Dialog and difference are words that fit comfortably in the vocabulary of anyone familiar with the Dominican tradition. Dialog is the centerpiece of intellectual pursuits; it is at the heart of pastoral practice, and defines the intimacy of an ongoing conversation with God. Difference has sometimes created the tension of dichotomies: us and them. Whether in the realm of politics, economics, or religion, history reveals that people have too often felt the need to cast their lot on one side and to oppose all others. That each of these spheres is further differentiated by race, ethnicity, culture, and experience only sharpened the differences, making them appear to be incompatible and unworthy of respect.

Gratitude marks those who hear Jesus' good news. “I give you a new command . . . love one another.” (Jn 13.) Saying yes to this commandment means saying yes to a lifelong commitment to growing in love with
difference and to being grateful for the abundance of gifts that become evident. Catherine of Siena, the great conversationalist and spiritual writer, insisted on speaking the truth in love and being in love with whatever, and whoever, God loves.

**Viewing difference through the lens of love** cultivates respect. It also begs the question: Can genuine love, or even respect, survive in a world where billions of dollars are spent each year on persuading consumers to embrace sameness? Can love even survive, let alone respect for difference, in an economy committed to fostering a desire for power and possessions? These are challenges that need to be asked with clarity and love. The truth is that participating in the global economy has apparently not led to equity. The result has too often created division rather than unity.

**For those entrusted with preaching** God’s word it is clear that the mission of the Gospel is intended to promote unity in the world—which is contrary to the sameness of uniformity—and respect for difference. Only unity and respect have the power to promote justice in the world. The preacher’s task is to seek the wisdom that will open hearts to a dialogue with truth. Perhaps those who live in one part of the world will discover how they are related to those whom they may never know, just as those who are called to share in the daily demands of community are called to generosity and inclusiveness. How can God’s word, and the words of a preacher, create an openness to this genuine love? In his encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II wrote that “the Church’s social teaching has an important interdisciplinary dimension.”

**The truth of the Gospel** must enter into dialogue with the “constantly changing social, economic, and political contexts” of modern life. Then the “practical and experiential dimensions are pursued at the crossroads where Christian life and conscience come into contact with the real world.” In other words, a perspective on global mission will be shaped by seeking to understand life beyond what is familiar. Then the only proper assessment is thoughtful and critical, as well as generous and practical.

**Truth is not a possession** held by some and unattainable by others. When separations occur due to some difference in interpretation, some claim to truth, for example, it too often leads to accusations of deception, expressions of anger, and acts of violence.

**The truth that dwells in human hearts**, that draws persons closer to the goodness they wish to imitate and the God they long to know, is demanding; it is also dynamic and inviting, not authoritarian. It needs to be in dialogue with the insight and desire of others. How else will it be possible for humanity to grow together into the wideness of God’s mercy?

**Sometimes, as with any conversation, the path of dialogue will lead in an unexpected direction.** Whether seen as success or failure, walking in the path of truth and love always serves the mission of bringing wholeness and holiness to light.

**THE PREACHING MISSION CONTINUES**

“The word is universal, as is humanity. It should not have ‘forbidden’ arenas where it cannot make itself heard. What counts then is our capacity to discover these new places, where young people are to be found, where people’s ways of seeing the world are prepared and forged—tomorrow’s ways of thinking and of living.” *Vincent de Couesnongle, OP (What Does Preaching the Word Require Today? To Praise, To Bless, To Preach: Words of Grace and Truth*, Dominican Publications, 2004).

“I live among the ‘poor’ and share ministry with them. But when ‘the poor’ are known by name the idea of ‘the poor’ disappears. They become my/our neighbours with real names and faces and real needs that are also mine. I do not deny poverty and all its causes and shapes and how they affect people’s lives and self-perceptions. But once the befriending begins the tag/label of ‘the poor’ drops away and caring and sharing among friends in need become the driving force for lobbying to have roads fixed and water for all. The term ‘the poor’ now seems to me so cold and distant.” *Diane Jagdeo, OP ([Trinidad and Tobago] Building Bridges: Dominicans Doing Theology Together*, Dominican Publications, 2005).

“Silence can be due to discretion. It was one of the characteristics of the wise in the Old Testament. ‘Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord, keep watch over the
door of my lips.' (Ps 141:3.) Words are so powerful that one must not throw them around carelessly. But silence can also be the sign of death, silence of the tomb, the extinguishing of the word of life. ‘The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any that go down into silence.’ (Ps 115:17.) We believe in the resurrection in which God’s word broke the silence of the grave on Easter morning. And so we must dare to speak. How then are we to speak? What might be a spirituality of speaking and listening? It is the asceticism and delight of encountering those who think differently from ourselves, who feel differently, who inhabit different worlds. We each owe our existence to the encounter of difference.” Timothy Radcliffe, OP (What is the Point of Being a Christian? Continuum Books, 2006).

“The mission of Dominic is a mission of compassion. This Jubilee of the Order coincides with another important anniversary: forty years from the publication of the document Populorum Progressio (March 26, 1967). In the drafting of this encyclical our brother Louis Joseph Lebret (1897–1966) collaborated in a fundamental manner.” Re-read this text, wherein are the traces of a profound spirituality of compassion. (International Dominican Commission for Justice and Peace, January 30, 2007.)

“We cannot insist too much on the duty of giving foreigners a hospitable reception. It is a duty imposed by human solidarity and by Christian charity, and it is incumbent upon families and educational institutions in the host nations. Young people must be given a warm reception . . . that they may be shielded from feelings of loneliness, distress and despair . . . and may be guarded against the corrupting influence of their new surroundings, where the contrast between the dire poverty of their homeland and the lavish luxury of their present surroundings is, as it were, forced upon them.” (Populorum Progressio, 67.)

**FOR REFLECTION**

What makes the call to take an active role in *global mission* compelling?

How do the words of the *Gospel* compare with the words that drive *consumerism*?

**November is the month when the Church honors All Saints (November 1) and All Souls (November 2). Dominicans also set aside November 7 to honor All Saints of the Order—mentors, classmates, friends—teachers and preachers all, whose memory makes their living presence felt.**
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