

The Salamanca Process as an Embodiment of Dominican Charism Today

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Abstract: In his letter to the Master of the Dominican Order on the occasion of the 800th *Dies Natalis* of Saint Dominic, Pope Francis praised the School of Salamanca as being “perhaps the finest expression” of the “unity of truth and charity” that he adverted to as the founding inspiration and formative charism of the Order. This article investigates the experience of the School of Salamanca, how its core dynamic termed as the “Salamanca Process” embodies the charism of the Dominican Order, and the ongoing attempt to recover it as a model for the life and mission of Dominicans today as expressed in official documents of the Order, especially in recent General Chapters.

Keywords: Dominican Order, Dominican Charism, Salamanca School, Salamanca Process

In his letter to the Master of the Dominican Order on the occasion of the 800th *Dies Natalis* of Saint Dominic in 2021, Pope Francis praised the Dominican School of Salamanca as being “perhaps the finest expression” of the “unity of truth and charity” that he had adverted to earlier in the same document as the founding inspiration and formative charism of the Order of Preachers.¹ He lauded

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¹ Francis, “Letter to Br. Gerard Francisco Timoner, III, OP, Master General of the Order of Preachers, for the VIII Centenary of the Death of Saint Dominic of Caleruega,” 24 May 2021, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2021/documents/papa-francesco_20210524_lettera-centenario-sandomenico.html (accessed 8 June 2022).

in particular the work of Francisco de Vitoria (1483-1546) and the “heroic efforts” of Antonio de Montesinos (1475-1540), Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484-1566), and Domingo de Salazar (1512-1594) in defending the dignity and rights of indigenous peoples in various territories colonized by Spain in the 16th century.

The “Salamanca Process” has also been frequently mentioned in the recent General Chapters of the Order of Preachers, with the last General Chapter in Biên Hòa, Vietnam in 2019 again calling for its continued promotion and the *Relatio* of the Master to the coming 2022 General Chapter in Tultenango, Mexico referring to it twice. What is this School of Salamanca and how is the “Salamanca Process” an apt and living embodiment of Dominican charism, especially today?

The School of Salamanca and the Order of Preachers

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the term “School of Salamanca” refers in the broad sense to the intellectual movement that arose in Spain and Portugal around the 16th and 17th century, with its center located in the University of Salamanca in Western Spain.² In a similar vein, Duve defines it as “a center of knowledge production which was deeply entangled with other places,” describing it as “an important node in a huge web of places in which normative knowledge was produced.”³ According to him, the term “Salamanca School” was coined in the 19th century to refer to an “important moment in the history of European political and legal thought,” initially portrayed as “profoundly scientific, Dominican, and Spanish” until the 1970s when scholars began to relativize its prominence and contextualize it as part of a much broader intellectual current.⁴ In this wider sense, the term is not confined to Salamanca geographically, to the academe essentially, or to the Dominicans corporately.

This widening of perspective is important because the term Salamanca School can suggest the picture of an elite if not enclosed body of experts and their apprentices patronizingly sharing their knowledge, as has been suggested by the title of a book, *Salmantica docet*, which speaks of the “projection” of Salamanca to the New World.⁵ Here it is important to emphasize that the dynamics of the Salmantine

² Thomas Izbicki and Matthias Kaufmann, “School of Salamanca,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019) edited by Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/school-salamanca/>.

³ Thomas Duve, “The School of Salamanca: A Case of Global Knowledge Production” in *The School of Salamanca: A Case of Global Knowledge Production* edited by Thomas Duve, José Luis Egío and Christiane Birr (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2021), 3-4.

⁴ Duve, “The School of Salamanca: A Case of Global Knowledge Production,” 21-24.

⁵ Águeda María Rodríguez Cruz, *Salmantica Docet: la proyección de la Universidad de Salamanca en Hispanoamerica* (Salamanca, Universidad de Salamanca, 1977).

School was not a one-way affair. As González avers: “if Matías de Paz and Vitoria studied the conquest, it was because the Indian subjects and American realities in general had an impact on the thinking and teaching of some of the most important masters in the Peninsula.”⁶ This, according to O’Meara, would generate “an exchange in theory and practice,” thanks to the continued correspondence and personal visits between the scholars and the missionaries, in “a conversation lasting for fifty years.”⁷ Hence, the opposite is also true: *Salmantica discit*.

In addition, Cobo notes, as the ideas from Salamanca spread through its networks, it was “not a straight-forward transfer” but “rather an engagement with and development of certain lines of thought to suit local circumstances.”⁸ In line with this, Camacho suggests understanding Salamanca as a “communicative practice” not concentrated on a specific center but involving the circulation of ideas across the globe by means of books and especially of people.⁹

Meanwhile, in the narrower sense of the word, the School of Salamanca specifically refers to the two or three generations of students, Dominican and otherwise, that were mentored by Francisco de Vitoria who is recognized as the Father of the School, both in the broad and narrow sense.¹⁰ Aside from those already mentioned above, other prominent names associated with the Salamanca School include Domingo de Soto (1494-1560) and Melchor Cano (1509–1560), as well as non-Dominicans such as the Jesuits Luis de Molina (1535-1600) and Francisco Suárez (1548-1617). A very important thread that runs throughout their discourse, not always acknowledged in secular analyses of the Salamanca School, is their emphasis on justice and ethical behavior so that all their discussion, whether touching on politics, economics or law always had a moral bent and pastoral intention.¹¹

⁶ Enrique González González, “Salamanca in the New World: University Regulation or Social Imperatives?” in *The School of Salamanca: A Case of Global Knowledge Production* edited by Thomas Duve, José Luis Egío and Christiane Birr (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2021), 79.

⁷ Thomas O’Meara, OP. “The Dominican School of Salamanca and the Spanish Conquest of America: Some Bibliographical Notes” In *The Thomist* 56 (1992): 563.

⁸ Natalie Cobo, “Creating Authority and Promoting Normative Behaviour: Confession, Restitution, and Moral Theology in the Synod of Manila (1582– 1586)” in *The School of Salamanca: A Case of Global Knowledge Production* edited by Thomas Duve, José Luis Egío and Christiane Birr (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2021), 210-244.

⁹ Marya Camacho, “Mirando las cosas de cerca’: Indigenous Marriage in the Philippines in the Light of Law and Legal Opinions (17th– 18th Centuries)” in *The School of Salamanca: A Case of Global Knowledge Production* edited by Thomas Duve, José Luis Egío and Christiane Birr (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2021), 289.

¹⁰ Izbicki and Kaufmann, “School of Salamanca.”

¹¹ L’École de Salamanque: Les racines catholiques du libéralisme, *Contrepoints*, 10 November 2010 <https://www.contrepoints.org/2010/11/16/7287-1%E2%80%99ecole-de-salamanque>.

In this paper, however, we will focus in particular on the Dominican aspect of the Salamanca School and the Salamanca Process as understood within the Order of Preachers. Although decidedly Dominican in scope, we would at the same time adopt an ampler notion of the Salamanca School, going beyond the confines of the academe to its extension in the apostolate, which not only benefited but also contributed in turn to its development.

The University of Salamanca, founded in 1218, is the oldest in the Iberian Peninsula. Consistent with the desire of Saint Dominic to have friars in the University cities, the Dominicans established a presence in Salamanca soon after his death in 1221. After their original church and convent of San Juan el Blanco outside the city was swept by flooding in 1256, they were given the church and convent of San Esteban inside the city which became the site of the *studium generale* of the Order for the Dominicans in Spain in 1299. Since then, the Dominicans have been active in the University, and when a theology program was established in the fourteenth century, two of the four chairs were given to Dominicans. Both the University and Convent of San Esteban would attain their highest prestige in the sixteenth century with the rise of Francisco de Vitoria and the famous School of Salamanca.¹²

In 1486, Columbus spent some time in the Dominican convent while preparing for his famous voyage. The Prior, Diego de Deza, had been his important advocate to the Spanish Court. In 1508, then Master of the Order, Cajetan, mandated the Province of Castilla to send fifteen friars to the newfound lands. The first four friars from Salamanca led by Pedro de Cordoba arrived there in 1510 and within less than a year, we have the famous sermon preached by Montesinos in 1511. Thus, the vital connection was established between the School of Salamanca and the New World and with their continuous correspondence came the cross-fertilization of the theoretical reflection of the scholars in Salamanca and the work of the missionaries in the field.¹³

Among its notable contributions, Allemann points to the important role played by the Salamanca School in providing a theological basis for the establishment of the Spanish empire, while at the same time challenging the legitimacy of the Spanish claim especially in light of abuses of human rights. Such was their teaching and its impact that on 10 November 1539, Emperor Charles V wrote the Prior of San

¹² Saint Stephen's Priory - Salamanca Dominicans, "History," Saint Stephen's Priory - Salamanca Dominicans Website, <http://www.saintstephenspriory.com/history> (accessed 8 June 2022).

¹³ Philippe Denis, OP, "Human Rights in the History of the Dominican Order" in *Dominicans and Human Rights: Past, Present and Future* edited by Mike Deeb, OP and Celestina Veloso Freitas, OP (Hindmarsh, SA: ATF Theology, 2017), 8-12.

Esteban, mandating the Dominicans to cease preaching, discussing and publishing on the matter without his express permission.¹⁴

Melquiades enumerates five characteristics that generally distinguished the tradition and approach of the School: “(1) the elimination of useless, antique or linguistic issues; (2) a continuity with the past, not only with Aquinas and previous Salamancan friars but with Scripture and the Fathers; (3) an attention to contemporary moral and pastoral issues; (4) a literary clarity and balanced judgment; (5) an interest in methodology but also a search for truth in ideas which reflect realities—in short, a practical realism but one opposed to a positivism of logic and authorities”¹⁵

According to Duve, it was the School’s “mode of reasoning” and its manner of resolving cases that those who had studied in it would apply wherever they go, shaping the administration of justice in many places.¹⁶ He even goes on to say that “it might be, in no small way, these rules of practice, the ‘practices of practice,’ and, more concretely, the conviction that one had to look at the circumstances of each case and find a just solution for this specific case, that made up the School.”¹⁷ Indeed, the number and the mobility of its alumni which included not only priests and bishops but also lawyers and politicians would extend its influence and create a vast network as they brought “the School” and its way of proceeding wherever they went. At the same time, insights and lessons would also find their way back to Europe by way of the same network.¹⁸ It is this dynamic synergy between the academe and mission that has come to be known in the Order of Preachers as the “Salamanca Process.”

“Salamanca Process”

The dynamic synergy between the scholars in Salamanca and the missionaries in Hispaniola has not always been accorded prominence in the consciousness of the Order. For instance, Hinesbuch’s *The Dominicans: A Short History* published in 1965 mentions in its chapter dealing with the 16th century both the contributions of the Thomistic center in Salamanca and the work of the missionaries in the West Indies.

¹⁴ Allemann, Daniel. “Empire and the Right to Preach the Gospel in the School of Salamanca, 1535-1560” in *The Historical Journal* 62 (2019): 35-37.

¹⁵ Agustin Martin Melquiades as quoted in O’Meara, Thomas. “The Dominican School of Salamanca and the Spanish Conquest of America: Some Bibliographical Notes” in *The Thomist* 56 (1992): 555-582.

¹⁶ Duve, “The School of Salamanca: A Case of Global Knowledge Production,” 4.

¹⁷ Duve, “The School of Salamanca: A Case of Global Knowledge Production,” 34.

¹⁸ Bert Roest, “Early Mendicant Mission in the New World: Discourses, Experiments, Realities,” *Franciscan Studies* 71 (2013): 214-215.

Noticeably, however, it does not make an explicit connection between them, with the exception perhaps of the passing remark that Vitoria's *Relecciones de Indis* is a "more scholarly treatment" of the problems encountered in the missions relative to de las Casas' *Historia de las Indias*.¹⁹ Nonetheless, such an awareness was certainly far from being non-existent, as we see in this paragraph from Martinez in the 1980s:

A good lesson to be learned from the Dominican tradition is the ability of the Order to establish a dialogue with any kind of culture, Christian or not, classical or new, with a profound sense of openness and spiritual freedom. A good example of that is Saint Thomas who was always open to the "quaestiones disputatae" of his time, and always ready to dialogue with different philosophical and cultural traditions. His example remains a challenge for us today. But *perhaps the best example* of a true collaboration between missionaries and theologians was the theology which flourished in Salamanca in the sixteenth century, when Vitoria and his brethren paid special attention to the questions raised by missionaries of the New World. [...] The old glories mean new and renewed commitment today.²⁰

In recent times, more and more attention would be given to it, especially through the efforts of successive Masters of the Order.

In 2010, during the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Dominicans in Hispaniola, then Master of the Order, Fr. Carlos Aspiroz Costa, together with the General Promoter for Justice and Peace and the Order's Permanent Delegate at the United Nations, recalled the fertile exchange that occurred between the friars in the missions and their confreres in the University of Salamanca in the sixteenth century. This they termed as the "Salamanca Process" and put forth to the Order as "a model to imitate."²¹

Originally conceived as "an interactive dialogue between the academy and reality and between reality, religious sciences and all the humanities," its aim was to arrive at an "incarnation of theology in reality" and build networks of common action. As proposed, the actual "process" was to begin by identifying a major Dominican university in each continent as a center which those in charge of promoting the process in the Order will visit to discuss it with the members of the Dominican family in the area and witness their academic and social realities. "The aim of the *process* is

¹⁹ William Hinnesbuch, OP, *The Dominicans: A Short History* (NY: Alba House, 1975), 118.

²⁰ Felicísimo Martínez, OP, "The Mission of the Dominican Order Today," *Philippiniana Sacra*, Vol. 23, No. 67 (1988), 50.

²¹ Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP, "The Salamanca Process: Preaching God's Reign of Justice and Peace" *Towards the Intelligent Use of Liberty: Dominican Approaches in Education* 2nd edition edited by Gabrielle Kelly OP and Kevin Saunders, OP (Hindmarsh, SA: ATF Press, 2014), 177-178. Emphasis added.

to listen to what they do, how they do it, and what difficulties they face, and to notice their accomplishments and best practices.” This they had begun to do in 2012 in the Philippines, Colombia, and Ivory Coast.²²

Even prior to 2010, as recounted by Fr. Azpiroz Costa in his 2007 *Relatio*, this synergy has also been highlighted by his predecessors, namely, Fathers Vincent de Couesnongle, Damian Byrne and Timothy Radcliffe, who lauded the “fecundity of dialogue between the Dominican Friars of ‘La Española’ dedicated to preaching in an eminently pastoral field and the friar theologians of Salamanca who received the concerns of the former as a real incentive for their study and reflection.”²³ For instance, Fr. Radcliffe, in his *Letter to our brothers and sisters in initial formation* issued in 1999, noted how “Bartolomeo de Las Casas worked with his brethren in Salamanca for the rights of the Indians,” highlighting it as one of the examples of Dominican collaboration in mission.²⁴ Fr. Byrne, on the other hand, in his *Letter on the Role of Study in the Order* in 1991 went as far as to call it “the finest example of collaboration between missionaries and teachers.”²⁵

Once more in his 2010 *Relatio*, Fr. Azpiroz Costa, then at the end of his term, again praised “the fertile relationship between the missionaries in Hispaniola and the professors of Salamanca,” putting it forth as “a model to be imitated.”²⁶ Moreover, aside from offering the Salamanca model as an exemplar, he also presented it as a continuing challenge to Dominicans of every epoch to remain responsive to the challenges of their time, saying: “This community continues to serve as a model for us in integrating all of the elements of our life and mission.... Do the most urgent *quaestiones disputatae* of each and every era remain ours?”²⁷

The Acts of the 2013 General Chapter in Trogir described the *Salamanca Process* as being “of particular importance” among the projects developed in the Order since 2010²⁸ and called for the development of concrete proposals at the local

²² Linera, “The Salamanca Process: Preaching God’s Reign of Justice and Peace,” 182-184.

²³ *Relatio de Statu Ordinis*, ACG Bogota 2007 no. 74.

²⁴ Timothy Radcliffe, OP, *Letter to Our Brothers and Sisters in Initial Formation*, 13 February 1999, Dominican Website, https://www.op.org/docs/874/bro-timothy-radcliffe-op-1992-2001-5_letters-of-masters-of-the-order-home-doc-en-5fbf8ea66d4ae/1x318H4S4T_mhTFhhtQALyOuZA3hnT2hh/Letter%20to%20our%20brothers%20and%20sisters%20in%20initial%20formation (accessed 8 June 2022).

²⁵ Damian Byrne, OP, *The Role of Study in the Order*, 25 May 1991, Dominican Website, https://www.op.org/docs/872/bro-damian-byrne-op-1983-1992-5_letters-of-masters-of-the-order-home-doc-en-5fbf8ea66d4ae/1GkPkg97jJqWloVGDlj-vNjtFGS2hVzyK/The%20Role%20of%20Study%20in%20the%20Order (accessed 8 June 2022).

²⁶ *Relatio MO* 2010, no. 40.

²⁷ *Relatio MO* 2010, no. 34.

²⁸ ACG Trogir 2013, no. 112.

level.²⁹ Rev. Fr. Pablo Carlos Sicouly, OP, now head of the international working group tasked to develop and promote the Salamanca Process, notes that this is the first time that the term “Salamanca Process” appears in the official documents of the Order. He adds that “[i]t is interesting to note that the term initially used by Br. Bruno in his report was “Salamanca *Project*,” while in the Acts of the General Chapter, after the discussion at the commissions and at the plenary, already appears the term ‘Salamanca *Process*’.”³⁰

We also notice here an important development and expansion in its meaning, for as the term began to evolve, “Salamanca Process” at this point has come to refer not only to the relatively recent specific “process” proposed in 2010 and initiated in 2012, but to the more original process that transpired in the 16th century between the Dominican scholars in Salamanca and their missionary confreres in the New World. The Trogir Chapter formally defines it as: “a sustained *process* of collaboration between friars engaged in pastoral ministry and friars dedicated to academic study, as occurred in the 16th century between the missionaries in the New World and the friars in the Convent of Saint Stephen in Salamanca.”³¹ With this understanding, it is actually more accurately descriptive if not also more just based on this definition to call it the “Salamanca-New World Process” as has already been suggested during one of the conferences on the topic held in Manila in 2020.³² At present, however, the term that appears in the documents, as we shall see, is simply “Salamanca Process.”

The appeal for initiatives and efforts in line with the Salamanca Process would be reiterated by Fr. Cadore in the 2016 *Relatio*, where he notes that “While it answers to the concerns of many people and corresponds to the realities with which the preaching of the Order is confronted, it is slow to get off the ground.”³³ In line with this, he invited the 2016 General Chapter to “specify a development plan for it and indicate the criteria and the time frame by which it is to be assessed.”³⁴ He also praised the synergy between theology and pastoral ministry as an important way of putting “the tradition of the Order at the service of a renewed evangelization.”³⁵ In response, the Acts of the General Chapter encouraged “provinces and vice provinces

²⁹ See ACG Trogir 2013, nos. 113-114.

³⁰ Pablo Carlos Sicouly, OP, *The “Salamanca Process”: Origins, Meaning and Implementation of a Recent Dominican Theological-Pastoral Category*. *Philippiniana Sacra*, Vol. 58, No. 175 (2023), 5.

³¹ ACG Trogir 2013, no. 112. Emphasis added.

³² This suggestion was made by Rev. Fr. Pablo T. Tiong, O.P., Vice-Rector for Religious Affairs of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila as quoted in Sicouly, *The “Salamanca Process,”* 17 (Footnote 43).

³³ *Relatio MO* 2016, no. 39.

³⁴ *Relatio MO* 2016, no. 39.

³⁵ *Relatio MO* 2016, no. 105.

to continue the development of the Salamanca Process, as the Chapter of Trogir requested.”³⁶

Meanwhile, the Order of Preachers celebrated the 800th Year of its Foundation with a Jubilee Year that was opened on 7 November 2015 and concluded on 21 January 2017. As part of the celebration, an International Congress on “Dominicans in the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights: Past, Present and Future” was held in the historic Convent of San Esteban Protomártir in Salamanca, Spain, on September 1 to 5, 2016, which was attended by around 200 delegates from all over the world.³⁷ The 2016 Congress was itself an embodiment of the “Salamanca Process,” bringing together the leaders of Dominican intellectual institutions together with brothers, sisters and lay Dominicans who are at the forefront of the promotion and defense of human rights. In its final statement, the Congress committed to “adopt and promote the Salamanca Process which calls on Dominicans, our educational institutions, and ministerial programs to direct our study, research, analysis, and action towards addressing the challenges our world faces, thus creating a passionate synergy between our intellectual and apostolic lives.”³⁸

The conferences during the Congress, together with its Final Statement, have been gathered in a book with its theme as title. In turn, the book offers its definition of the “Salamanca Process” as the “*intention of renewal* of our preaching that links intellectual life and mission” promoted by recent General Chapters.³⁹ One of the articles describes it as “[t]he *synergy* between the friars in immediate contact with the victims of human rights abuse, Montesinos, Cordoba, Las Casas or Bertran for example, and the Dominican theologians.”⁴⁰

Most recently, the 2019 General Chapter held in Biên Hòa, again called for the continued promotion of the Salamanca Process. In his letter of promulgation, the new Master of the Order, Fr. Gerard Francisco P. Timoner III, OP recalled the explicit intent of the Chapter “to continue and build upon these accomplishments by reflecting on and finding ways on how to fortify the *συνέργια* (synergy) of Dominican

³⁶ ACG Bologna 2016, no. 118.

³⁷ Including then were Vice-Rector for Religious Affairs of the University of Santo Tomas-Manila, Rev. Fr. Filemon I. De La Cruz, Jr. OP and its Director of Community Development, Assoc. Prof. Mark Anthony Abenir, DSD.

³⁸ See *Final Statement* of the Salamanca Congress on Human Rights 2016, <http://www.op.org/en/content/final-statement-salamanca-congress-human-right-2016> (accessed 12 December 2018). Emphasis added.

³⁹ Mike Deeb, OP and Celestina Veloso Freitas, OP, eds., *Dominicans and Human Rights: Past, Present and Future* (Hindmarsh, SA: ATF Theology, 2017), xxxi. Emphasis added.

⁴⁰ Denis, “Human Rights in the History of the Dominican Order,” 32. Emphasis added.

life and mission.”⁴¹ Indeed, the Acts of the Chapter has an entire section in its eighth chapter dedicated to the Salamanca Process wherein it exhorted

brothers in charge of universities, faculties and centres of studies in the Order to organize regular activities in line with the Salamanca Process that promote dialogue between academic work and the pastoral experience of brothers, especially of those working in places where the rights of individuals and of peoples and the integrity of the creation are not respected or are threatened. This dialogue should also be extended to bioethical issues, especially those related to the respect of life.⁴²

The General Chapter also called the community of friars from Salamanca who came to the New World led by Pedro de Cordoba and their preaching as “a singular example of what we call today the ‘Salamanca Process,’” further describing them – and the Salamanca Process which they embodied by way of extension – as “paradigmatic” of the life-mission synergy of Dominican life.⁴³ Moreover, the same Chapter recommended the appointment of a deputy director to the Order’s General Delegation to the UN in Geneva, with one of the main tasks of said deputy director being “to promote, on the basis of the synthesis of experiences, and relying in particular on the expertise of the lay Dominicans, the orientation given to research on the ‘Salamanca Process.’”⁴⁴

The 2019 General Chapter, in its various usages of the term “Salamanca Process,” also added various layers to its meaning. In addition to its reference to the life-mission synergy of Dominican life already mentioned above, it also identifies Salamanca Process as a “*methodology*”⁴⁵ that can be applied in the work of justice and peace. The Chapter also offered its own formal definition, referring to the Salamanca Process, as “*research* based on the experience of situations where the equal dignity and rights of persons and peoples are not respected or are endangered that ‘aims to place theology at the service of law and respect for human, individual and social dignity.’”⁴⁶ It further suggested that in line with the Salamanca Process would be the promotion of “*dialogue* between academic work and the pastoral experience of brothers, especially of those working in places where the rights of individuals and peoples and the integrity of the creation are not respected or are threatened.”⁴⁷

⁴¹ ACG Biên Hòa 2019, *Litterae Promulgationis*.

⁴² ACG Biên Hòa 2019, no. 316.

⁴³ ACG Biên Hòa 2019, no. 65.

⁴⁴ ACG Biên Hòa 2019, no. 318.

⁴⁵ ACG Biên Hòa 2019, no. 170. Emphasis added.

⁴⁶ ACG Biên Hòa 2019, no. 315. Emphasis added.

⁴⁷ ACG Biên Hòa 2019, no. 316. See also 131.

The Chapter also issued the challenge that what has been called Salamanca Process may “contribute to ensuring that the voice of the forgotten in the world may make understood the need to respect the human dignity of individuals and peoples.”⁴⁸ Most significantly, the General Chapter commissioned the Socius for the Intellectual Life and the Socius for the Apostolic Life, together with the Promoter for Justice and Peace to create a working group that would promote the Salamanca Process.⁴⁹ This working group has since been holding its regular meetings, even during the pandemic, and represents the sustained concern and effort of the Order to develop and advance the Salamanca Process.

The head of the group, Fr. Sicouly, acknowledges the challenge that comes with such a “rich category...both in terms of its understanding and its implementation,” sharing that “[i]n spite of the expressions of the last General Chapters, it is not infrequent that brothers and sisters, members of the Dominican Family, wonder about its precise meaning, and that sometimes different answers are given as to its understanding.”⁵⁰ Nevertheless, this moment represents a golden opportunity to explore and discover ways of understanding as well as implementing the dynamism of the Salamanca Process in our own context.

Most recently, the *Relatio* of the Master for the General Chapter held in Tultenango, Mexico on July 22 again mentions the “Salamanca Process” twice.⁵¹ Significantly, it now describes the “Salamanca Process” as a “forum” among the various fora of apostolic life (15). Secondly, it gave an update as to the appointment of the “Coordinator of the Academic Engagement Programme” of the UN Delegation as mandated by the previous General Chapter (46).⁵²

All these developments in recent decades reflect the great and pressing concern of the Order to pursue a deeper articulation and wider application of the Salamanca Process, which no less than the Pope has adverted to as being “perhaps the finest expression” of the “unity of truth and charity” which he identifies to be the founding inspiration and formative charism of the Dominican Order.⁵³

⁴⁸ ACG Biên Hòa 2019, no. 131.

⁴⁹ ACG Biên Hòa 2019, no. 317.

⁵⁰ Sicouly, *The “Salamanca Process,”* 4.

⁵¹ *Relatio* MO 2022, 15 and 46.

⁵² ACG Biên Hòa 2019, 317.

⁵³ Francis, “Letter to Br. Gerard Francisco Timoner, III, OP, Master General of the Order of Preachers, for the VIII Centenary of the Death of Saint Dominic of Caleruega.”

In Search of the Dominican Charism?

In its Decree on Religious Life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, the Second Vatican Council called for a *ressourcement* of each religious institute's founding charism, exhorting that "It redounds to the good of the Church that institutes have their own particular characteristics and work. Therefore let their founders' spirit and special aims they set before them as well as their sound traditions-all of which make up the patrimony of each institute-be faithfully held in honor."⁵⁴ Roche describes charism as a share in the founder's own spirit, which, according to him, is "the most important gift that a founder transmits to his followers."⁵⁵

Nevertheless, the Dominican charism is not as easy to identify compared to that of others. Added to this difficulty is the fact that there are various "spiritualities within the Dominican tradition" with its more than eight centuries of history, as well as overlaps with those of other orders and congregations.⁵⁶ Cox also mentions the adaptability of the Dominican charism, which enables it to take on various forms, remarking that: "[t]he charism of the Dominican Order, that elusive "something" which typifies, idealizes and unites Dominicans everywhere regardless of their accidental attributes, is so very adaptable that we are tempted to dub our charism "adaptability" itself."⁵⁷ Conversely, however, this very adaptability may also tend to make the Dominican calling "chimerical"⁵⁸ or amorphous. Woods even suggests that "ours is a spirituality *characteristically* without a method, or a technique, or a favored set of exercises."⁵⁹ Add to that the tendency, according to Martinez, that "[w]e, the Dominicans are by no means overly prone to study and proclaim our charism."⁶⁰

Meanwhile, Saint Dominic has been described as an "unusually retiring kind of founder" who "deliberately tried not to impose his own views too much on his associates and he did not leave his followers either a Rule of his own devising (as St. Francis did) or a corpus of writings to guide and inspire them."⁶¹ Instead, as the Pope

⁵⁴ Vatican II, *Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life (Perfectae caritatis)*, 28 October 1965, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html (accessed 8 June 2022), no. 2b.

⁵⁵ Simon Roche, OP, "Rediscovering our Dominican Charism for Today," *Philippiniana Sacra*, Vol. 23, No. 67 (1988), 72-73.

⁵⁶ Richard Woods, OP, *Mysticism and Prophecy: The Dominican Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 19.

⁵⁷ Thomas Marie Cox, OP, "Dominican Charism – Black and White Rose?" *Dominican Ashram* 5/1 (1986) 28.

⁵⁸ Cox, "Dominican Charism – Black and White Rose?," 28.

⁵⁹ Woods, *Mysticism and Prophecy: The Dominican Tradition*, 27. Emphasis added.

⁶⁰ Martinez, "The Mission of the Dominican Order Today," 31.

⁶¹ Simon Tugwell, OP, ed., *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, (NY: Paulist Press, 1982), 51.

directed, he simply chose an already approved Rule – that of Saint Augustine - and largely adopted the customs of the Premonstratensians. In fact, there are no extant texts, except for three brief letters, that can be attributed to Saint Dominic himself and used as basis for discerning what his charism was or what he intended the Order to become. The closest text to this effect that exists is perhaps the brief insertion to the 1216 Customary, which is the fruit of the 1220 General Chapter in which Saint Dominic himself took part:

For this reason, however, the prelate shall have power to dispense the brethren in his priory when it shall seem expedient to him, especially in those things that are seen to impede study, preaching or the good of souls, since it is known that our Order was especially founded from the beginning for preaching and the salvation of souls. Our study ought to tend principally, ardently and with the highest endeavor to the end that we might be useful to the souls of our neighbors.⁶²

Hinnesbuch describes this precious paragraph as the “keystone”⁶³ of the Order, which, albeit lamentably brief, encapsulates its “end, means and spirit.”⁶⁴ This pioneering link made by the Founder between study and service is enshrined in the *Book of Constitutions and Ordinations* that recalls how “Saint Dominic in founding the Order was truly innovative: he intimately linked study to the ministry of salvation.”⁶⁵ In another work, Hinnesbuch comments on this innovation: “for the first time in a thousand years of monastic history, a religious Order incorporated into its rule sections dealing with the academic life,” and by so doing “made study a sacred obligation for every Dominican.”⁶⁶

Martinez, meanwhile, adds an important qualification, saying that “study was not invented by Saint Dominic. It existed before Saint Dominic and before the birth of the Dominican Order. [...] The original or prophetic intuition of Saint Dominic was to make study an essential instrument for missionary activity. Dominican study has a basically apostolic meaning and purpose.”⁶⁷ Another way this has been put is in the words of the Angelic Doctor, which has become one of the mottos of the Order: “*contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere*”⁶⁸: to contemplate and share the fruits of

⁶² Primitive Constitutions, Prologue.

⁶³ William Hinnesbuch, OP, *The History of the Dominican Order, Vol. 1: Origins and Growth to 1500* (New York: Alba House, 1966), 84.

⁶⁴ Hinnesbuch, *The History of the Dominican Order, Vol. 1: Origins and Growth to 1500*, 83.

⁶⁵ *Book of Constitutions and Ordinations*, no. 76. See also ACG Providence 2001, no. 104.

⁶⁶ William Hinnesbuch, OP, *Dominican Spirituality* (Washington: Thomist Press, 1965), 105.

⁶⁷ Felicísimo Martínez, OP, “The Dominican Ideal of Truth and the Dialogue with Cultures and Ideologies,” *The Dominicans’ Mission Here and Now* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 1988), 68.

⁶⁸ S. Th., II-II, q. 188, art. 6. See also S. Th. I q. 1, art. 4 and II-II, q. 45, art. 3.

one's contemplation. Walgrave on the other hand describes the Order as composed of "apostolic communities with a contemplative base"⁶⁹ All this is consonant with the "unity of truth and charity" which the Pope describes as the founding charism of the Order and located in the Salamanca Process as "perhaps [its] finest expression."⁷⁰ He also acknowledges Dominican study as one of the Order's enduring contributions to the mission of the Universal Church:

By sending the first friars to the emerging universities in Europe, Dominic acknowledged the vital importance of providing future preachers with a sound and solid theological formation based on sacred Scripture, respectful of the questions posed by reason, and prepared to engage in disciplined and respectful dialogue in the service of God's revelation in Christ. The Order's intellectual apostolate, its numerous schools and institutes of higher learning, its cultivation of the sacred sciences and its presence in the world of culture have stimulated the encounter between faith and reason, nurtured the vitality of the Christian faith and advanced the Church's mission of drawing minds and hearts to Christ.⁷¹

An Unfortunate Divorce

Nevertheless, this dynamic link between study and ministry, contemplation and mission, which lies at the heart of the very origins of the Order has also been a frequent bone of contention between a so-called "monastic/intellectual tradition" and a so-called "missionary tradition" throughout its long history. As Martinez observes:

All of us know very well the two tendencies of the Dominican tradition: the one monastic and the other missionary. The problem is not that both tendencies have always been present in the history of the Order. The problem is that both of them could very seldom live together in harmony. [...] Our task is to reconcile both traditions, so that the old motto which inspired the best and most fruitful times of the history of the Order can become true once again today: "contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere."⁷²

Indeed, this dramatic tension has sometimes been carried to an extreme as to even oppose Saint Dominic and Saint Thomas Aquinas, with the latter and those

⁶⁹ Valentine Walgrave, OP, *Dominican Self-Appraisal in the Light of the Council* (Chicago, IL: Priory Press, 1968), 40.

⁷⁰ Francis, "Letter to Br. Gerard Francisco Timoner, III, OP, Master General of the Order of Preachers, for the VIII Centenary of the Death of Saint Dominic of Caleruega."

⁷¹ Francis, "Letter to Br. Gerard Francisco Timoner, III, OP, Master General of the Order of Preachers, for the VIII Centenary of the Death of Saint Dominic of Caleruega."

⁷² Felicísimo Martinez, OP, "The Mission of the Dominican Order Today," *Philippiniana Sacra*, Vol. 23, No. 67 (1988), 33.

who follow in his footsteps being accused of “a kind of treason or disloyalty to the first Dominican ideal.”⁷³ At times, this has even been blamed for the present lack of effectivity in preaching, as former Master, Fr. Byrne narrates:

Some years ago, the brethren in Latin America set up a commission composed of theologians and pastoral men to discover why we are not more effective in our preaching. They reached the conclusion that, as an Order, we were more in the tradition of St. Thomas than St. Dominic. While our tradition in following St. Thomas is very rich and very important, it makes us rather intellectual. [...] After the Chapter, I received a letter from one of the brethren and he said, “For the first time I realized the importance of falling under the spirit of St. Dominic rather than of St. Thomas.” Not indeed that he despised Thomas in any way but Dominic, with his compassion, is what we seem to have lost or played down.⁷⁴

Martinez emphatically calls this “unfortunate divorce between Doctors and Missionaries” as a “later sin in the Dominican tradition” and describes it as “ruinous both for study and ministry of preaching in the Order.”⁷⁵ Hindsley on the other hand says that for a Dominican to choose between being active or contemplative is a “thrust” at the heart of the Dominican vocation and tantamount to saying that it is impossible to live the legacy of Saint Dominic and the Order.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, we see Dominicans who are very scholarly but with scarce missionary engagements or impact as well as those who are very pastoral but with scant doctrinal content or engagement. Both extremes would constitute a treason to the Dominican charism, for as Martinez says, “Dominican spirituality is essentially a spirituality of evangelization.”⁷⁷

Indeed, even in the Universal Church, such a divorce makes itself apparent. For instance, Pope Francis himself has been described as “a pastor rather than a scholar”⁷⁸ and has sometimes been compared to his immediate predecessor, Benedict XVI, who is regarded as more of the latter.⁷⁹ Moreover, the present Pope appears

⁷³ Martinez, “The Mission of the Dominican Order Today,” 48.

⁷⁴ Damien Byrne, OP, “A Vision for Our Time” *Dominican Ashram* 4/1 (1985) 5.

⁷⁵ Martinez, “The Mission of the Dominican Order Today,” 49.

⁷⁶ Leonard P. Hindsley, OP. “The Necessary Elements: Towards a Definition of Dominican Spirituality” *Dominican Ashram* 4/3 (1985) 119-121.

⁷⁷ Felicísimo Martínez Díez, OP, “The Spirituality of Saint Dominic and the Dominican Mission” *Dominican Ashram* 13/4 (1994) 172-186.

⁷⁸ William Grimm, “Pope Francis is A Pastor rather than A Scholar,” *La Croix International*, 13 August 2019, <https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/pope-francis-is-a-pastor-rather-than-a-scholar/9477> (accessed 8 June 2022).

⁷⁹ Thomas Reese, “Pope Francis: ‘Facts are more important than ideas,’” *National Catholic Reporter*, 30 July 2015, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/pope-francis-facts-are-more-important-ideas> (accessed 8 June 2022). See also “The Legacy of Benedict” (Editorial), *The Tablet*, 2 March 2016, <https://thetablet.org/the-legacy-of-benedict/> (accessed 8 June 2022).

inclined to make such a distinction himself, as for instance in a 2014 homily where the Pope enjoined bishops and priests to be shepherds first and students later⁸⁰ and in a 2013 address to a gathering of nuncios where he told them to look for pastors to propose as bishops and consign the intellectuals to the university instead.⁸¹ At the same time, he also emphasizes the importance of study for ministry especially in his landmark apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*.⁸²

This needless dichotomy between study and service, very often accompanied by a patent anti-intellectual slur, can have very concrete implications with potentially deleterious effects in the life of the Church, if left unchecked. For instance, seminary formation can relegate studies in favor of the apostolate, forgetting that a learned ministry is actually a more effective ministry. In terms of actual ministry, the catechetical and doctrinal formation of the people of God may also tend to be neglected in favor of interventions that are considered to be more concrete and effective, to the neglect of our mission to evangelize.

Hence, it is in light of this fracture that a rediscovery today of the Salamanca Process as a synergy of study and service, contemplation and mission, can truly make its contribution not only to the Order but to the entire Church as well.

Towards a Synthesis of Study and Mission

Having to maintain the delicate balance between action and contemplation, Dominicans have at times tended towards a certain “dualism” between the two, yet as Hinesbuch contends, “the Dominican system is not inherently dualistic”:

Dominic fully understood that there would be friars with one or other inclination, to action or to contemplation. He employed the power of dispensation and other devices, such as the large priory, to direct both tendencies to the common purpose. A preacher who goes on a mission knows that other friars less suited or less talented for his type of work, or at present not so employed, will be in the priory preserving the contemplative atmosphere that makes his own work fructify. The lector dispensed from some monastic observances to facilitate his study has the same assurance. Those standing in choir engaged in the divine worship or busy elsewhere in

⁸⁰ Francis, *Homily*, 6 June 2014, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2014/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20140606_never-forget-first-love.html (accessed 8 June 2022).

⁸¹ Francis, *Address to Participants in the Papal Representatives' Days*, 21 June 2013, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco_20130621_rappresentanti-pontifici.html (accessed 8 June 2022).

⁸² See for instance paragraph nos. 145, 146, 152, 175.

the works of the common life, though denied the stimulus of the ministry, know that they are providing the spiritual energy that make preaching and teaching effective. That is why laybrothers are Friars Preachers with as much title as the preacher or the teacher.⁸³

Within this purview, all friars, and indeed the whole Dominican family can find their place within the synergy of contemplation-action that characterizes the Dominican charism. Every Dominican will find oneself somewhere within the spectrum as one seeks to balance the two poles in one's own life and mission. Particular individuals, communities or even Institutes may tend to gravitate towards one pole or the other, but such is not necessarily a problem, so long as there is no divorce, for these two aspects are not opposed but complementary. As McGonigle propounds, "The fulfillment of St. Dominic's vision of a community of contemplative preachers requires balancing so that both the active-preaching dimension and the contemplative-prayer-study dimension are held *in creative tension*."⁸⁴ Aumann similarly proposes that "the charism of the Order is a composite reality and an authentic description would seem to require a *balance*"⁸⁵ rather than emphasis on only one aspect or another. Moreover, in light of the Salmantine School experience, the specific propensity of individuals and communities to one pole or the other, can result in a kind of specialization which can actually be harnessed and synergized with other individuals and communities to form dynamic networks, not of conflict but of cooperation, which is what the "Salamanca Process" is all about.

In his treatment of Aquinas as a Dominican, Boland confronts the claim that Thomas was not a good Dominican and that "his influence and authority diverted the Order in a way that was not in keeping with St. Dominic's original intention."⁸⁶ He follows the thought of de Chenu, a French Dominican, who argued that Dominic and Thomas are "essentially complementary 'moments in a fresh impetus of the Holy Spirit in the Church,'" with Dominic representing "evangelical inspiration" that rightly precedes the "rational construction" represented by Thomas. In this way, he grounds the impassioned theological study of Aquinas in Dominic's own passion for

⁸³ Hinnestbuch, *The History of the Dominican Order, Vol. 1: Origins and Growth to 1500*, 126-127. In Hinnestbuch, contemplation refers to the monastic aspects of Dominican life, while study is considered part of the action dimension. Nonetheless, this statement stands even if study be considered part of the contemplative aspect.

⁸⁴ Thomas McGonigle, OP, "The Dominican Tradition" in *Behold the Heritage: Foundations of Education in the Dominican Tradition* edited by Matthew Mary Cummings, OP and Elizabeth Anne Allen, OP (Tacoma, WA: Angelico Press, 2012), 260. Emphasis added.

⁸⁵ Jordan Aumann, OP, "Dominican Life-style and Mission" *Dominican Ashram* 4/3 (1985) 171.

⁸⁶ Vivian Boland, OP, "Thomas Aquinas and The Practice of Theology," *Dominican Ashram* (1995): 60.

⁸⁷ Boland, "Thomas Aquinas and The Practice of Theology," 60.

preaching, affirming that “in all this, Thomas is continuing, in his way and with his gifts, the basic inspiration of Dominic.”⁸⁸ As such, excellence in study does not detract but even contributes to excellence in ministry and is at the same time nurtured by it. Or as Martinez beautifully puts it: “True Dominican study starts from the questions raised by apostolic activity, is carried on in a context of prayer and contemplation, and leads to a better apostolic activity...”⁸⁹

In fact, the Fundamental Constitutions describes the proper life of the Order as being established in the “synthesis” of its various elements which are “closely interconnected and carefully balanced, mutually enriching one another.”⁹⁰ Thus understood, study is inextricable from the Dominican mission. Vergauwen goes as far as to say that “studies themselves are an apostolate, an integral part of our mission. One might say that they form the contemplative and cognitive dimension of the mission.”⁹¹ According to the 2001 General Chapter in Providence: “Within the Order, study should not be considered in a pragmatic way, as if it were only an apprenticeship for a trade. Rather, study belongs to the contemplative dimension of our Dominican life, a vital part of its cognitive aspect.”⁹²

In this vein, it has to be stressed that the dynamism between study and preaching operative in the “Salamanca Process” can actually be traced, not only to Salamanca, but even to as far back as the foundation of the Order itself. As we saw above, we find it already in the brief insertion to the 1216 Customary, now enshrined in the *Primitive Constitutions*, which explicitly connects study with the endeavor for the salvation of souls, saying: “Our study ought to tend principally, ardently, and with the highest endeavor to the end that we might be useful to the souls of our neighbors.”⁹³ The *Book of Constitutions and Ordinations* also recalls how: “Saint Dominic in founding the Order was truly innovative: he intimately linked study to the ministry of salvation.”⁹⁴ The 2001 General Chapter in Providence even went on to say that “Our order is born from of love for truth and of this conviction that men and women are capable of knowing the truth.”⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Boland, “Thomas Aquinas and The Practice of Theology,” 60.

⁸⁹ Martinez, “The Mission of the Dominican Order Today,” 50.

⁹⁰ Fundamental Constitutions OP, Section IV.

⁹¹ Guido Vergauwen, OP, “The Charism of Study in the Education of Dominicans,” *Towards the Intelligent Use of Liberty: Dominican Approaches in Education* 2nd edition edited by Gabrielle Kelly OP and Kevin Saunders, OP (Hindmarsh, SA: ATF Press, 2014), 89.

⁹² ACG Providence 2001, no. 105.

⁹³ *Primitive Constitutions*, Prologue.

⁹⁴ *Book of Constitutions and Ordinations*, no. 76. See also ACG Providence 2001, no. 104.

⁹⁵ ACG Providence 2001, no. 107.

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing, we realize that the “Salamanca Process,” although a very recent category in terms of its formulation, may actually be foundational in terms of its substance for the Dominican Order. Thus, its elaboration today will not only be the development of a new initiative but an actual *ressourcement* in line with the desire of the Council, of the Order’s founding charism. As Linera remarks, “This type of interactive and scholarly reflection is not new to us Dominicans. It is our trademark since the time Dominic founded the Order in the thirteenth century.”⁹⁶

At the same time, we realize that the founding insight and inspiration of Saint Dominic continues to be true and relevant, especially in view of the “unfortunate divorce” between study and service that is palpable both within the Order and in the wider context of the Universal Church.

In this regard, the increasing attention and importance being given to the Salamanca Process in the Order is thus an opportune moment to revitalize the Dominican charism and to tap into the synergy of study and service that lies at the very heart of Dominican spirituality, in continuation not only of the precious example of the 16th century Dominicans in Salamanca and the New World, but of an enduring tradition that goes back to Saint Dominic himself. As Schillebeeckx says:

Dominican spirituality is a living reality which is to be realized among us now. Otherwise, we simply repeat stories which others have told for a long time, as though we ourselves did not have to write our own chapter in what is of course a story which had already begun before us.⁹⁷ **PS**



⁹⁶ Carlos Rodriguez Linera, OP, “The Salamanca Process: Preaching God’s Reign of Justice and Peace” *Towards the Intelligent Use of Liberty: Dominican Approaches in Education* 2nd edition edited by Gabrielle Kelly OP and Kevin Saunders, OP (Hindmarsh, SA: ATF Press, 2014), 178.

⁹⁷ Edward Schillebeeckx, “Dominican Spirituality,” *Dominican Spirituality* edited by Erik Borgman (London: Continuum, 2001), 95.

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