Conversion begins in an experience of love. Learning to love allows the goodness within to see beyond difference and to embrace the goodness in others and in the world. Practicing Dominic's way of life consists in humbly learning to love and allowing that conversion, that change of heart, to change everything. Ultimately this power can lead to transformation. Opening ourselves to love is an invitation to follow a path into the mystery of an even greater love, shown in acts of compassion.

Transformation reveals itself in lives lived in harmony with self, with others, with nature, with God. It doesn't come easily, and is a reminder of the necessity to do the hard work of dialogue in the pursuit of truth. It also requires a commitment to a lifelong process of growing in understanding. This dialogue, together with collaboration and prayer, offers the promise of unity and the possibility of "renewal in the whole church."

I pray for all those you have given me

Eagle Nebula
Catherine of Siena, Prayers, 8
Conversion and transformation come about through the mystery of God’s Spirit touching hearts that are open to change. The effects, however, are felt far beyond. Though the experience is both personal and intimate, it cannot be limited because it is a gift of God, given for all.

“I will pour out my Spirit” (Acts 2). First appearing in the book of the prophet Joel, Christian tradition claims that this prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. The power of God’s Spirit gave life, gave hope, and gave energy to the followers of Jesus, and demonstrated to them the power to transform any situation. Just as Jesus’ disciples experienced a time of confusion, disillusionment, and sadness, so do followers today. When confronted by the power of God’s promise, human hearts open themselves to the many conversion moments made possible by this outpouring of grace.

God’s goodness not only made conversion possible, it provided the spiritual stamina required for facing the challenges that would go along with change. This has been especially true when it seemed as if God were absent and the way ahead offered choices that were unclear and confusing. Perhaps another necessary step in the process of conversion is being able to recognize the presence of God. Always.

Diversity offers opportunities for conversation and transformation. Nearly everywhere that humans share a common space, difference is apparent. There are unfamiliar languages. Dress and scents are different, comfort foods, spiritual practices, and economic status, to say nothing of more hues in skin tone that have been experienced by people in any previous age throughout human history. All of this confronts the boundaries that protect individual space, inviting all into a wider truth that can only be encountered with open hearts. In every age believers have been reminded of their need for the power of God’s Spirit if they are to engage with others and take up the preaching mission with radiance, freedom, courage, and truth.

The mystery of conversion is that what begins in one heart has the power to change the world. Being able to see and to experience life differently changes the way one lives and relates with others. Change that occurs slowly, or perhaps all of a sudden, may have come about because of a long history that preceded the insight, awareness, or new vision. That is the way of mystery. That is the way of conversion. That is the way of living the Gospel or practicing Dominic’s way. One has to pay attention to the moment, to all of the past that led up to it as well as to the future possibilities toward which it could lead.

Perhaps this is the way of transformation: Limits are overcome. Boundaries are crossed. Burdens are shared. Possibilities are imagined. Privilege is discarded. Newness is embraced. Compassion is abundant.

This is the way of the preacher. Dwelling in God’s Word does not distance the preacher from the people who long to hear a word of hope. The conversion that occurs and the transformation that is possible happens first in the heart of the preacher.

The Preaching Mission Continues

“Meister Eckhart wrote this: ‘People should not worry so much about what they should do; rather about what they should be. If we and our ways are good, then what we do will be radiant.’ This Word of God . . . is stretched open to find a space for all that we are; taking on our doubts and fears, entering into our experience of absurdity, that wilderness in which all meaning is lost. To be a preacher is not just to tell people about God. It is to bear within our lives that distance between the life of God and that which is furthest away, alienated, and hurt. We have a word of hope only if we glimpse from within the pain and despair of those to whom we preach. We have no word of compassion unless somehow we know their failures and temptations as our own. We have no word which offers meaning to people’s lives, unless we have been touched by their doubts, and glimpsed the abyss.” Timothy Radcliffe, OP (The Promise of Life, To Praise, To Bless, To Preach: Words of Grace and Truth, Dominican Publications, 2004, p. 414).

“Living side by side with people of different religions in a multi-religious society somehow makes one breathe a natural religiosity and kindles a thirst for God, at times expressed in ways other than mine but, nevertheless, indicative of the search for something, for Someone who can satisfy the deepest aspirations of the human heart.” Anny Palliampikunnel, OP ([India] Building
"Slowly, over time, something has happened to me in the process of venturing into languages and cultures and religions other than my own. The world has become larger and smaller at the same time. I have learned to see the world with a whole new set of eyes, and today my ears hear music that was once inaudible." Brian Pierce, OP (We Walk the Path Together: Learning from Thich Nhat Hanh and Meister Eckhart, Orbis Books, 2005).

"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.)

"Certain concepts have somehow insinuated themselves into the fabric of human society. These present profit as the chief spur to economic progress, free competition as the guiding norm of economics, and private ownership of the means of production as an absolute right, having no limits nor concomitant social obligations. Populorum Progressio, 26 "We must make haste. Too many people are suffering. While some make progress, others stand still or move backwards; and the gap between them is widening." (Populorum Progressio, 29.)

APRIL 5 IS THE FEAST OF ST. VINCENT FERRAR (1347–1419) WHO IS REMEMBERED FOR HIS GIFT OF PREACHING WITH CONSISTENT COURAGE IN A TIME OF SCHISM, SIN, AND UNREST. VINCENT'S PASSIONATE DEDICATION TO TRUTH GAVE HIM SUCCESS IN BREAKING THROUGH HARDENED HEARTS, CONVERTING BOTH CATHOLICS WHO HAD ABANDONED THEIR FAITH AS WELL AS THOSE FROM OTHER TRADITIONS.

FOR REFLECTION

How has diversity and difference called you to respond in new ways?

When has conversion led to some transformation in your life?