

The Newsletter of the Dominican Friars Foundation



# BLACKFRIARS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

*Going Godward  
at the Dominican  
Rosary Pilgrimage*

*Bluegrass with the  
Correct Theology*

*Serving the Powerhouse  
of the Order of Preachers*

The Dominican Friars chant the Salve Regina as they pray the Rosary with over 3,000 pilgrims at the second annual Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage. Photo by Jeffrey Bruno.

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**“ God has built within every one of us a direction to him, something that will not be satisfied by anything else but him. Going Godward with the Blessed Virgin Mary simply means following her on the path that she has already begun for us. ”**

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Fr. James Sullivan, O.P., principal preacher for this year's Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage, preaches about Going Godward in one of his talks at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Photo by Jeffrey Bruno.







Letter from the Executive Director

# Dear friends in Christ,

At this year's Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage, Fr. James Sullivan, O.P., our principal preacher for the day, began his preaching with an image from a sign he saw this past summer in New Hampshire, which read, "The goal of life is living in agreement with nature." Fr. James explained that to live in agreement with our human nature is to live as God intended us to live. God intends us to live, and we were made to live, in the direction that leads to him—Godward.

The Blessed Virgin Mary leads us Godward through her shining example and powerful intercession. As Dominican Friars we lead others to Mary, so that she can show us all the Way—her son, Jesus Christ. During the annual Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage eloquent preaching and fervent prayer bring many souls to Jesus through Mary. Over 3,000 pilgrims from all over the country joined us in person in Washington, DC this year along with thousands more who participated via the event livestream and the televised Mass.

Dominicans preach the gospel at all times and in all places, from the high pulpit at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception to highways, byways, halls, stages, and fields throughout the country. The Hillbilly Thomists, a band of 8 friars, took their musical gifts and their fourth album, *Marigold*, on tour this summer. Through their theologically insightful lyrics and catchy melodies, they preached to packed audiences for the glory of God and the salvation of souls!

As the Apostles were aided by the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so our work as Dominican Friars would not be possible without the prayers of the Dominican nuns, who ceaselessly pray for us friars and the people we serve. St. Dominic knew this when he founded the Order of Preachers, and so he founded the first monastery of Dominican nuns even before assembling the first friars. Our friars continue to serve as chaplains for the cloistered Dominican nuns whose prayers have sustained the work of the Order of Preachers for over 800 years.



Fr. Michael O'Connor, O.P., who led the Dominican Schola Cantorum, composed a new entrance antiphon, *Totus Tuus*, for this year's Pilgrimage. Photo by Jeffrey Bruno.

I know, also, that our work would not be possible without your prayers and support. If you have not yet made an annual gift to support our young men in formation for the priesthood, please consider giving to our annual Matching Challenge for Vocations through the enclosed envelope or through our website. Between now and December 31, your gift will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$350,000 to ensure a high quality formation for the next generation of Dominican preachers. I am so thankful for your partnership in our Dominican mission of preaching for the salvation of souls.

May you and your family have a blessed Advent and a Merry Christmas! Let us continue to pray for one another, asking for Our Lady's intercession, as we gather around the manger to adore our newborn King of Kings and, through him, go Godward together.

In Christ and St. Dominic,

Fr. John Paul Kern, O.P.  
Executive Director  
Dominican Friars Foundation



# GOING GODWARD AT THE DOMINICAN ROSARY PILGRIMAGE

By *Blackfriars Staff*

A little slice of heaven is how one pilgrim described this year's Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage—a day-long gathering of more than 3,000 pilgrims with the Dominican Friars and the Blessed Mother at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. It is days like these that nourish our journey here on earth—gathering together in the Upper Room, so to speak, with Mary—replete with good Dominican preaching, praying of the Rosary, Adoration, confessions, Mass, and a concert by The Hillbilly Thomists.

Going Godward was the message Fr. James Sullivan, O.P., preached at this year's Pilgrimage and “going Godward with the Blessed Virgin Mary simply means following her on the path that she has already begun for us of being united with her in prayer at every moment of our life.”

Fr. James served as principal preacher for the second annual Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage which took place on September 28. He centered his talk on the Annunciation, saying God not only broke into creation at the Annunciation, but it is there that God assures us that creation is good. Even though our first parents sinned, Mary is the proof humanity works, Fr. James preached.

But this Godward movement is not possible without God's grace, he said. And at the Annunciation, God gives us not only his son, but

also his mother. “The Annunciation is a gift to us of both Jesus and Mary, and both of them together weave the prayers of the Rosary. And Mary is proof that the fullness of the human person is forged by God's grace in her,” Fr. James taught.

Fr. James described how we should see the virtues lived by the Blessed Mother, especially faith, hope, and charity, as clear signs for us on this path Godward. In regards to faith, Fr. James preached that St. Louis de Montfort told us that Mary will share her faith with us. We just have to ask her. “Her faith on earth was stronger than that of all the patriarchs, all the prophets and apostles, and all the saints. And now that she is reigning in heaven, she no longer has this faith, because she sees everything clearly in him by the light of glory. But she lived by faith in this life. She knows this virtue because by knowing the Lord, she came to love him all the more,” said Fr. James.

As regards to her hope, Fr. James preached that “because she had no sin to impede her faith, she had no concupiscence to weaken her faith,

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Photo: Fr. Dominic Verner, O.P. preached a stirring homily about the “armada of amnesia” we face in modern times at this year's Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage. Photo by Jeffrey Bruno.



and that knowledge of God led her to grow in hope.” He told the pilgrims that the virtue of hope enables us to do two things; first, to trust in the promises that God has made us, specifically, the promises of Jesus in the gospel; and secondly, to desire the fulfillment of those promises.

And finally, in living out the virtue of charity—probably the hardest virtue to live, Fr. James said, because we don’t have it within us to love as God commands. But he assured the pilgrims that in our command to love, Mary will help us. “She will open and enlarge your heart to obey the commands of her son.”

In his homily at the Vigil Mass, Fr. Dominic Verner, O.P., preached powerfully and poetically about the Battle of Lepanto, the Ottoman armada that outnumbered the Catholic fleet, and Pope St. Pius V’s call to prayer to defeat the enemy—specifically his call to pray the Rosary. “Perhaps it was this time [Our Lady] had in mind when she gave the Rosary to St. Dominic’s sons. Perhaps it was for a moment such as this, that she gave us the beaded wire to her throne. And Pope St. Pius ordered the churches to stay open, day and night, for Christian prayer,” Fr. Dominic preached. Though clearly outmanned, Our Lady intervened for her flock that day in a most miraculous way, turning the enemy back, Christendom saved.

But Fr. Dominic warned we face another armada today. He termed it “an armada of amnesia.” The forgetfulness of God is what we face now, but it’s not a foreign enemy that comes at us, it’s our brothers and sisters who are enslaved. Using imagery from the Rosary, Fr. Dominic illustrated where we see this “great forgetting” in full view: “We too often have let the mysteries be forgotten, and the fleet has



Over 3,000 pilgrims joined the Dominican Friars at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. Photo by Jeffrey Bruno.

gathered strength. The Annunciation has been forgotten, with its angelic honors given to the chosen mother, and a new feminism arises despising motherhood itself. The Visitation has been forgotten, with its prophet leaping in the womb, and a culture of death clamors for the right to kill the unborn. The Nativity has been forgotten, with the poor God-child born in a stable, no crib, no bed, and the poor homeless are passed over with averted eyes.”

Our Lady has given us the Rosary for these times, too, and she commands the angels once more, Fr. Dominic proclaimed. The winds are shifting, he said, and “while the world does not remember, it is beginning to suspect that something has been forgotten.” He assured us that Our Lady hears our prayers and “the Aves echo once more.”

A highlight of the day was the moment Fr. Joseph-Anthony Kress, O.P., led 400 pilgrims in an enrollment in the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary. “Too often, we keep our devotions private,” Fr. Joseph-Anthony said, “but this is an opportunity to join our voices together to cry out to heaven and ask for the mercy and grace of God.”

In one of his talks that day, Fr. James preached that the glorious mysteries of the Rosary are something we have to wait for. But the Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage—a day spent with Our Lady in the Upper Room, a day of so many graces for so many present—was a glimpse of the glory that awaits us.

To view this year’s Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage or to learn more about next year’s Pilgrimage, visit [rosarypilgrimage.org](http://rosarypilgrimage.org).



Fr. Frassati Davis, O.P., preached to Spanish-speaking pilgrims in the Crypt Church of the Basilica at this year’s Pilgrimage. Photo by Jeffrey Bruno.



# BLUEGRASS WITH THE CORRECT THEOLOGY

By *Blackfriars* Staff

It was a Marian summer for The Hillbilly Thomists, a band of eight Dominican friars, who spent much of their summer touring with their new album *Marigold*, whose title song is an homage to the Blessed Mother. Playing 12 cities, at venues as varied as the Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, the Nordic Museum in Seattle, the oldest parish in Utah, and a music festival in Asheville, NC, the tour's last stop was the Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage in Washington, DC!

Debuting at #2 on the bluegrass charts, *Marigold*, the band's fourth album, held its spot for a few weeks right behind Billy Strings, who is kind of a phenom in the bluegrass world, Fr. Justin Bolger, O.P. said. The album builds on the same great music we've come to expect from this talented band of friars, with more of them expanding into the role of songwriter for this album. "We're all Dominicans and we all have

the same view of theology and of the world, but it's expressed in different ways when you have different songwriters," said Fr. Simon Teller, O.P., "and that leads us musically in a different direction too."

Fr. Simon said there's a common theme running through their music rooted in Flannery O'Connor. He explained that Flannery writes about how God's grace is at work in a world that is broken and that oftentimes grace appears in ways that are unanticipated and sometimes strange. "So, the theme of God's grace in the midst of a fallen world gives our songs a kind of optimism," Fr. Simon said, "and there's a kind of

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Photo: The Hillbilly Thomists played 12 different cities, to mostly sold-out audiences, on their *Marigold* tour this summer.



joyful approach to suffering or to the brokenness of humanity, not because we undervalue it, but because we have confidence that where sin abounds, grace abounds.”

Fr. Justin added to this insight, saying “thus we (the band) do not fall prey to Nietzsche’s critique of an over-Platonized Christianity which empties the world of meaning, because there is meaning in the world. But we live for the other side too.”

The other side is another way of saying death—another theme permeating the band’s music. “But we’re not singing about death in a morbid way or in a way that is escapist... we’re trying to do it in the tradition of the *ars moriendi*,” Fr. Justin explained. “In the Catholic Church, we have this art of dying, and music has always been a part of that—certainly for Mass and prayer, processions, etc., but this is a weird, hillbilly contribution to the *ars moriendi*.”

Fr. Justin said the band also borrows from Flannery O’Connor’s theory (which she took from Jacques Maritain) which holds “the good of the art is the art itself.” He recalled how Flannery said something to the effect that in our age we don’t need flattery, we have advertising agencies to do that. Rather, our art should show us who we are at a given moment in time. “So, we can expect the art of our time may be like Flannery’s time,” Fr. Justin said. “You can call it jarring, or nihilist, or ugly—but it’s revelatory. And that’s why it has staying power. Because she is trying to jar us. And God is trying to do that too. And hopefully, good art does that as well.”

What people have found in the music of The Hillbilly Thomists is that it’s authentic and it’s about the faith. One fan in DC told the friars what he likes most about their music is “it’s bluegrass with the correct theology.” Fr. Justin said he thinks the big crowds they saw at each concert this summer reveal there’s a bit of a void with respect to music that is dealing with faith that is not overly pious or hitting you over the head with a message. “Our music is more invitational, observational, while also being devotional.”

Fr. Justin’s sister Maggie encouraged him to write a song about the Blessed Mother, thus the song and title track, *Marigold*. “It’s sort of an Advent song,” Fr. Simon said. “A song about expectation. The seed is hidden, waiting for it to bear fruit, waiting for it to appear in our lives.” Fr. Justin added it’s essentially a song about patience. “Our Lady teaches us through her own suffering to be patient for good things that God has promised.” Several people reached out to the friars this summer to tell them how much this song has helped them through a time of suffering and helped them to see that in going through loss, there is also this message of hope.

To learn more about The Hillbilly Thomists, visit [hillbillythomists.com](http://hillbillythomists.com)

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Photo: The Hillbilly Thomists played well into the evening at this year’s Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage. Photo by Jeffrey Bruno.





Fr. Brian Mulcahy, O.P., serves as chaplain to the nuns at Our Lady of Grace monastery in Connecticut. Photo by Aaron Joseph, Archdiocese of Hartford.

# SERVING THE POWERHOUSE OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS

By Br. Jerome Masters, O.P.

If you travel about 100 miles northeast of New York City, you might stumble across the Dominican Monastery of Our Lady of Grace in North Guilford, Connecticut. These Dominican nuns have been praying there since 1947. What many people don't know is that the nuns of the Dominican Order are a vital part of the success of preaching for the salvation of souls.

There is an 800-year history of Dominican friars serving the nuns as chaplains. It is not common knowledge (unfortunately) that St. Dominic, when founding the Dominican Order, established the nuns first at the Monastery of Prouille in France. He converted nine heretic women and gave them a rule of life. St. Dominic entrusted to their care his brother Bl. Mannes as their chaplain, saying, "Our very dear brother, Brother Mannes, who has spared no pains to bring you to this high state, will take what steps seem to him necessary to secure its continuance, your holy and religious life."

Today, Fr. Brian Mulcahy, O.P., serves the Dominican nuns in North Guilford as their residential chaplain. Ordained in 1990, Fr. Brian has served the

Province of St. Joseph in several capacities, including parochial vicar and pastor at different parishes, working at the then-Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, hospital chaplain, university chaplain at Youngstown State University, and provincial of the province. This assignment differs from the other assignments though.

"My task as chaplain is to serve the needs of the nuns. To celebrate, when I'm needed, their conventual Mass, and to preach for them," Fr. Brian said. "I am here to help them to live their life that is centered upon the solemn celebration of the liturgy." Fr. Brian's celebration of the liturgy has changed since coming to the monastery. "There are always faithful from outside who come to the nuns' Mass, but it is the nuns' Mass." This is evident if you visit the monastery. Fr. Brian faces the sisters when saying Mass. His homily can be beneficial to the faithful who come but is aimed more at the nuns. Since he is not at a parish, the celebration of the liturgy matches the pace of the nuns' life, thus a longer and more contemplative Mass.

When asked about how preaching differs from the environment of a parish or among the brethren Fr. Brian said, "Study is a very big part of their life as well. That sets Dominican nuns apart from other contemplative communities." This life of study the nuns share with the brethren enables Fr. Brian to preach about things that he might not be able to preach about effectively at a parish. He also said, "Our Lord is very fond of these women. He loves them very much, so he often gives me things to say to them."

One might be shocked to learn that Fr. Brian does not serve as the nuns' regular confessor. "We have other friars and priests who come and do that." This mainly serves as a boundary for him so that he is kept from knowing too much about the internal life of the community. As a chaplain, he helps keep the separation between the internal workings of the community and external things. The prioress of the community alongside her council run the inner workings of the community.

"You can't really appreciate the Order of Preachers without coming to an appreciation of the role the nuns play in the life of our Order," Fr. Brian said. "The nuns are the powerhouse of the Order who pray for the friars to preach well for the salvation of souls. They participate in the preaching of the Order through their life of contemplation and forgoing earthly goods to love our Lord."



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