

Minutes from the 2008 Lay Provincial Council of the Southern Dominican Laity

The 2008 Lay Provincial Council was held at the Dominican Conference Center in New Orleans, LA from February 28 through March 2, 2008. Thirty-five people officially connected with the Dominican Laity took part in the meeting including both delegates and observers from the pro-chapters and chapters in the Southern lay Province. Fr. Marty Gleeson OP, Prior Provincial of the Southern Dominican Province, fr. Carl Trutter OP, and Sr. Ann Willits OP also visited with us.

The theme of the meeting was “Serving Jesus by Serving Others as Dominicans”. “Leadership is service” was emphasized throughout the sessions and open dialogue was encouraged. Morning and Evening Prayers were prayed in community with a member of the Dominican Laity providing a lay preaching after the Scripture reading. Lay preachers included Mr. J. Scott Farris OP, Mrs. Druscilla Chauffe OP, Mrs. Maureen Wright OP, and Dr. Lanie LeBlanc, OP. Mrs. Druscilla Chauffe, OP provided leadership in our songs.

Sr. Ann Willits, a Sinsinawa Dominican Sister, gave a spirited talk about “Dominican Spirituality in the 21st Century” followed by a question and answer session. Some of her main points for us as Dominican Laity included encouragement to:

1. Proclaim the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ in many different ways as we are called
2. Live the apostolic life of unity, indefatigable journeying, and voluntary poverty
3. Insert ourselves into the ministry and mission of the Church, and
4. Provide structures for ourselves by which we govern ourselves according to the Dominican tradition.

Sister Annie challenged us to “build bridges” among people and to ask ourselves repeatedly “Who is the God you preach?”

Our Provincial Promoter of the Dominican Laity, **fr. John Lydon OP**, gave a brief history of preaching including a doctrinal/dogmatic perspective, a focus on preaching about the human condition, and preaching based on Scripture. He emphasized Dominic as Preacher and many other historically noteworthy Dominican preachers as well. He also shared some of the methods and resources that he uses when preparing his homilies. fr. John celebrated Mass on Friday, the Mass of the Holy Spirit with us on Saturday evening prior to provincial elections, and also Mass on Sunday prior to our departure.

Mr. Bruce Trigo OP, Provincial Moderator, convened the opening session of the meeting on Thursday evening. Miss Cynthia Donnelly OP, Provincial Vice-Moderator, offered the opening prayer. There was ample time for **introductions and fellowship as well as the hard work** that marked our time together throughout the extended weekend. The initial ice-breaker activity plus the focus on the highlights of our reports brought lively conversation and revealed some **common needs**. Ideas were shared on obtaining committed members rather than just increasing our numbers, the call and variety of ways for laity to preach, and enlisting Dominican Spiritual Promoters for our chapters and pro-chapters.

Throughout our meeting, the voting members of the Lay Provincial Council, as the governing body of the Southern Dominican Laity in our Province, made some important decisions, assessed the priorities for 2005-2008 and then set new priorities for 2008-2010, and passed resolutions. These new **Decisions, Priorities, and Resolutions** will be included on our web site shortly and should command particular attention when reviewing the procedures and accomplishments of this meeting.

Several topics received considerable attention and discussion during this time. Miss Cynthia Donnelly, OP reviewed the history of policies, procedures, and resources on **the Formation Program** within the Province including the extensive work done by the Formation Committee in 2002-3. Dr. Lanie LeBlanc OP reported the results of the Formation Surveys that were submitted to the Executive Council in 2007. It was repeated that it was a mandate approved by the Lay Provincial Council of 2002 to teach the approved topics to Inquirers and Candidates, and not just a suggestion. It was agreed that not to take this aspect of Dominican Life seriously was an injustice to those who seek incorporation into the Dominican Family and that a solid Formation Program for Inquirers and Candidates must be provided in order to verify readiness for profession. A continued program of study should also be provided for all those who are professed..

It was decided that all of the chapters, pro-chapters, and beginning groups should send a **revised and completed copy of the Formation Survey** to the Executive Council through the new Lay Provincial Secretary no later than **July 1, 2008**. (Mrs. Theresa Alvarez OP was elected; her address follows.) A copy of the initial Formation Survey that was sent in as well as blank new forms were given to each chapter, pro-chapter, and beginning group represented at the meeting. These blank forms will be included with a copy of the minutes to those chapters, pro-chapters, and beginning groups who were not represented. A follow-up call by a member of the newly elected Executive Council will be made to those Moderators not in attendance.

Discussion continued about how to standardize the formation for Inquirers and Candidates in our Province within a reasonable length of time since having a solid program in place was of such importance. Discussion of the formation materials from the lay Eastern and Western Provinces included both advantages and disadvantages. A **Formation Committee** will be formed to review the revised materials from the Eastern Province for compatibility with the approved topics for Inquiry and Candidacy from our Province. A finished product for Inquiry is expected within 6 months and a finished product for Candidacy is expected within 9 months. These products will then be reviewed by the Executive Committee for a final decision and proposal for implementation throughout our lay Province.

There was also much discussion about ways to promote more effective **communication** within the lay Province. Each chapter, pro-chapter, and beginning group should have a governing council. The contact information for all of those local council members, including e-mail addresses whenever possible, must be on file with the Lay Provincial Secretary. It was decided that communication from the Executive Council should be sent to all of the local council members and not just to the Moderator as a way to promote interacting as a communication team. A form for that purpose will be available on the web site. The form should be sent immediately to: Mrs. Theresa Alvarez, OP, Lay Provincial Secretary

706 Dyer Street
Rockdale, TX 76567

Please update this information immediately when there are any changes or new elections occur.

Other matters of communication were also discussed. The new **Declarations of the Master of the Order**, which the Dominican Laity worldwide are bound to follow, will be added as an Appendix to our Directory . A **Directory Committee** will be formed to review the proposals and suggestions from the International Congress of Lay Fraternities. The committee will report their findings to the new Executive Committee.

It was decided that in early summer of each year, the printout of the **census information**

on file for each pro-chapter, chapter, and beginning group will be sent to the Moderator along with a reminder of the provincial dues that become due during the month of July. A reminder without the forms will be sent to the other local council members. This yearly census information should be returned, corrected and updated, with the **yearly dues** to the Provincial Treasurer. The recent Declarations of the Master reminded us that archives and records of contact information, stages of formation, and professions are to be kept at the Provincial level.

Ease of communication through various technologies was also discussed. An updated web page with password access to these census records was suggested. It was decided that mailing paper/hard copies of our newsletter was an exorbitant expense especially with increased postal rates and fees for returned copies due to inaccurate addresses. On-line copies of **Luminaria** will now be the standard way of receiving the newsletter. It may be printed directly from the web site and duplicated for those who do not have personal on-line access. A Moderator may request one free paper/hard copy of each issue. The question of forming regions was again brought to discussion. Communication with other members of the Dominican Family is also important. Dr. John Patrick Jordan OP gave a brief report on the workings of the International Dominican Foundation, highlighting the many activities of our brothers and sisters worldwide. A **Communications/ Media/Technology Committee** will be formed to investigate additional ways of facilitating communication throughout the Province and the Dominican Family through teleconferencing, networking, e-mail, and the updated web site.

Lay Preaching was a topic of discussion throughout the meetings. Several delegates shared their chapter's activities, both in common and individually, on this topic. Suggestions included a regional retreat with in-house lay preaching, lay preaching during the annual retreat, and contacting speakers throughout the year who can provide support, training in specific skills, and coaching for those called to preach to small groups. The discussion included several topics such as where one might preach, what appropriate topics might be addressed, and when opportunities might present themselves. Written preaching and preaching to groups seem less common for lay preachers than one-on-one preaching in particular circumstances. It was decided that the Executive Council will appoint a **Lay Promoter of Preaching** for the lay Province. The need for addressing the particular needs of a growing bilingual population, both Hispanics and the Vietnamese, in our Province was also discussed in terms of lay preaching, recruitment, and formation. A **Bilingual Committee** will be formed to address these concerns.

An important aspect of lay preaching as Dominicans is attention to the issues of **Peace, Justice, and the Care of Creation**. Our Provincial Promoter, Mr. J. Scott Farris OP, presented a document forming a **Lay Commission on Peace, Justice, and Care of Creation** for our Province comprised of a contact person from each of our chapters, pro-chapters, and beginning groups. Through each contact person, a three year plan will be presented to include specific training in the aspects of Catholic Social Teaching, independent research by each chapter, pro-chapter, and group to discern through the four pillars what God's call for action might be, and, finally, how to implement each local plan. Long range goals for the entire Province were also discussed. Various methods of technology will be used to facilitate this training as well as communication among contact people. Those who wish to be designated as the contact person for this initiative should contact Scott directly at jscottfarris@charter.net. The revised Charter for Peace, Justice, and Care of Creation will be available shortly on our web site.

The formulation and approval of a three year budget for 2008 - 2010 necessitated a

formal assessment of the 2005-2008 Priorities and the setting of new **Priorities for 2008 - 2010**. Many of the items listed as former priorities were already addressed in previous conversations and decisions as described above. Additional comments were made to remember our elderly members as prayer members and to continue visitations throughout the Province. Attention to our own spiritual renewal, both as individuals and as members of a chapter, pro-chapter, or beginning group, was reaffirmed. The new **Priorities for 2008 - 2010** will be available shortly on our web site.

The budget for the past three years was reviewed and a **new budget for next three years** was proposed by Treasurer Mr. William Malloy OP. The impact of Hurricane Katrina on our Province was substantial, individually to many members and jointly to all of us. Katrina prevented many of our activities from occurring, thus saving substantial expenditure of funds. In addition, new proposals especially those concerning communication via electronic means necessitated the revision of what was proposed. Considerable discussion was conducted about the need for local and provincial fund raising efforts to supplement the funds acquired from yearly dues. The importance of each chapter and pro-chapter being responsible for sending yearly dues in a timely manner was stressed. **Fund raising** by local groups was encouraged as a way to collect provincial dues; several groups shared their efforts at such fund raising by conducting a raffle of donated items and by group apostolates such as selling decoupage plaques, tamales, and Dominican bookmarks, profession plaques, and keychains. A **Financial Development Committee** will be formed to investigate fund raising initiatives, obtaining 501 c status under the Province of Friars, and other measures to improve our own sustainability. The approved revised budget for 2008 - 2010 will be sent to Moderators.

The observance of the Four Pillars of Dominican Life during our time together provided a solid basis for the nominations, discussions, deliberations, and elections of officers for the **2008 - 2010 Provincial Executive Council**. As mentioned, this important event was preceded by the Mass of the Holy Spirit. The Counting Committee included Kevin Hanlon, Kevin Sanderson, and John Patrick Jordan. The results of elections are as follows.

Nominations for Provincial Moderator included Bruce Trigo and Cynthia Donnelly. Cynthia Donnelly asked that her nomination be recinded. **Bruce Trigo was elected as Provincial Moderator** by acclamation.

Nominations for Vice-Moderator included Scott Farris, Cynthia Donnelly, Jim Brown, John Patrick Jordan, Lanie LeBlanc, Jimmy Davis, and Theresa Alvarez. Cynthia Donnelly, Jim Brown, and John Patrick Jordan asked that their nominations be recinded. The persons who nominated Cynthia and Jim agreed, but John Patrick Jordan's name was left in nomination. **J. Scott Farris was elected as Provincial Vice -Moderator** on the 4th ballot.

Nominations for Provincial Secretary included JoAnn Cotterman, Cindy Martinez, Theresa Alvarez, Druscilla Chauffe, and Donna Woods. Dru Chauffe asked that her nomination be recinded.. **Theresa Alvarez was elected as Provincial Secretary** on the 4th ballot.

Nominations for Provincial Treasurer included William Malloy. **William Malloy was elected Provincial Treasurer** by acclamation.

The officers were installed on Sunday morning as part of the concluding Mass. All present also affirmed their commitment to bring the work of the 2008 Lay Provincial Council to their local chapters, pro-chapters, and beginning groups. Miss Cynthia Donnelly OP, former Provincial Vice-Moderator is returning to graduate studies; Dr. Lanie LeBlanc OP, former

Provincial Secretary, will be moving to Seattle, Washington with her family. Both were given books in appreciation for their leadership and service. All those who worked before and during the council meeting and liturgies were thanked for their service. The meeting was concluded and hugs were shared by all before departing.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Lanie LeBlanc OP
outgoing Lay Provincial Secretary

on behalf of and approved by the Executive Committee
March 19, 2008
Feast of St. Joseph