. I thank you for standing with us! May Our Holy Mother Mary watch over all your loved ones, now and at the hour of death.

Father Gabriel

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

Dominican Friars stand before the Supreme Court at the March for Life.



REPORT FROM THE MARCH FOR LIFE

By Bro. Juan Macias Marquez, O.P.

Hope and excitement permeated the air. Prayer and exhortation flooded the scene. At this year's March for Life there was an extra little pep in everyone's step as we marched down Constitution Avenue bound for the Capitol and Supreme Court. At the prospect of a reversal of the Supreme Court's infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision, many brave marchers were eager to show their hope that God has not abandoned His people in their fight for the unborn, that God has not been silent to the cries of the unborn. The tide seems to be turning.

Now, we don't know what the future holds. *Roe v. Wade* might not be overturned. We might have to continue our fight against legalized abortion and may need to change our tactics while remaining ever in prayer for the cause of life. However, even if the horrid *Roe v. Wade* decision is overturned and the fight for the unborn goes to the states, we will still have to labor for the unborn and we must be more dynamic in doing so. Even if abortion becomes completely illegal in this country, we will still have to carry the banner of the pro-life cause. Why? Because laws don't directly change hearts.

Over the past fifty years, with the legalization of abortion, we Americans have created a culture in which abortion went from possible with certain caveats to a woman's fundamental right. At first women would only abort their unborn child in the most drastic of circumstances. Then slowly the inhibitions towards having an abortion faded away. Now we meet women who are proud of their many abortions. What does this say about the hearts of those around us?

“God has used the Church to conform the culture to the Gospel time and time again. From her infancy, the Church spoke out clearly against the horrors of abortion in a first-century document titled the Didache.”



A Dominican student brother marches with his father. All photos by George Goss

But we do not lose hope. God has used the Church to conform the culture to the Gospel time and time again. From her infancy, the Church spoke out clearly against the horrors of abortion in a first-century document titled the *Didache*. The Church was tasked with changing the hearts and minds of ancient Romans and Greeks for whom abortion was a common reality. Because of her conviction about the sanctity of life, the Church persisted in her condemnation of abortion and after some time it became unthinkable to be a proponent of abortion. Though we live in a decidedly different age we trust in the power and dynamism of the

Gospel and God's desire that all people come to live the fullness of life that He has provided for them as His sons and daughters.

If the Church is going to transform the culture, then we must situate the issue of abortion in the context of a deeper understanding of life. Only then as a culture will we begin to possess greater reverence for the sanctity of life, specifically in the womb but also at all stages of human development. Our recent pontiff Pope St. John Paul II, in his encyclical on life, *Evangelium Vitae*, instructs us as we move forward to fight for life in an unknown future:

"All together, we must build a new culture of life: new, because it will be able to confront and solve today's unprecedented problems affecting human life...new, because it will be capable of bringing about a serious and courageous cultural dialogue among all parties. While the urgent need for such a cultural transformation is linked to the present historical situation, it is also rooted in the Church's mission of evangelization. The purpose of the Gospel, in fact, is 'to transform humanity from within and to make it new'...to permeate all cultures and give them life from within, so that they may express the full truth about the human person and about human life." (Evangelium Vitae 95)





“A person’s death is not an isolated event, but an opportunity to promote a culture of respect for life and to build up the kingdom of God on Earth.”

Bro. Columba Thomas, O.P., speaks about *The Art of Dying* on EWTN’s *Pro-Life Weekly*.

THE ART OF DYING: AN INTERVIEW WITH BRO. COLUMBA THOMAS, O.P.

By *BlackFriars Staff*

Bro. Columba Thomas, O.P., first encountered the Dominicans in medical school and completed his medical training before joining the Order in 2016. His translation of the 15th century *Ars Moriendi* (*The Art of Dying*) was published by the National Catholic Bioethics Center.

What are the problems with how we approach death today?

The biggest challenge we face is the overmedicalization of dying. Health care has become so complex, with so many options available, that dying persons and their loved ones often must make many difficult and painful decisions, and they can become so focused on health care interventions that it distracts them from the deeper spiritual dimension.

How can *The Art of Dying* help?

The Art of Dying serves as a compass to ensure that people do not lose sight of their ultimate destination. It focuses on the life of the soul in a way that is concise, practical, and sums up the Church’s tradition. In addition

to discussing five common temptations that dying people face, *The Art of Dying* also emphasizes the need to reflect on the truths of the faith summarized in the Creed, the need to pray regularly and unite our sufferings with Christ, and the importance of the sacraments.

How can the Church respond to the practice of physician-assisted suicide?

If you look at recent trends in attitudes regarding the legalization of physician-assisted suicide in the United States, the level of support expressed by people of faith is alarming. A Gallup poll in 2018 showed that 41% of Americans who attend church weekly support legalizing physician-assisted suicide. I suspect this support is rooted in a false sense of compassion that supports a person’s autonomy over more fundamental moral concerns.

In response, *The Art of Dying* provides Christians with a helpful vantage for overcoming a growing societal acceptance of physician-assisted suicide. Some themes that especially speak to this include the great dignity of uniting one’s sufferings with Christ, the priority of the soul over the body, and the role of community in advocating for the soul’s eternal health. A person’s death is not an isolated event, but an opportunity to promote a culture of respect for life and to build up the kingdom of God on Earth.



SEVEN DOMINICANS MAKE SOLEMN PROFESSION, BECOMING FRIARS FOR LIFE!

Thanks to your support, seven more men (six pictured above with Prior Provincial, Very Rev. Kenneth R. Letoile, O.P.) have pledged their lives to fight the Battle for Life as Dominican Friars. **Please keep these men in your prayers; they will be keeping**

you and your loved ones in theirs: Zachary Sexton, O.P., Nicholas Hartman, O.P., Dominic Mary Koester, O.P., Raymond Maria La Grange, O.P., Charles Marie Rooney, O.P., Vincent Ferrer Maria Bernhard, O.P., Cyril Stola, O.P.

WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

YOU can ensure that the Gospel of Life is preached to future generations by leaving a gift to the Dominican Friars in your will—and become a member of the St. Dominic Legacy Society!

To learn more, contact our **Director of Planned Giving, Rossano Rovello**.

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HOPE FOR THE FUTURE: AN INTERVIEW WITH VOCATIONS DIRECTOR FR. JACOB BERTRAND JANCZYK, O.P.

By *BlackFriars* staff

Fr. Jacob Bertrand Janczyk, O.P., joined the Dominicans in 2010 after graduating from Marist College, where he studied biomedical science. Ordained in 2017, he served as assistant chaplain at Dartmouth College before becoming vocations director. He is co-host of the podcast *Godsplaining* and author, with Fr. Patrick Briscoe, O.P., of *Saint Dominic's Way of Life: A Path to Knowing and Loving God*. *BlackFriars* sat down with Fr. Jacob Bertrand to discuss the vocations program and its future prospects.

How do you see your role as vocations director?

My job isn't to hunt future Dominicans and bring them into the Order, but to look at men who are being moved by Our Lord and to recognize whether or not receiving formation is a possibility in the Province of Saint Joseph and in the Dominican Order. Are these men desirous of the things that Dominicans do: a life

of contemplation, a life of study, a life lived in community—all ordered to preaching? Do these men want to live the evangelical counsels?

How do you account for the high number of novices entering the Province of St. Joseph each year?

The Province has a lot to recommend itself—our parishes, our campus ministries, the Thomistic Institute, projects like the Hillbilly Thomists and *Godsplaining*. The Province is very present and engaged, and I think that draws men to the Order. We try to be faithful to the charism and mission of St. Dominic.



Fr. Jacob Bertrand Janczyk, O.P., preaches at a recent *Godsplaining* retreat.

Do you foresee this trend continuing?

Vocations don't arise out of a vacuum; even when the Lord calls, they need to be fostered and encouraged. If there's not an environment to do that, you see a dearth of vocations. The Church in America has a vibrancy and staying power to it. Because of that, we can expect and hope that vocations will continue to come.

**Your generosity helps us be good
stewards of the men God is sending
into the Dominican Order.
Thank you!**

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