

The Rule of the Lay Fraternities of St Dominic

**The Newly Revised Rule for Dominican Laity
Approved by the
Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (1987)**

STATUTES OF FRATERNITIES OF LAY DOMINICANS

I. FUNDAMENTAL CONSTITUTION OF LAY DOMINICANS

Laity in the Church

1. Among the disciples of Christ, there are men and women who live in the world, participating actively through Baptism and Confirmation in the Royal, Priestly and Prophetic Mission of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and have as their vocation to shine forth the presence of Christ in the heart of humanity in such a way that through them "the divine message of salvation be known and accepted by all men" (Apost. Act. #4,3).

Dominican Laity

2. Some among them, moved by the Holy Spirit to live according to the spirit and charism of Saint Dominic, are incorporated into the Dominican Order through a special commitment in accordance with their own statutes.

3. These seculars form communities and constitute one Dominican Family with other groups of the Order (LCO. #141).

Specific Character of Dominican Laity

4. They are characterized by a particular spirituality and by dedication to the service of God and neighbor in the Church and, in as much as they are members of the Order participate in its apostolic mission through prayer, study and preaching in accordance with the state of the laity.

Apostolic Mission

5. Supported by fraternal communion and the example of St. Dominic, St. Catherine and others who have influenced us and continue to influence us in the life of the Order and of the Church, they give testimony to their faith, conscious of the church of their time and in this way they are of service to Truth.

6. Taking into account the principal objectives of the contemporary apostolate of the Church they are dedicated in a special way, with authentic mercy, to remedying the different forms of suffering, to the defense of freedom, to justice and peace.

7. Animated by the particular charism of the Order they know that their apostolic mission springs from the abundance of contemplation.

LIFE OF THE FRATERNITIES

Life of the Fraternities

8. They have to make an effort to live an authentic fraternal communion according to the spirit of the beatitudes which will always be manifested in acts of mercy and participation in good works among members of the fraternities, above all, with the poor and infirm and through prayer for the dead in such a way that "all be of one heart and one soul" (Act. #4,32).

9. The members of the fraternities collaborating with all their heart in the apostolate of the brothers and sisters of the Order will participate actively in the life of the Church being always available to cooperate with other apostolic groups.

10. To progress in the fulfillment of their inseparably contemplative and apostolic vocation, the laity of St. Dominic have recourse to the following sources:

- (a) listening to the Word of God and the reading of Scripture, especially the New Testament;
- (b) active participation in the celebration of the liturgy and in the daily Eucharist if possible;
- (c) have frequent recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation;
- (d) conversion of heart through the spirit and practice of evangelical penance;
- (e) liturgical prayer in union with all the Dominican Family, also private prayer, meditation and the rosary;
- (f) assiduous study of revealed truth and constant reflection, in the light of faith, on contemporary problems;
- (g) devotion to the Virgin Mary, in accordance with the tradition of the Order, like that of Our Father St. Dominic and of St. Catherine;
- (h) periodical meetings on spirituality.

Formation

11. Its object is to form adults in the Faith who are capable of receiving, celebrating and proclaiming the Word of God. With this end in view each province will establish a program:

- (a) for formation in stages for new members;
- (b) for permanent formation for those of its members, including those who find themselves isolated.

12. A Dominican must prepare himself or herself to preach the Word of God. This preaching is the exercise of the prophetic function of the baptized and strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation. In the present world the preaching of the Word of God implies especially the defense of human dignity. Promotion of the unity of Christians and dialogue with non-Christians and non-believers are part of the Dominican vocation.

13. The principal sources of Dominican formation are:

- the Word of God and theological reflection,
- liturgical prayer,
- the history and tradition of the Order,
- contemporary documents of the Church and of the Order,
- study of the signs of the times.

Profession or Commitment

14. In order to be incorporated into the Order, the laity must make profession or commitment, which consists of the formal promise to live according to the spirit of St. Dominic and in accordance with the way of life indicated in their own Statutes.

This profession or commitment can be temporal or perpetual.

It will be made through this formula or another that is substantially the same:

In honor of God all powerful, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Dominic, I (Full Name), before you prior/prioress (or president) of the fraternity, and of you (Name), representing the Master of the Order of Preachers, promise to live according to the Statutes of the Laity of Saint Dominic (for three years or for life).

III. STRUCTURE AND GOVERNMENT

15. The fraternity of the special source through which the commitment of each one is nourished and sustained in his/her vocation. The rhythm of meetings will vary according to the fraternities. Assiduous participation at these meetings gives testimony of the fidelity of each one.

16. The admission of new members will be in accordance with the guidelines established in the Directory where conditions and stages of admission are explained. The Lay person responsible for the Fraternity, after the decisive vote of the Council, proceeds with the religious promoter to receive the candidate in accordance with the way prescribed by the Directory.

17. After a time of experience and of testing determined by the Directory and with the vote of the Council of the fraternity, the person responsible will receive with the religious promoter the temporal or perpetual profession of the candidate.

Jurisdiction of the Order and Autonomy of the Fraternities

18. The fraternities are under the jurisdiction of the Order; nevertheless, they enjoy the special autonomy of seculars, governing themselves.

Universal Level of the Order

(a) The Master of the Order as successor of St. Dominic and the head of the Dominican Family, presides over all the fraternities throughout the world. It is his task to maintain intact the Dominican spirit, to establish practical rules according to the demands of the circumstances of time and place and to promote the spiritual good and apostolic zeal of members.

(b) The promoter general represents the Master of the Order in all fraternities and transmits to the Master of the Order and to the General Chapter the proposals that the fraternities themselves present.

Provincial Level

20. (a) The Prior Provincial presides over the fraternities within the territorial limits of the province and with the consent of the Ordinary of the place, he erects new fraternities.

(b) The Provincial Promoter, brother or sister, represents the Provincial Prior and is an ex officio member of the Provincial Council of the Laity. He/she is appointed by the

Provincial Chapter or by the Prior Provincial with his council, having listened to the Provincial Council of the Laity.

(c) A Provincial Council of Lay Dominicans is to be established within the territory of the Province, whose members are elected by the fraternities and who function according to the norms of their particular directory. This council will elect the Provincial President of the Laity.

Local Fraternity Level

21. (a) The local fraternity is governed by the president with his/her council; these are fully responsible for the government and administration of the fraternity.

(b) The council of the fraternity is elected in accordance with common law and for the determined time in the particular directory. The council will elect the president from among its members.

(c) The religious promoter (brother or sister) must give doctrinal and spiritual assistance. He/she is appointed by the Prior Promoter and the local council of the Laity.

National and International Council

22. (a) When there are different provinces in the territory of the same country a national council can be established, according to the norms established in the particular directory.

(b) In the same way an international council, if it is deemed useful, after consulting with the entire Dominican Laity, may be set up.

23. The councilors of the fraternities can send petitions and suggestions to the provincial chapter of the friars; the provincial and national councils of the Laity can present them to the General Chapter.

It is recommended that Lay representatives be invited to and welcomed at the above Chapters to deal with matters pertaining to them.

Statutes of the Fraternities

The Laws by which the Dominican Laity are governed are as follows:

(a) The fundamental Rule of the Laity (Fundamental Constitutions, norms of life and government of the fraternities).

(b) The general declaration of the Master of the Order and General Chapters.

(c) Special Directories