Others can sometimes see the face of Christ in what we do and say! When that happens we become the Living Word. We make God's love visible. When in prayer we name the concerns of our world for the God of Creation, we are saying to the world that God really cares. Deeply, and for all!

Community helps us stay connected with God. It gives us companions for praying and helps us remember what really matters – our own lives, of course, and also the life of everything else that exists on this planet. As important as we are, human life is only a tiny speck in the vastness of the universe!

A prayerful community helps us see everything, and everybody, that surrounds us, including what's often overlooked as well as all the stuff that's more obvious. When we contemplate, which simply means "when we pay attention," our eyes are opened. We notice actions that produce dignity and others that lead to despair, some that foster hope and others that increase fear, those that express goodness and others that spread evil, and those which promote beauty as opposed to those which express violence.

Jesus taught his disciples about building community one person, one gesture, one word, one action, one prayer at a time. Dominic did the same. Both of them were committed to welcoming and reconciling, listening and speaking, healing and empowering, teaching and learning, seeking and finding, feeding and comforting. Jesus, in the 1st century, and Dominic, in the 13th century, knew community begins with hospitality and is based on God's dream for all of creation: kinship and abundance of life.

Dominic had a desire to search for truth. He believed that the truth of the gospel asks us to see others, all others, as neighbors. This kind of respect
helps relationships deepen, and when these relationships are based on mutuality, trust grows along with confidence and gratitude for companions who share much in common, even their differences!

Every disciple of Jesus is called to the mission of building community. Every follower of Dominic is called to practice the skills of building community. In return for this hard work, community promises to support its members and show the world a tangible sign of acceptance and love. It is a practical example of God’s generosity and desire for all life on this planet.

Dominic discovered what was to become known as his preaching mission in 13th century France. He was traveling with his bishop, Diego, and wherever they went he could see the misery of the people as they struggled with the rapidly changing landscape of church and society. Already a priest, he was saddened when he observed corruption in the church, and saw how the gospel was often misrepresented. Instead drawing people closer to God, it seemed to suggest that God’s love was beyond them.

So Dominic did something radical. Well, at least it was radical for the 13th century! The custom then was that if people wanted to hear the gospel proclaimed, generally by a bishop, they made a pilgrimage to a monastery or cathedral. Dominic said something new was needed. Preachers would travel to where the people lived. These preachers would live in community, be sent out on mission, and return from time to time to dwell in communal and contemplative prayer and study. This deepened both their contemplative and missionary spirits.

The rhythm of this movement between communal prayer and study followed by travel in their active ministry kept them grounded and focused.

That was 800 years ago. Wherever Dominic established a monastery or convent for nuns or friars, community was an essential element of their life. The nuns shared in the preaching mission through their constant prayer and study. Their life together provided the necessary encounters, human struggles and support that ensured they would deepen, test and practice their faith. The friars went out to preach among the people (Remember, this was the 13th century! It would never have occurred to Dominic to send women out to do the same thing.). Their spirit of confidence grew because of the prayer that supported them. Dominic believed that each nun and each friar would deepen in their love of God and be clearer about their call to mission through this experience of being transformed by living the gospel. That may not seem so “radical” in the 21st century. Today there are many women and many communities inspired by the humility and zeal of Dominic’s charism. And they don’t all live in convents! Still, they’re committed to the preaching mission and to building community. They practice loving God by loving others – those whom they know, as well as others who are distant, unknown, of another (or no) spiritual tradition.

That’s big. It’s enormous! It also requires the energy and imagination of youth, the wisdom of experience and the commitment of an entire lifetime. Making gospel truth and love the center of individual and communal prayer promotes integrity and insight. It also helps in building a community where all are welcomed with respect. Ethnic and religious differences are honored, never used as a means to divide or dominate. Appreciation for the mystery of life’s profound dependence on Earth is encouraged to deepen and a new awareness of solidarity with the entire cosmos grows. Wherever injustice is found, integrity gives courage to voice opposition and seek ways to challenge systems and change structures.

Dominic’s vision continues to bring communities together, and on every continent and in more than 100
nations of the world there are roots and branches of this family story. Wherever they are, these communities are signs of life and hope, generating new waves of energy, and evidence that building community in the tradition of Jesus and Dominic continues – one person, one gesture, one word, one action, one prayer at a time.

Youth and Young Adults

**At The Heart of Dominic’s Charism**

- Community Helps us Pay Attention
- Prayer Is About Staying Connected
- Study...Who Knows Where It Can Lead?
- Preaching Takes Imagination, Simplicity and Grace
- Catholic and Dominican Means Bringing the Gospel to Life

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