



Bulletin

December, 2008

DVI is a project of the Dominican Family which links persons and communities from different parts of the world in order to collaborate in the preaching mission

Open Your Eyes...

We offer a suggestion for your Advent reflection in preparation for Christmas, that is, to look specifically at your way of perceiving and observing. You might ask yourself: "Do I see well? How do I see people? And happenings?" The question emerges given the multiplicity of images that pass before our eyes on



television screens and other media, as well as in our immediate environment. The deeper question is whether we are truly seeing, or if we have a problem of certain blindness or apathy. It seems that we often close our eyes in

order to make some persons and situations invisible, especially those in difficult and distant contexts, or when they focus on people who are very poor and suffering. They can tend to become practically "invisible" before our eyes, which happens so often in relation to the African continent and peoples. What can we do about this? Vincent de Couesnongle, OP, ex master general of the Order challenges us: "**Courage to face the future consists first of all, in the capacity to see things in a new way.**"

How can we try to do that? Favio Ciardi tells us

it is a question of attitude, of wanting to enter into the world of the other, to try to be "in the skin of the other, walk in his shoes, see the world as the other sees it, ask the questions he formulates. The other – I always refer to each person, but also to countries and cultures – has to be welcomed and loved as he is and not in the way we want him to be... The encounter with the other is of such richness that it has the power to transmit or bring about something new." (1)

We have some outstanding examples of persons who paved a new way at the beginning of the sixteenth century in Hispaniola, today Dominican Republic and Haiti. The protagonists were friars of the **first community of the Order of Preachers in America**, with **Fr. Pedro de Cordoba** as guide and animator. They were all witnesses of incredibly cruel acts committed by the Spanish "conquistadores" and unscrupulous "encomenderos" (landholders) against the defenceless indigenous population.

Luisa Campos points out that Pedro de Cordoba was a "person of deep sensibilities and consciousness of mission, and began to perceive that "something was wrong"... and from his "first experience with the indigenous began to shape a methodology of evangelization which surprises us and is still current today (2). This methodology involves both a process of communal sensibilization, reflection and decision-making for action.

The fourth Sunday of Advent, 1511 was the date of the action proposed by the community. The friars chose **Antonio de Montesinos** to preach the homily which had been prepared and signed by all the community. Excerpts follow:

Open Your Eyes...

“Tell me by what right and by what justice you keep these Indians in such a cruel and horrible slavery? By what authority have you waged such a detestable war on these people who are in their own humble and peaceful land, where so many of them have been consumed by death and devastation never heard of before?



Why do you keep them so oppressed and wary without giving them food or curing their sicknesses caused by excessive workloads from which they die, or to say it better: by which you kill them in order to gain and acquire gold each day? ... These people, aren't they human beings? Don't they have rational souls? Aren't you obliged to love them as you love yourselves? Don't you feel this? How can you be in such a deep lethargic sleep? Know this for sure, that you are unable to save yourselves more than anyone who lacks or does not want to know the faith of Jesus Christ.” (3)

Brian Pierce reflects as follows: “Montesinos invited his contemporaries to **open their eyes and look at the world in a different way.**” The sermon impacted and shook up the audience including the young cleric, **Bartolome de las Casas**, who began to see the truth and feel ashamed of the contradictions and complicities in his own life. Thanks to the courage of the Dominicans, he recognized “*the darkness that lifted before my eyes*” and “*he always tried to see more clearly keeping the eyes of his heart open to the reality*”. (4)

Isn't this an outstanding message for us all and for our volunteers who are also missionaries in new contexts? The experience of **encounters between cultures** requires great sensitivity and excellent vision to be enabled to see and respond well. Our volunteers and communities are called, to try to see people and situations **as God sees them.** May you be able to see clearly as you walk your own Advent journey!

1. Ciardi, Fabio: “Bartolomé de las Casas: el Evangelio en el encuentro entre las culturas”
2. Campos, Luisa: *Pedro de Córdoba: Precursor de una comunidad defensora de la Vida*”.
3. Cita original tomada de “Obras de Fr. Bartolomé de las Casas, vol. II.
4. Pierce, OP, Fr. Brian: “Bartolomé de las Casas: Profeta contemplativo”.

VOLUNTEERS ON SITE

Jho Trocio from the Philippines, new volunteer in Indonesia, shares:



“During my send-off mass, Fr. Pedregosa, in his homily, told me to “fall in love with Indonesia”.... I am beginning to fall in love.... I am beginning to embrace the culture... We had our recollection/ reflection yesterday... and I have phrases in my heart: - empty yourself - be surprised - fall in love. I realized that indeed it is very important that I am open to learn and re-learn, and be ready to embrace and be embraced...I am letting the Lord's hand hold mine, for I know, He'd never let go...”



Marina Viracacha, from Colombia, is serving in Mexico.

1- What has impacted you most in your new mission?

I have had to face many things to mature personally, and adapt to a new lifestyle as volunteer living with a religious congregation. It has been interesting to share their customs, thoughts, schedules, regulations, food, forms of communication as well as to share and work with young girls with psycho-affective deficiencies and their challenging behaviour. Many have been abandoned or have suffered violence, physical and psychological abuse, and lack self esteem. They are very aggressive among themselves, lacking love, respect and human relationship; frequently they need professional help.



2. How are you participating in the mission project of the Sisters?

At present I am in Casa Hogar Don Bosco in the centre of San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico. The sisters receive girls having special affective needs. They try to integrate them into a home environment and support their formation and integral growth. My participation is to offer educational support for those girls between 7-12 years of age, who because of their difficult lives have not learned to read or write; I try to support their intellectual growth with other values.

... Marina Viracacha

3. What suggestions would you give to DVI candidates who are preparing to leave their countries?

I have learned on this mission that it is necessary to learn to listen well what you are being told, as communication is a key element in having a successful volunteer experience. Also it is so important to respect the new culture and to become a part of it, practice tolerance, learn to value and not to depend upon material things and ones independence.

NEW DVI CANDIDATE:

Lupita Guadalupe García, from

León, Guanajuato, México will soon be our first volunteer in Cuba. She is a psychologist, member of the International Dominican Youth Movement, and has



already been a volunteer with the Dominican Sisters of the Incarnate Word in her country. "A few weeks ago those of us on national coordination team of the International Dominican Youth Movement finished our time of service. I

had been in charge of the area of formation and I leave feeling happy and satisfied with this experience and all I learned while serving. I think I gave much, but received even more.

As I said before, the place (projected for DVI mission) as well as the details we spoke about in the project finds me filled with enthusiasm. So it is evident that I truly want to accept the proposal to go to Cuba.

The Dominican Sisters of the Incarnate Word are also happy as well as my family..."

Laura Esther Gómez, OP, the receiving community, sent a message to Lupita which says: "We open the doors of our home to you and we also open our heart to share with you all that you might be able to live with this dear Cuban people. You will love it, I am sure! Also we open to you the space in which we live, share and project our work with our people and neighbourhood."



In response to Sr. Laura:

"I was so pleased to receive your early message of welcome. This fills me with excitement and my expectations are being fulfilled through your words of welcome. Thanks so much for that."

NEW DVI COMMUNITIES

DVI is a small project of the Order, but it is also true that it is experiencing and exploring new receiving communities for DVI candidates in country where war, natural disasters or specific challenges are present. We think of Indonesia, East Timor and Cuba.

Sr. Rose Ann Schlitt, OP has visited many of our Dominican brothers and sisters in **Cuba**. She expressed our solidarity, especially in the aftermath of the devastation caused by the hurricanes. In a visit to the **Dominican Republic** she was able to visit **Fr. Enrique Sariego**, ex-codirector of DVI in El Seybo, where the Order preaches with the Dominican Family through Radio Seybo.



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Early in the New Year we will announce the theme for 2009

Reflections on Volunteer Experience

What do ex-volunteers Paul (Lawrence) Lew, Daniel Jeffries and Nick Crowe have in common?

They are ex-volunteers of DVI, who served at different times with the community of friars in Dagat-Dagatan, a poor area of Metro Manila in the Philippines. And all three have entered the English Province of the Dominican Order! After Fr. Edward Ruane, vicar of the Order and co-director of DVI, made a canonical visitation to the province, he returned to Rome with a glowing report. This sparked us to make renew our contact and ask them to respond to the following questions. We share their responses with you.

What images or thoughts come to mind most often when you think of your time as volunteer in the Philippines?

Nick Crowe



Looking back I am most struck by the kindness and generosity of the people that I lived and worked with during my time in Dagat-Dagatan. Filipinos are famous for their hospitality and it is certainly a well deserved reputation, particularly during fiestas! It was a real privilege to be welcomed into such a vibrant and loving community and I was greatly enriched by the experience.

Br Lawrence Lew, OP

Three years on from my time in Dagat-dagatan, I still think of my experience with fondness. A certain warmth fills my heart when I recall my time in the parish and school of San Lorenzo Ruiz, and this is the warmth not just of the people who taught me so much about humility, gratitude and love, but also the warmth of the climate! I recall also the vibrancy of the Philippines, the 'joie de vivre' (the joy of life) of the Filipinos and the frequent occasions for laughter and cheer even in the midst of much hardship and deprivation. This joy, founded on an unshakeable hope in God, taught me to trust Him more, with a humble child-like faith.



Daniel Jeffries



I think of the thousands of people who crowded into the church every Sunday to come and receive their Lord and saviour in the Eucharist and what an inspiration that was to me. I think of people who had so little materially but had so much hope and love for God and neighbour. I think of the heat and the noise and a culture that was so different, where every day brought something new to learn.

Did this missionary experience influence you in your Dominican vocation? How?

Nick Crowe

I benefitted enormously from experiencing the Dominican charism and Dominican spirituality expressed in a different cultural context. The broader perspective gained by living alongside friars from another Province gave me a much better understanding of the breadth of the Dominican vocation, yet despite the differences there was much that was familiar and I felt at home. I suppose ultimately it was this feeling of belonging even in unfamiliar circumstances that finally prompted me to complete my application to the Order.



Br Lawrence Lew, OP

Yes. I was made to feel a part of the Dominican family and participated in the life of the Province of the Philippines. Through the many opportunities in the Philippines to meet Dominicans from every branch of the OP family, I grew in appreciation and love for the Order, inspired by their compassion and quest for Truth. And so, I felt called to give my life to God in this way and sought to be counted among St Dominic's sons and daughters.

Daniel Jeffries

Yes I often am inspired by my time a Dominican Volunteer to think "outside the box", so to speak and think differently about how a particular situation might be approached. Experiencing Dominican Life in another part of the world

Reflections on Volunteer Experience

helps me as English Dominican to be open to other possibilities and to understand the international side of the Order better.

Please share learning in heart and mind that you value.

Nick Crowe

One day I was sitting in the street talking with a lady that was very poor. After a while she pointed to her children who were playing amongst the rubbish and said 'Look, because we are poor, we understand what is most important.' She went on to explain that she had a strong family, a strong community, and a strong faith and because of this she knew that she was loved and had great joy despite her material poverty. I often ponder these words. They very neatly sum up everything I learned during my year with DVI.

Br Lawrence Lew, OP

In Manila, although I was teaching in a parish school, I often struggled to communicate because I was unable to communicate well in Tagalog. This has led me to think of the incarnate Word who was silent among us for so many years, and I began to marvel at the humble obedience of Christ, who made himself vulnerable and himself learnt from Mary and Joseph and others to live as a human person. I pray to be given the grace to follow in his footsteps. By his grace may I learn to be a preacher who speaks only after a period of silent reflection, who is open to learn from others whoever they may be, so that I may be more truly a Dominican brother who hands on the fruit of genuine contemplation.

Daniel Jeffries

I learnt to be a lot more patient in a culture where people aren't in a rush and I learnt that people who have nothing can be happy when they have the love of God, of family and friends.



“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth... and from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.” (Jn 1, 14, 16)

HAPPY CHRISTMAS