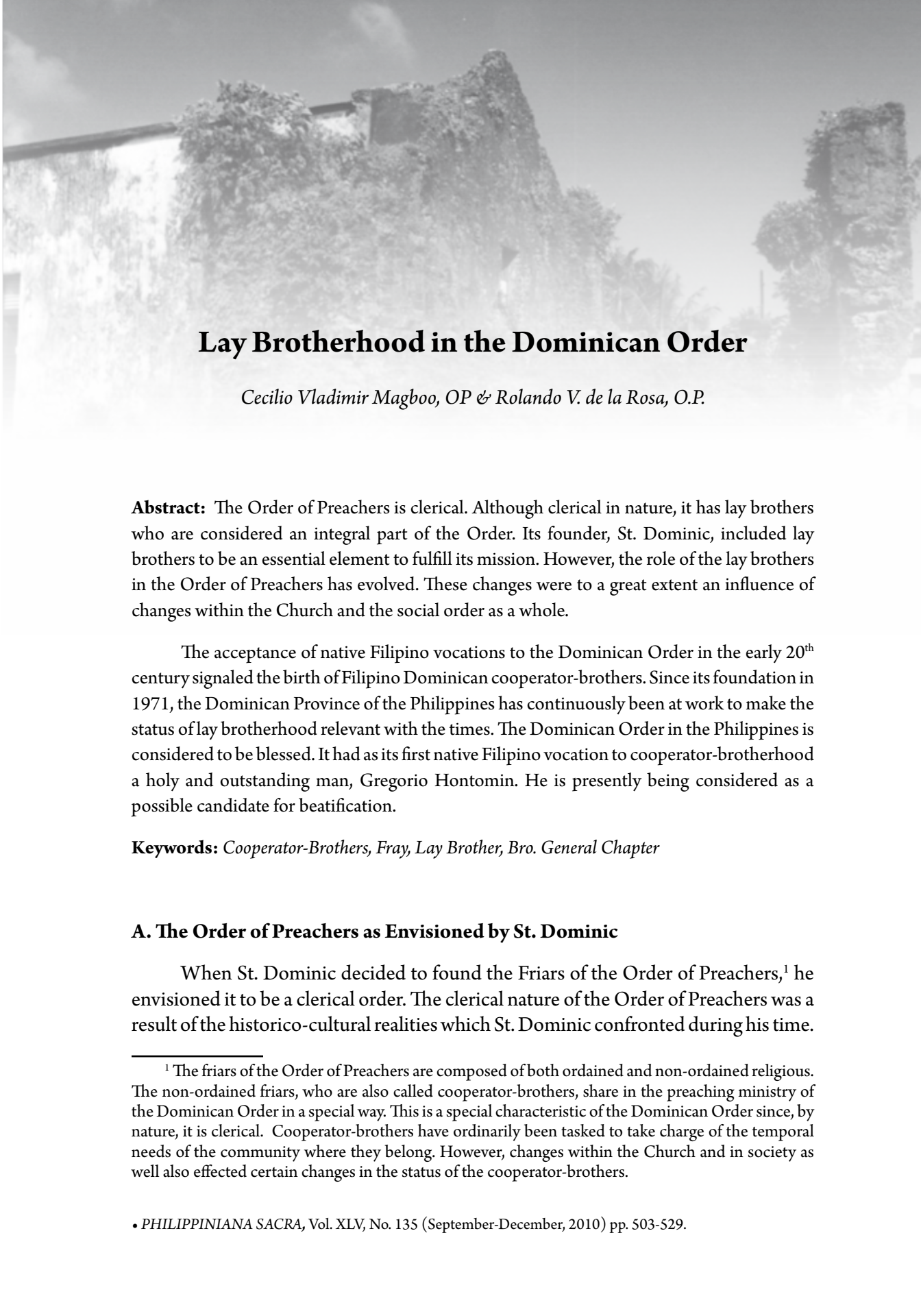




Lay Brotherhood in the Dominican Order

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Abstract: The Order of Preachers is clerical. Although clerical in nature, it has lay brothers who are considered an integral part of the Order. Its founder, St. Dominic, included lay brothers to be an essential element to fulfill its mission. However, the role of the lay brothers in the Order of Preachers has evolved. These changes were to a great extent an influence of changes within the Church and the social order as a whole.

The acceptance of native Filipino vocations to the Dominican Order in the early 20th century signaled the birth of Filipino Dominican cooperator-brothers. Since its foundation in 1971, the Dominican Province of the Philippines has continuously been at work to make the status of lay brotherhood relevant with the times. The Dominican Order in the Philippines is considered to be blessed. It had as its first native Filipino vocation to cooperator-brotherhood a holy and outstanding man, Gregorio Hontomin. He is presently being considered as a possible candidate for beatification.

Keywords: *Cooperator-Brothers, Fray, Lay Brother, Bro. General Chapter*

A. The Order of Preachers as Envisioned by St. Dominic

When St. Dominic decided to found the Friars of the Order of Preachers,¹ he envisioned it to be a clerical order. The clerical nature of the Order of Preachers was a result of the historico-cultural realities which St. Dominic confronted during his time.

¹ The friars of the Order of Preachers are composed of both ordained and non-ordained religious. The non-ordained friars, who are also called cooperator-brothers, share in the preaching ministry of the Dominican Order in a special way. This is a special characteristic of the Dominican Order since, by nature, it is clerical. Cooperator-brothers have ordinarily been tasked to take charge of the temporal needs of the community where they belong. However, changes within the Church and in society as well also effected certain changes in the status of the cooperator-brothers.

Realizing the needs of his time, St. Dominic designed his Order to meet the demand for a more effective sacerdotal ministry.² The clerical nature of the Dominican Order is clearly expressed in its Fundamental Constitution which says, “The Order’s nature as a religious society derives from its mission and its fraternal communion, since the ministry of the word and of the sacraments of faith is a priestly function, ours is a clerical Order.”³

By founding the Order of Preachers, St. Dominic responded to the need of the Church to have preachers and priests who will bring the message of salvation to the people in an efficacious manner. By bringing about an Order of itinerant, mendicant and well-educated clerics, St. Dominic was able to devise a solution to the crisis of the Church during his time. While he came up with something new, he retained a touch of the old by drawing from the experiences and lessons of the religious movements during his time, particularly the *vita apostolica* and poverty movements.

To appreciate the clerical nature of the Dominican Order and the spirit of its founder, it is important to note that the Order of Preachers was not the only great religious movement that was born that time. There was another great mendicant Order founded. Concurrent to the establishment of the Dominicans was the birth of the Franciscans or Order of Friars Minor, which was founded by St. Francis of Assisi. In contrast to the Dominicans, the Order of Friars Minors is not a clerical order. In the early years of the Franciscan Order, laymen stood in equal footing with the clerics and their members were recruited mostly from the laity.⁴ St. Francis himself never chose to be ordained priest.

To grasp further the clerical nature of the Order of Preachers, one could also look at the fact that St. Dominic and his friars adopted the Rule of St. Augustine which was being followed by the Canons. In drafting their first constitution, St. Dominic and his friars referred extensively to the constitutions of another clerical institution, the Praemonstratentians.⁵ Founded by Norbert of Xanten (1082-1134), the Praemonstratentians in those times was the largest and the most influential among the reformed canons.⁶ In fact the white tunic of the Dominican habit was the garb of the Canon Regular and for more than twenty years the Dominicans were officially

² William A. Hinnebusch, OP, *History of the Dominican Order, Vol.1, Origins and Growth to 1500* (New York: Alba House, 1965), 120.

³ Fundamental Constitution of the Brothers of the Order of Preachers # VI.

⁴ Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order, Vol.1*, 125 citing H. Felder, *Geschichte der wissenschaftlichen Studien in Franziskanerorden* (Freiburg i. B., 1904), 67-69; H. Holzapfel, *Manuale historiae ord. frat. Min.* (Freiburg i. B., 1909), 155.

⁵ See Simon Tugwell, OP, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (New York: Missionary Society of St. Paul, 1982), Appendix.

⁶ Franzen and Dolan, 192.

styled as ‘Canons.’⁷ Hinnebusch sums up the clerical roots of the Dominican Order in the following words:

The Order of Friars Preachers is at root, by papal confirmation and use of the Rule of St. Augustine, an Order of Canons Regular, its spirituality is priestly, theocentric and Christological. The solemn worship of the Church is fundamental element in the life of a Canon. By origin, the Canons were officially designated by the Church to continue without interruption her official prayer life, carrying out in the cathedrals and collegiate churches of the world the solemn acts of the liturgy – the solemn mass and the solemn chanting of the Divine office.⁸

B. Religious Movements during the Time of St. Dominic

Prior to the foundation of the Order in 1215,⁹ there were a number of movements in Europe that sought to reform the Church. These reform movements aimed to strengthen the Church from her weakening effectivity in ministry. This desire for reform was chiefly expressed in the ideal of *vita apostolica*, which means leading a simple life according to the example of Christ and the apostles.¹⁰ Some of the prominent reformers during those times were: St. Romwald (951-1027) who founded the Camaldolese Order; St. Bruno of Cologne (1030/1035-1101) who founded the Order of Carthusians in 1084; Abbot Robert of Molesme (d. 1111), founder of the reformed Benedictine monasticism commonly known as Cistercians; and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090/1091-1153) a Cistercian and is considered among the greatest spiritual reformers of his time.¹¹

The *vita apostolica* movements became greatly popular throughout Western Europe from the tenth to the twelfth centuries to the extent that they influenced the reform of the secular clergy. This reform among the secular clergy was concretized

⁷ The Order substituted *clericus* for *canonicus* about 1241. Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, Vol.1, 125, citing (*Acta capitulorum generalium ordinis Praedicatorum*, I, 36, 44, 49, 55; Raymond Creyten, “Les Constitutions des frères Prêcheurs dans la redaction de s. Raymond de Peñafort,” *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* (AFP), XVIII, (1948), 22 n. 52.

⁸ William A. Hinnebusch, OP, *Dominican Spirituality: Principles and Practice*, (n.p.: The Thomist Press, 1965), 7.

⁹ The first religious community of the Order was founded in April 1215 in Toulouse when Peter Seila and Thomas made their profession in the hands of Dominic. Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, Vol.1, 39.

¹⁰ August Franzen and John Dolan, ed., *A History of the Church*, translated by Peter Becker (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1965), 206.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 187-190.

in the establishment of a renewed way of life for the canons.¹² The said renewal was implemented through the Gregorian Reformation in 1059. Ordinary canons had always adopted the Rule of St. Augustine regarding common life or *vita communis*. Having been reformed these ordinary canons also adopted the *vita apostolica* and came to be known as Augustinian or Regular Canons. Having embraced the *vita apostolica*, the reformed or Regular Canons added to their rule “Apostolic poverty, celibacy, obedience to the spiritual leadership, hierarchical church consciousness, theological training and an irreproachable personal life.”¹³ When St. Dominic entered the cathedral of Osma¹⁴ and became a Canon, it was invigorated with the spirit of the Gregorian Reforms.¹⁵ This means that the Cathedral of Osma was already a community of Canon Regulars. It was in Osma where St. Dominic was ordained priest and became a sacristan of the chapter.¹⁶ At the age of twenty-eight, on January 13, 1201, he also became its sub-prior.¹⁷

The reforms that were undertaken by the Church were not enough. Related to the *vita apostolica* movements were the rise of the ‘poverty movements.’ On one hand the people saw the institutional Church as very affluent and on the other hand, “laymen wanted to learn about the life of Christ and the apostles directly from the scriptures and were literally starving for the word of God.”¹⁸ This situation provided fertile grounds for poverty movements to flourish, which in extreme cases led some to despise the Church. Those who despised the Church came to be known as heretics. Influential poverty movement leaders at that time were: Tanchelm (d. 1115), a Dutch reformer who vehemently attacked the mundane lifestyle of the clerics; Arnold of Brescia (d. 1155), who upheld a Church without property and fiercely attacked the papacy; Peter Waldes of Lyons¹⁹ (d. 1217), who led a life of Apostolic poverty

¹² An ecclesiastical title first applied to all clergy on the official staff of a diocese (excluding monks, private chaplains, etc.), and was gradually limited to those secular clergy belonging to the cathedral or collegiate church. They had a share in the revenues of the Church and were bound to a common life there, though in the early Middle Ages this was not very uniformly interpreted. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Canons” by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingston.

¹³ Franzen and Dolan, 192.

¹⁴ Dominic arrived in Burgo de Osma in the closing years of the twelfth century and during that time, it was a city of clerics – an Episcopal city entirely dominated by its imposing cathedral. The presence of the bishop, the chapter, the seminary, the schools, haunts the length and breadth of its streets. It was also chiefly inhabited by those who were at the service of the Church and tenants of church land. M.-H. Vicaire, OP, *Saint Dominic and His Times*, trans. Kathleen Pond, Darton (Great Britain: Longman and Todd, 1964), 31.

¹⁵ Ibid., 42.

¹⁶ Ibid., 45 citing, J. Loperraez, III, *Descripción de la historia del Obispado de Osma*, vol. 3 (Madrid 1787-88), 41; *Monumenta Ordinis Praedicatorum Historica (MOPH)*, vol. XV, *Historia Diplomatica S. Dominici*, by S.H. Laurent (Paris 1933); E. Martinez, *Collection diplomatique del real convento de S. Domingo de Caleruega* (Vergara, 1931), 13.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Franzen and Dolan, 192.

¹⁹ His followers called themselves *pauperes Christi*. They were also called Waldensians.

but was eventually excommunicated because he insisted that only persons living in apostolic poverty, like him, have the right to preach.²⁰ Moreover, being a layman, as the law required of lay people at that time, Peter of Lyons was not allowed to speak on matters of faith.²¹

The Catharists²² were considered the worst enemy of the Church at that time. The Church and the Catharists had an atrocious antagonism which led to horrifying bloodsheds. It became worse because the situation made the Church carry out the Inquisition. The Catharists were most numerous in the French town of Albi, thus the term Albigensians.²³ St. Dominic for the first time came face to face with the crisis caused by the Albigensian heresy on his journey with Bishop Diego of Osma.²⁴ St. Dominic saw the helplessness of the Church in converting the heretics because of the incapacity and lack of credibility of the clerics. The legates were either pompous or poorly prepared. Besides, they were small in number. On the other hand, the Albigensians were effective because they seemed to exemplify the evangelical poverty taught by Christ and his apostles.²⁵

C. The Beginnings of the Lay Brothers in the Dominican Order

While clerical in nature, lay brothers have always been integral to the Dominican Order. The integrality of the lay brothers in the Order is expressed in its Fundamental Constitution which says, "Being a clerical Order, the cooperator-brothers share in its mission in many ways by exercising the common priesthood in a manner specific to them."²⁶ This is the reason why the lay brothers are given the title 'preachers' as much as the priests are, for they are not simply an accessory to the Order. They are essential to the Order of Preachers. Lay brothers are a necessary element in the Order

²⁰ Ibid., 206-208.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Generally applied to sects during the medieval times whose main belief is based on a dualist philosophy that considers the flesh and material creation as evil. For the Catharists, redemption will only take place if the soul will be liberated from the flesh. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Catharists" by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingston.

²³ Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization, Vol. 4, The Age of Fatih; A History of Medieval Civilization – Christian, Islamic, and Judaic – from Constantine to Dante: A.D. 325-1300* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), 771.

²⁴ Bishop Diego of Osma was requested by King Alfonso VIII of Castille to arrange a marriage for his son Fernando to a noble girl from the Marches, a territory in Northern Germany which was probably subject to the Danish crown. Vicaire, *St. Dominic and His Times*, 47-49; Jordan of Saxony, *On the Beginnings of the Order of Preachers*, trans. and ed. Simon Tugwell, OP (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1982), 31.

²⁵ See also Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order, Vol.1*, 22-23; Vicaire, *St. Dominic and His Times*, Chapter IV.

²⁶ Fundamental Constitution VI.

for the accomplishment of its mission. The present Constitutions of the Order also say that in the spirit of the Order, preaching is a shared work and responsibility of the whole community, that is why in the tradition of the Order, a convent is called a 'holy preaching.'²⁷ This implies that lay brothers take on a special task in the preaching ministry of the Order. They are normally understood to be the ones providing the temporal needs of the community. The present Dominican constitutions also say that they could also perform their ministry either by "working with their brother priests or exercising their own talents in the apostolate."²⁸

1. Lay Brotherhood as an Established Tradition in the Dominican Order

Having lay brothers in the Dominican Order was not a subsequent innovation by the friars. Neither was it an outcome of the General Chapters held after the time of its foundation nor was simply a response to the changing needs of the time. The practice was started by St. Dominic himself. Lay brothers were already present in the Order from the very beginning. In 1217, when St. Dominic decided to send his brethren to preach for the first time, lay brothers were among those whom he sent. A lay brother called Oderic, a Norman, joined Mames, half-brother of Dominic, and Miguel of Spain, on the way to Paris.²⁹ In the beginning of 1218 a lay brother was also among those sent by Dominic from Rome to Bologna.³⁰ When St. Dominic left Paris for Bologna, he was accompanied by a lay brother named John together with William of Monferrat.³¹

A note on the presence of lay brothers in the Dominican Order: Having lay brothers as an integral part of a clerical Order for the purpose of accomplishing its mission was not a unique invention by St. Dominic. The practice of having lay brothers who would take care of the temporal needs of a religious community, particularly in undertaking manual labor, so that the other members of the community may be free for studies and perform priestly duties was a popular practice which began a century before the time of St. Dominic. They were popularly called *conversi*. *Conversi*, being considered lay members of a religious community were not bound to the recitation of the Divine Office.³² For instance, the presence of *conversi* in the Cistercian Order

²⁷ Book of Constitutions and Ordinations of the Friars of the Order of Preachers (LCO) 100 # I.

²⁸ Ibid., # II.

²⁹ Jordan of Saxony, *On the Beginnings*, 14.

³⁰ Dominic sent some friars from Rome to Bologna, namely brothers John of Navarre and Bertrand. Later, he sent Brother Christian too, together with a laybrother. Ibid.

³¹ Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, Vol.1, 64 citing A. Walz, ed., *MOPH*, vol. XVI, *Acta canonizationis sancti Dominici* (Rome: 1935), 134; B.M. Reichert, ed., *MOPH* vol. I *Vitae fratrum ordinis Praedicatorum*, ed. Gerard of Frachet (Rome: 1896), 72.

³² The institution which originated in the 11th century, developed as a result of the general literacy of the monks and their abandonment of manual labor, and of the increasing general custom of monks proceeding to the Holy Orders if admitted to the monastery in youth. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Lay Brothers" by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingston.

is testified by the *Exordium Parvum*, the first document of Cistercian history.³³ The Canons Regular and Praemonstratensians had lay brothers too. They belonged to their order in as real a sense as the fathers but their lives, apart from the time given to their prayers and devotions were consecrated to manual toil necessary for the temporal welfare of the monasteries.³⁴

2. Early Life and Practices of the Lay Brothers

Dominican lay brothers from the beginning were considered as full-fledged members of the Order of Preachers. Although they were neither expected to preach nor teach like the clerical friars, they have always been seen as sharers in the ministry of preaching of the Order in a special way. This is in view of the fact that for St. Dominic, preaching is a communitarian work and primarily a responsibility of the whole community and not of its members simply as individuals.³⁵ For these reasons, lay brothers were assigned tasks that were different from those of the clerics. They were not expected to study but had some manual skills. They were usually engaged in domestic or manual labor since they were expected to provide the temporal needs of the community.

Lay brothers saw to it that the priories were well kept and maintained. They served as sacristans, door-keepers, infirmarians, cooks, custodians of the wardrobe, tailors, cellarers, shoemakers and other domestic duties. Among their earliest duties was to accompany the clerical friars and carry on the quest for alms.³⁶ In the early years of the Order, a lay brother usually accompanied the 'limiter' (in Latin, *terminarius* or *limitator*) or the friar, a talented preacher, put in charge of all the pastoral activities of

³³ [They] began discussing by what planning, by what device, by what management they would be able to support themselves in this life, it was then that they enacted a definition to receive, with their bishop's permission, bearded laybrothers, and to treat them as themselves in life and death except that they may not become monks and also hired hands; for without the assistance of these they did not understand how they could fully observe the precepts of the Rule day and night; ... And since they had set up farmsteads for agricultural development in a number of different places, they decreed that the aforesaid laybrothers, and not monks, should be in charge of those dwellings, because, according to the Rule, monks should reside in their own cloister. "EXORDIUM PARVUM, Chapter IV". Retrieved July 12, 2007 from <http://users.skynet.be/scourmont/script/docprim/exorparv-chr-eng.htm>.

³⁴ Rev. V.F. O'Daniel, OP, *The Dominican Lay Brother* (Washington D.C.: The Lay Brothers Saint Dominic's Press, 1921), 20-21.

³⁵ In fact, in the early days not only the cooperator-brothers but many priests did not preach. What was important was not "What am I doing?" but "Is the Gospel being preached and am I contributing something to getting this job done?" Benedict M. Ashley, O.P. *The Dominicans* (Minneapolis: Liturgical Press, 1990), 20.

³⁶ Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, Vol. I, 289 citing P.F. Mulhern, *The Early Dominican Laybrother* (Washington, D.C., 1944), 67-68; J.M. Caccia, *Chronique du convent de Precheurs d'Orvieto*, ed. A.M. Viel – P.M. Girardin (Rome, 1907), 78, 80, 84; *Acta capitulorum generalium ordinis Praedicatorum (Acta)*, ed. B.M. Reichert, (Rome: 1898), 234; Thomas Käppeli - Antoine Dondaine, ed., *MOPH vol. XX, Acta capitulorum provincialium Romanae (1243-1344)*, (Rome: 1941), 27, 45, 68.

a district under the priory where he belongs.³⁷ The master general, aside from his *socii* (associates), usually had a lay brother with him whenever he travelled. In addition to taking care of the books, clothing and other needs of the master, the lay brother carried the seals of the Order and the master which he also affixed to the documents and letters.³⁸

By reason of the unique position that the lay brothers assumed in the Order, certain conditions were given for their admission and their formation. The primitive constitutions had nothing to say about their admission. What it says is that once a person is incorporated into the Order as a lay brother, he cannot transfer to the clerical state.³⁹ It was assumed though that before anyone could be admitted to the novitiate as a lay brother he should have already acquired skills in some art or trade.⁴⁰ This qualification was agreed upon by the Order from the beginning.⁴¹ It was however said that this was not insisted upon as an indispensable requisite for admission.⁴² While people from all walks of life entered the Order as lay brothers, it was observed that most of them have come from the artisan or laboring classes.⁴³

Whereas, it has been part of the charism of the Order to have lay brothers, the Order in its history had also been cautious in accepting too many lay brothers. For one reason or another, the Order had tried to keep a proper ratio between clerics and lay brothers.⁴⁴ For instance, in the 1233 General Chapter, the provincials were advised to use moderation in receiving lay brothers so that priories would not have too many of them which could cause idleness on the part of some brothers and therefore be bad for the community.⁴⁵ The Chapter of Provence in 1254 recommended that the Province cut down the number of its lay brothers while the Roman Province adopted a more effective measure in 1305 when it lifted the age requirement for lay brother candidates to twenty.⁴⁶ A legislation made by the Order in 1251, forbade the Provincial to receive a lay brother candidate

³⁷ Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, Vol.1, 270.

³⁸ Ibid., 204.

³⁹ "The Primitive Constitutions of the Order of Friars Preachers, xxxvii -- Rules for Our Lay Brothers". Retrieved July 9, 2007 from <http://domcentral.org/trad/domdocs/0011.htm>.

⁴⁰ O'Daniel, 35.

⁴¹ Humbert of Romans recommended that an untrained lay brother be put to work with an older brother who might teach him a craft. The master of lay brothers should see to it that the brother did acquire some ability to work with his hands. This recommendation was repeated by the general chapter of 1372. Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, Vol.1, 289 citing *Quellen ud Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland* vol. XL, *Registrum litteratum pro provincial Saxoniae, 1487-1551*, ed. G.M. Löhr (Cologne-Wiesbaden: 1952), 83 n. 310.

⁴² O'Daniel, 35-36.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, Vol.1, 288.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 204 citing B.M. Reichert ed., *Acta I*, (Rome: 1898), 3.

⁴⁶ Ibid. citing B.M. Reichert ed., *Acta I*, (Rome: 1898), 58; C. Douais, ed., *Acta capitulorum generalium ordinis fratrum Praedicatorum. Première Province de Provence, Province Romaine, Province d'Espagne* (Toulouse: 1894), 153.

without the consent of the priory where he was being received, and likewise a priory was forbidden to receive one without the consent of the Provincial.⁴⁷ In 1264, the admission became more rigorous when the Order enacted that two thirds of the house chapter must vote for the acceptance of a lay brother.⁴⁸ In the General Chapter of 1328, this requirement was also applied to the profession of lay brothers.⁴⁹ There was also a time when the age requirement for clerical postulants was lowered and the age requirement for lay brothers was retained at eighteen.⁵⁰ In addition, candidates for the lay brotherhood were required to be mature enough so they will be able to undertake manual labor.⁵¹ These stringent measures for the admission of lay brothers in the early years of the Order was expressed in a letter by Bro. Wigbert, to his sister, the German mystic, Christine Stombert saying, "If you knew with what great deliberation lay brothers were accepted for our Order, you would surely count it a miracle or a special blessing of God that your brother, a total stranger to us, was received with so little difficulty."⁵²

Arising from their status as non-ordained members of a clerical institution, the regular life of the Dominican lay brothers also had elements which differed from those of the clerical friars. Their prayers had been different from the clerics. It had been a practice until Vatican II that in place of the Divine Office in choir, the lay brothers recited their *Paters* and *Aves*, although they also had their mass and meditation, as well as instructions, pious reading and the Rosary.⁵³ The Primitive Constitutions mentions their prayer obligations as:

When they arise for Matins, they shall say the *Pater Noster* and *Credo*. They shall do the same before Prime and after Compline. During Matins, after they have said *Pater Noster* and *Credo*, they stand erect and say *Domine labia mea aperies, etc., Deus in adjutorium, etc., Gloria Patri, etc.* ... For Matins on non-feast days, they shall say 28 *Pater Nosters*; after which they shall say *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison, Pater Noster*, and ending with *Per Dominum, etc.* and *Benedicamus Domino, etc.* ... On feasts of nine lessons, they shall say *Pater Noster* 40 times, at the other hours, *Pater Noster* 7 times but 14 at Vespers. ... For Pretiosa they shall say *Pater Noster* 3 times ... For the blessing at meals, they shall say *Pater Noster* and *Gloria Patri*; after the meal, their thanksgiving shall begin with *Pater Noster* 3

⁴⁷ Ibid., 288-289 citing B.M. Reichert ed., *Acta I*, (Rome: 1898), 44, 49, 52.

⁴⁸ Ibid., citing B.M. Reichert ed., *Acta I*, (Rome: 1898), 116, 119, 122.

⁴⁹ Ibid., citing B.M. Reichert ed., *Acta II*, (Rome: 1898), 177, 145.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 288.

⁵² Ibid., 289 citing *Acta Sanctorum Junii*, vol. V, (Paris: 1867), 360 no. 43.

⁵³ O'Daniel, 39.

times and end with *Gloria Patri*, or they may say *Miserere mei Deus*, if they know it. As they do all this, they shall observe silence in the church and elsewhere. Lay brothers who have had psalters for at least two years may keep them, but henceforth, we do not wish the others to obtain them.⁵⁴

Regarding the habit, lay brothers, like clerics, wore a tunic but did not have the *cappa*. According to the Primitive Constitutions, they should wear a long, wide scapular, which unlike the tunic, should not be white. They were also permitted to have short grey scapulars of the same style as those worn by the clerics.⁵⁵ The small gray scapular was similar in cut to those of the clerics while the larger was bell-shaped, resembling the Gothic chasuble used by the priest at mass.⁵⁶ A law requiring the smaller scapular to be black was introduced in 1258.⁵⁷ After mid-thirteenth century, it was specified that it had to be black.⁵⁸ The following year, in the general chapter of 1259, the Order could not describe the gray of the scapular of the lay brothers any closer than to say it should be nearer black than white.⁵⁹ Finally, the 1505 Constitutions obliged the lay brothers to use a black scapular.⁶⁰ The Order used to have a difficulty holding the lay brothers to the use of the gray inner scapular. In addition to these garments, the lay brothers were provided with a rough outer scapular to wear when they did heavy work that would badly soil the ordinary habit. The custodian of the wardrobe supplied these coveralls to other friars when they did messy work in the kitchen or had their tonsures renewed.⁶¹ Concerning the tonsure, those of the lay brothers did not resemble the crown tonsure of the clerics but was a simple hairstyle that shaved only the nape of the neck.⁶²

Despite the different treatments the lay brothers received in the Order, they were still one and the same with the clerical friars in many ways. The Order recognized from the start that lay brothers took part in the ministry of preaching equally, though not in a similar way, with the clerics. Again in the Primitive Constitutions, it is said:

⁵⁴ The Primitive Constitutions, xxxvii.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order, Vol. I*, 341 citing B.M. Reichert ed., *Acta I*, (Rome: 1898), 87, 92, 95, 102, 105, II, 147; Raymond Creytens, ed., *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, vol. XIX, "Les convers de moniales dominicaines au moyen âge" (Rome, 1949), 27-28; P.F. Mulhern, *The Early Dominican Laybrother*, 53-56.

⁵⁷ Ibid., citing B.M. Reichert ed., *Acta I*, (Rome: 1898), 92.

⁵⁸ Ibid., citing B.M. Reichert ed., *Acta I*, (Rome: 1898), 76, 80, 84.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 342 citing B.M. Reichert ed., *Acta I*, (Rome: 1898), 98.

⁶⁰ Ibid., citing B.M. Reichert ed., *Acta I*, (Rome: 1898), 87, 88, 98, 226, 274, II, 18, 147, 360, 406, 415; QF, XXXXVII, 17; Thomas Käppeli - Antoine Dondaine, ed., *MOPH* vol. XX, *Acta capitulorum*, 21, 60, 263; F. Mulhern, *The Early Dominican Laybrother*, 54-55.

⁶¹ Ibid., 341 citing Humbert, *Opera*, II, 325.

⁶² Ibid. citing *AFP*, vol. XIX, 28-29.

Our lay brothers shall rise at the same time as our clerics, and make their inclinations in the same way. . . . They shall have the same clothes as the clerics except for the cappa, in place of which they shall wear a long, wide scapular, which unlike the tunic, shall not be white. They are permitted to have short grey scapulars of the same style as those worn by the clerics. . . . With regard to fasts, food, abstinence, faults and all other matters, they are bound by the same rules as the clerics. But the prelate may grant them dispensations in view of their work.⁶³

In many cases, lay brothers in the Dominican Order were seen to be more privileged than those in other clerical institutions. This was best expressed in the sermon concerning lay brothers by Humbert of Romans, the fifth Master of the Order. He articulated the lofty status that the lay brothers enjoyed in the Dominican Order.

Though the Lord gives a grace to everyone whom he calls to religious life, and an even greater grace to whom he calls who are not clerics, he seems to give the greatest grace of all to those whom he calls to be lay brothers in the Order of Friars Preachers. Elsewhere there are many lay brothers who receive very little spiritual teaching and that only rarely, but these lay brothers receive it more or less the whole time. There are many elsewhere who only rarely attend mass, but these can attend not only mass, but also the Divine Office, everyday. Also elsewhere, they only have Chapter occasionally and infrequent access to confessors; but here they have both as regularly as the clerics. Also elsewhere, there is considerable inequality between the lay brothers and the clerics in the way they are provided with the necessities of life; but here they receive exactly the same treatment with regard to food and clothing, medicine, beds, accommodation and all that kind of thing. Elsewhere the lay brothers are often not treated very respectfully, but here they are treated respectfully, and so for example, they do not have to go out alone, nor do they have their meals apart from the clerics and they are served by the clerics, just as they serve the clerics. Elsewhere they have to do all kinds of mean jobs, like looking after the farm animals, cleaning out stables and that kind of thing; but here they are only given decent jobs to do. Again elsewhere they are often ordered about like serfs, but here they serve freely as members of the family.⁶⁴

⁶³ The Primitive Constitutions, xxxvii.

⁶⁴ Simon Tugwell, OP, *Early Dominicans*, 326 quoting Humbert of Romans, Sermon XXXII, Laybrothers of the Order of Preachers, J.J. Berthier, B. Humberti de Romanis Opera de Vita Regulari (Rome, 1888; repr. Turin, 1956).

O'Daniel summarized the role of the lay brothers in the Order in the following words:

Labor itself is prayer when borne for God or souls, or because it is of obligation and is performed with the right spirit. ... This is precisely the case with the lay brethren in the Order of St. Dominic. They are never more pleasing to God than when they are laboring with a good will and a good heart so that their clerical brethren will reap a more fruitful harvest of souls. By such toil, moreover, they participate in the merits of the apostolic ministry itself. The greater their zest, the greater also will be their reward therefore.⁶⁵

D. Evolution of the Role of Lay Brothers in the Dominican Order

1. The Impetus Created by the Vatican Council II

The role of lay brothers today is much different compared to what they were in the early years of the Order. Whereas much has been preserved, much has also been changed. What makes these changes interesting is that they happened, from the point of view of the long history of the Order, just recently. Little has changed regarding the role of the lay brothers from the beginning of the Order in the thirteenth century until the late twentieth century. The changes legislated by the General Chapters beginning in the second half of the twentieth century were primarily driven by the changes within the Church particularly concerning religious life. These said changes within the Church happened during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

The Vatican Council II was the twenty-first ecumenical council and is considered to be one of the most important councils in the history of the Church. It instituted sweeping changes and the Church was never the same after Vatican II. The Church through Vatican II wanted to renew herself (*aggiornamento*) in order to respond more effectively to the needs of the people and accomplish her mission in the face of the new situation she found herself in. This new situation, which many would also call as 'modern world,' was largely a result of a terribly violent and destructive global crisis, the Second World War. It could therefore be said that this turning point in the history of the Church and the world was also a turning point in the history of religious life and consequently of the lay brothers in the Order.

Two Vatican II conciliar documents directly pertain to the renewal of religious life which affected the status of lay brothers in the Order. These documents are *Lumen Gentium* or Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and *Perfectae Caritatis* or Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life. The fifth chapter of *Lumen Gentium*

⁶⁵ O'Daniel, 39, 40-41.

expresses the universal call to holiness as it says that any Christian in any state or walk of life is called to the fullness of Christian life.⁶⁶ The sixth chapter of the same document explains in particular the role of the religious within the Church. Religious life, it explains, is a form of life by which some Christians both cleric and lay are called by God and enjoy a special grace so they may contribute to the saving mission of the Church.⁶⁷ It also makes clear that the religious life in reference to the hierarchical structure of the Church has its own place and is not a middle way between clerical and lay conditions of life.⁶⁸

The second document, *Perfectae Caritatis*, urges that, “The manner of life, of prayer and of work [of religious] should be in harmony with the present-day physical and psychological conditions of the members.”⁶⁹ *Perfectae Caritatis* urges furthermore that in order for religious communities to become more effective witnesses to the life of the early Church, they should strengthen their common fraternal life. With this, the decree says that lay brothers or cooperators should be associated more closely to the life and work of the community.⁷⁰

From the spirit of *Perfectae Caritatis* and chapters five and six of *Lumen Gentium* came post-conciliar documents on religious life, two of which directly affected the lay brothers. These documents are *Ecclesiae Sanctae* or Norms for Implementing The Up-To-Date Renewal of Religious life and *Renovationis Causam* or Instruction on the Renewal of Religious Life. A particular norm which *Ecclesiae Sanctae* mentions is concerning the prayers of the lay brothers. It recommends that instead of reciting the little office, lay or cooperator-brothers are to recite in full or in part the Divine Office in order to share more intimately in the liturgical life of the Church.⁷¹ This means that the celebration of the Divine Office will take on a more public and communitarian character and not just an obligation of the Order of Canons, monks, nuns and other Regulars.⁷² Another major step made by Vatican II was in terms of strengthening community life in religious institutes. *Ecclesia Sanctae* paved the way for a more contemporary and clearer expression of community life by instructing religious institutes to give the lay brothers or cooperators the right to vote and hold positions. To cite:

⁶⁶ *Lumen Gentium* 40 par 2.

⁶⁷ *Lumen Gentium* 43 par 5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*; Code of Canon Law # 588 §1 In itself, the state of consecrated life is neither clerical nor lay.

⁶⁹ *Perfectae Caritatis* 3.

⁷⁰ *Perfectae Caritatis* 15 par 2.

⁷¹ *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, 20.

⁷² The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, says that members of the said communities who are in the major Orders or who are solemnly professed, except for lay brothers, are bound to recite individually those canonical hours which they do not pray in choir. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 95 c.

General Chapters and synaxes must study the manner in which religious who are called lay brothers (and lay sisters), cooperators and any similar name, may gradually obtain a vote in specified community activities and in elections. They will thus become more directly involved in the life and activities of the community and the priests will have greater freedom to perform those ministries which are reserved to them.⁷³

Renovationis Causam, also proposes some changes regarding religious formation. One is concerning the novitiate of the lay brothers. *Renovationis Causam* decrees that novitiate made for one category is to be made valid for the other in institutes having different novitiates for different categories of religious.⁷⁴ This is in contrast to the earlier practice of a number of religious institutes, where lay brothers undergo their novitiate separate from the clerics.

2. Adjustment of the Order to the Needs of the Church and the Times

The Order through its General Chapters adopted the pursuit of Vatican II in renewing the role of the lay brothers. This adjustment primarily meant revitalizing human relations within the Order. This was in view of the fact that the desire of the Council to return to sources of the whole Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of religious institutes and to respond to the needs of the times meant revitalizing community life.⁷⁵ It was with regard to the status of the lay brothers in the Order that the revitalization of the community demanded the greatest change.⁷⁶ The Order tried to find ways toward a greater expression of fraternity between lay brothers and clerics.⁷⁷ Already seeing the need to embrace contemporary thinking, few years prior to Vatican II, the term 'lay' was replaced with 'cooperator' in the General Chapter of Caleruega in 1958.⁷⁸ This could be considered as the turning point in the changing

⁷³ *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, 27.

⁷⁴ *Renovationis Causam*, 27.

⁷⁵ See *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2, 15.

⁷⁶ Valentin Walgrave, OP, *Dominican Self-Appraisal in the Light of the Council* (Chicago: The Priory Press, 1968), 78.

⁷⁷ In various ways, the relationship between friars within the Order is influenced by: 1) the ecclesiology of Vatican II which highlights the fundamental equality of all the baptised; 2) the praxis of democracy adopted as the model of government by the majority of existing societies; 3) the task of incarnating our Dominican tradition today; 4) the re-evaluation of the Sacrament of Orders in relation to baptism; 5) sociological changes as between social classes; 6) a new vision of authority and its exercise; 7) the adoption of the vernacular in the liturgy. *Summary document Round-table at Santa Sabina 25-26 May 2006*, Commission: Clerical Nature In The Order Of Friars Preachers and The Role Of The Cooperator Brothers, 1.

⁷⁸ *Inchoamus et inchoantes ordinamus ut in toto textus Constitutionum Fratres non clerici non vocentur Conversi sed vocentur Cooperatores; ideoque haec mutatio intelligatur facta in quocumque loco Constitutionum, quoniam elenchus omnium transcribendus sit in his Actis. Acta Capituli Generalis 1958*, 81.

role of the lay brothers in the Order. Seven years after that, just right after the Vatican II was concluded, a General Chapter was held in Bogota. The said Chapter ratified that both the clerical and cooperator-brothers are to have the same habit as the clerics.⁷⁹ The General Chapter of River Forest in 1968 made another big step. Conforming to the proposal of *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, the lay brothers were given the right to vote i.e., to have active voice.⁸⁰ This was another major change because even in the early years of the Order, the lay brothers did not have voting privileges. Moreover, lay brothers who transferred to the rank of clerics⁸¹ were given voting privileges only once they become clerics and not from the time of their profession.⁸² The Chapter of 1369 for instance denied them voting rights until they had been five years in the clerical habit while the Chapter of 1388 added the requirement of Sacred Orders for voting.⁸³

The General Chapter in Quezon City in 1977 is considered the hallmark in the renewal of the role the lay brothers (technically called cooperator-brothers at that time). It dedicated one fifth of its work to cooperator-brothers.⁸⁴ This was clearly expressed by the Chapter in saying:

In the name of the whole Order, the present Chapter confesses that we have too often ignored the rich heritage of St. Dominic, that we have omitted to promote the specific vocation of the cooperator-brother and we have neglected his role in the apostolate of the entire community. We declare that one of the priorities of this Chapter is to repair this neglect; we also ask all the friars, clerics, and cooperators to revive the knowledge and esteem of this special vocation and to

⁷⁹ *Declaramus quod inchoatio cum ordinatione facta supra n. 198 relate ad n. 601 Const. ita ad praxim deducenda est ut sit Capituli Provincialis, aut Provincialis cum suo Consilio, tempus determinare quo Fratres cooperatores scapulare et caputium album induent; semper tamen intra triennium a promulgatione horum Actorum. Acta Capituli Generalis 1965, 242.*

⁸⁰ *normae circa regimen conventuum, praesertim de materia et de momento deliberationum capituli et consilii conventus (cf. n. 311 § II, 318, 6°), de munere officialium (nn. 317 § III, 320-330), de domibus filialibus (n. 335 § II), de quibusdam condicionibus pro voce activa (n. 440), de praesentia in convent pro electionibus (n. 458 § II), de observantia (cf. nn. 69, 38, 48, 49 § III, 53 § I, 336, 306, 358 § III, 1°); Acta Capituli Generalis 1968, 101.*

⁸¹ Although the early Constitutions forbade lay brothers to transfer to the rank of clerics, Raymond of Peñafort revised this ruling. Transfer was allowed with approval of the Master General. Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order, Vol. I*, 290 citing *Acta I*, 32, 217, 222.

The Obervant Dominicans of Spain were more strict by forbidding lay brothers to become clerics even if they are members of the nobility. Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order, Vol. I*, 290 citing Camillus Jasinski, *Summarium ordinationum capitulorum generalium ordinis Praedicatorum*, (Cracow, 1638; Brescia, 1654), 35.

⁸² Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order, Vol. I*, 290 citing *Acta*, I, 322 (1303), II, 411, III, 36.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Benoit Berthelot, "Evolution of the Status of Cooperator Brother in the Order of Preachers," *Religious Life Review* 44, July-August (2005): 231.

work together in rediscovering its value for the life of the community and for the salvation of the human race.⁸⁵

The Order also found the reforms being pushed by the Council providential. Through the Quezon City General Chapter, the Order was able to rediscover the role of the lay brothers according to the original spirit of St. Dominic i.e., to be totally committed to the preaching of the Gospel by word and work as shown by the fact of their religious profession.⁸⁶ The Chapter also articulated:

When the cooperator-brothers are not fully present and active in the apostolate of the Order or are not encouraged to have full participation in our life and ministry, let them consider that mind of the Order clearly expressed in the Constitution (LCO 100, I & II), our Order as St. Dominic intended it to be is diminished and also the nature of our common profession is obscured.⁸⁷

The Chapter also expressed the necessity to uphold the vocation to cooperator-brotherhood since it is truly part of the primitive inspiration of the Order and truly part of her charism.

The brethren of the Order of Preachers both clerics and cooperators always worked together in the preaching of the Gospel and together watch in prayer. We affirm that where the clerics and cooperator-brothers are seen and were together, there the Order is present truly and fully. Although only a few receive the name of brother cooperator, all of us are called and are real cooperators in the mission of the Order.⁸⁸

Since it was in the mind of the Quezon City Chapter that the cooperator-brothers will be able to participate more fully in the life of the Order, it removed all

⁸⁵ *Acta Capituli Generalis* 1977, 62 no. 3.

⁸⁶ [The changes in the role of the cooperator-brothers] will bring us closer to the original plan of St. Dominic, who wished to confide to lay brothers the complete care of the material needs of the Order. Valentin Walgrave, OP, 79.

Right from the foundation of our Order, Dominic wanted cooperator-brothers in our communities. From the beginning, the carrying out of the mission of our Order in the Church and in the world is considered by Dominic to be especially linked to the exercise of the ordained ministry in as much as sent throughout the world for the salvation of all by means of preaching and the celebration of the sacraments.

Already in the first General Chapters, Dominic sees the cooperator-brothers as closely bound to this mission of the Order and wanted to assign to them the whole administration of priories. His intentions failed due to the resistance of the capitular friars. *Summary document Round-table at Santa Sabina*, 2.

⁸⁷ *Acta Capituli Generalis* 1977, 62 no. 3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 62 no. 2.

the judicial obstacles to the election of cooperator-brothers as diffinitors of Provincial and General Chapters.⁸⁹

The General Chapter in Bologna in 1988 defined again the identity of the cooperator-brothers in terms of religious profession and in terms of participation in the mission of the Order.⁹⁰ It affirmed that the presence of cooperator-brothers is a reminder that what binds the friars together is not their Ordination but their religious profession.⁹¹ When it comes to the mission of the Order, the Chapter has widened the perspective of the Order in the way the lay brothers were being seen. The Chapter accepted the fact that it is not enough to say that they cooperate in the mission of the ordained friars since they can already engage in explicit and direct preaching.⁹² The Chapter of Bologna affirmed once again, with respect to the mission of the Order, that all the brethren are cooperators participating fully in its life and mission, as the Order of Preachers consists equally of ordained and non-ordained friars.⁹³

These developments in the role of the lay brothers also effected a change in their formation. The same Chapter in Bologna recommended that the cooperator-brother candidates should make the pre-novitiate together with the candidates who are preparing for Sacred Orders in order to be formed in common life and Dominican life.⁹⁴ It also recommended that the period of post-novitiate formation of cooperator-brothers should, where possible, occur in houses of study in which the brothers who are preparing for Sacred Orders are being formed. Whereas, in the Constitutions of the Order, it is already ordained that there shall be a common novitiate for clerical and cooperator brothers, and the novitiate made for the cooperator state is valid for the clerical, and vice versa.⁹⁵ Like all the brothers in the Order, the cooperator-brothers are to engage also in some form of studies during formation, both in philosophy and theology as well as in other fields.⁹⁶ Finally, another major step in evolution in the status

⁸⁹ Ibid., 62 no. 4.

⁹⁰ *Acta Capituli Generalis* 1998, 135 no. 1.

⁹¹ Ibid., 136 no. 2.

⁹² In the past, we have been content to say that the brothers »co-operate« in the mission of the ordained friars. This response is no longer adequate since it relates the mission of the brothers to that of the priests. Today, the brothers can engage in the direct and explicit preaching mission of the Order which at one time was reserved for the ordained friars. The entire range of apostolic work available to the ordained friars is also available to the non-ordained except that which directly and explicitly requires the Sacrament of Orders. Ibid., 137 no. 2.

⁹³ Ibid., 137 no. 3.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 140.

⁹⁵ LCO 179; This ordination was promulgated in the General Chapter of Quezon City in 1977, (235): *Novitiatus communis sit pro fratribus clericis et cooperatoribus; factus pro statu cooperatorum valet etiam pro statu clericorum et e converso. Transitus tamen a statu cooperatorum ad statum clericorum vel viceversa semper fiat de licentia prioris provincialis cum suo consilio.*

⁹⁶ LCO 217-220; *Acta Capituli Generalis* 2001, 288; *Acta Capituli Generalis* 1998, 141 & 142. *Ratio Formationis Generalis, Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 1987, 94.

of the cooperator-brothers in the Order is in terms of assuming positions of leadership in the community. The recent General Chapter in Krakow recommended the Master of the Order to continue to petition to the Holy See so that duly elected cooperator-brothers will be allowed to assume offices of priors, sub-priors and superiors.⁹⁷

3. Reception of the Dominican Cooperator-Brothers in the Philippines

For the Dominicans in the Philippines, the door for receiving native vocations was opened through the chapter of the Dominican Province of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary in 1926. The chapter stipulated to open a novitiate in the Philippines and thereupon the admission of Filipinos.⁹⁸ The call to receive natives to the Order did not die down. It gained momentum as reflected in the succeeding Chapters of the Dominican Order. In the General Chapter in Rome, fostering of native vocations was given considerable attention as it said:

In the light of No. 56 of the Statutes of the Mission, we recommend very strongly that, given the will of the Holy See to commit the government and the care of the missions to the indigenous clergy, native vocations to the Dominican life should be encouraged and fostered, so that as soon as possible, we have indigenous religious who are qualified to govern and evangelize the missions which are committed to us, in the way that it has happily begun in some of our missions. Therefore great care should be given so that schools [for aspirants of the Order] be opened in our missions, as well as novitiate houses in which indigenous aspirants could be educated.⁹⁹

Finally, legislations for fostering native vocations to the Dominican Order was concretized by the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary in the Philippines with the building of the formation house in Rosaryhill in Hong Kong named St. Albert the Great Convent. While the formation house in Hong Kong also had the purpose of transferring the Spanish candidates from Rosaryville in Louisiana, USA to Rosaryhill in Hong Kong, it was also intended for the admission of indigenous vocations.¹⁰⁰ On March 9, 1936, Gregorio Hontomin was the first Filipino ever to be admitted to Rosaryhill. He was at the same time the first Filipino to enter as a cooperator-brother. From its opening in 1935 until it was closed in 1958, when the formation house was transferred to Sto. Domingo in Quezon City, there was a total of seven Filipinos who entered Rosaryhill as cooperator-brothers. Only two were able to profess, Gregorio

⁹⁷ *Teniendo en cuenta lo dicho en los Capítulos Generales de Oakland 164; Providence 290 y en el CIC 164, Pedimos al Mastro de la Orden que continúe sus diligencias ante la Santa Sede sobre la puedan ser priores, subpriors y superiores. Acta Capituli Generalis 2004, 256.*

⁹⁸ Dela Rosa, 161.

⁹⁹ *Acta Capituli Generalis Provincialium*, Rome, 1935, 83-84 as cited by Dela Rosa, 163.

¹⁰⁰ Dela Rosa, 166.

Hontomin (professed January 2, 1938) and Teofilo Maximiano (professed February 5, 1947). A total of eleven Filipinos entered as cooperator-brothers and all were able to make their profession from 1959, when the formation program started in Sto. Domingo, Quezon City until 1969.¹⁰¹ However, five of them left the Order.¹⁰² When the Philippine Dominican Province was born in 1971, there were fifteen solemnly professed cooperator-brothers.¹⁰³

4. Present Status

From fifteen solemnly professed cooperator-brothers in 1971 when the Dominican Province of the Philippines was established, the number was reduced to eleven in 1996.¹⁰⁴ This is despite the upliftment of the status cooperator-brothers in the legislations of the Order and the Philippine Province as well. Since the birth of the Philippine Province, Filipino Dominican cooperator-brothers have been urged to acquire academic degrees.¹⁰⁵ The Province has strongly emphasized the equality between clerics and cooperator-brothers.¹⁰⁶ There was even a move to ordain as deacons some qualified cooperator-brothers to be able to help in the pastoral ministry of the Province.¹⁰⁷ This suggestion did not materialize since no cooperator-brother had agreed to the idea.

About formation, the novitiate for clerical and cooperator-brothers has been one and the same since the birth of the Philippine Province.¹⁰⁸ Only

¹⁰¹ See also Dela Rosa, Appendix.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Fr. Joseto Bernadas, Jr., OP, "The First Twenty Five Years of the Dominican Province of the Philippines (1971-1996)" (STL-MA Thesis, Faculty of Sacred Theology, University of Santo Tomas, June 1996), 14.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 14

¹⁰⁵ Acts of the Assembly ad instar Capituli Provincialis of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, Convent of Saint Dominic, Quezon City from May 14 to June 14, 1972.

66. Considering the needs of our Province and the importance of technical preparation for our cooperator-brothers in the efficient performance of their distinctive role within the community, the Provincial may permit or designate upon the recommendation of the Prior and the Regent of Studies, qualified cooperator-brothers to take up courses leading even to academic degrees.

72. Considering the necessity of providing an adequate Dominican intellectual and religious growth of cooperator-brothers and the importance of their role in the corporate apostolate of the Province (Cf. LCO Cont. Fund., VI), we ordain that an institutional course commensurate with their needs be prepared.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid # 83. We remind the brethren that the cooperator-brothers by virtue of the common priesthood and their own chosen way of religious life, truly share in the apostolate of the community, and not just looking after the material needs of the house.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid # 88. In view of the present dearth of priests in our Province, to meet adequately the varied demands of our apostolate, we commission the provincial and his Council to study the possibility of having some qualified cooperator-brothers ordained to the diaconate, so that they can cooperate more effectively in the ministry of the Word (Cf. LCO 100, II).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid # 106. The novitiate in the Province shall be one and the same for both clerical and cooperator-brothers (LCO 179).

ample distinctions were made, such as the assignation of a separate Master of Students for cooperator-brothers in simple vows.¹⁰⁹ Slowly, Filipino Dominican cooperator-brothers began to be given more significance in the succeeding Chapters of the Philippine Province.¹¹⁰ They were asked to participate more in the life of study of the Order¹¹¹ and were encouraged to participate more in the preaching ministry.¹¹² They were also asked to take up theology courses at University of Santo Tomas.¹¹³ The present structure of formation provides that there is one Master for both clerical and cooperator student-brothers.¹¹⁴ The latest Provincial Chapter still maintained the provision for cooperator-brothers to pursue academic degrees.¹¹⁵ The Fifth Provincial Chapter in 1992 was significant for the Filipino Dominican cooperator-brothers since it had the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid # 99. The members of the council under the presidency of the Provincial or his delegate will be:

- a) The different directors of formation, viz. The Master of Students, the Master of Novices, the director of the pre-novitiate, the Master of cooperator-brothers in simple vows, the priest in charge of the pastoral formation.

¹¹⁰ Acts of the Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, December 16, 1979 to January 28, 1980, Convent of San Juan de Letran, Intramuros Manila

187. We charge those charged with the formation of our cooperator-brothers to stress the unity of priests and cooperator-brothers in the religious profession in the light of LCO 4; 100. II; 219. II.

196. We commission the Provincial Council of Formation to work out a program whereby the cooperator-brothers in formation may be introduced to the various areas of our Dominican apostolate, while remaining assigned in their house of formation (LCO 217). The aim of this program shall be to help them broaden their perspective of our apostolate, acquire practical skills, experience the various tasks and ministries of the Province, develop their sense of responsibility.

¹¹¹ Ibid # 24. Considering the needs of Our Province and the role of our cooperator-brothers within the community, the Provincial may permit or designate, upon recommendation of the Prior and the Regent of Studies, qualified cooperator brothers to take up courses in special institutes and colleges.

¹¹² Acts of the Fourth Provincial Chapter, Dominican Province of the Philippines, April 5 to April 30, 1988, Convent of Our Lady of the Rosary, Manaoag, Pangasinan.

91. We recommend that our co-operator-brothers in formation, without deviating from the wider scope of their vocation obtain training as professional catechists, preferably a degree course. So after solemn profession, they can devote a great part of their time in teaching of catechism in public educational institutions (LCO 100, II, 219; 220; CF no. 1).

¹¹³ Acts of the Sixth Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, October 20 to November 13, 1996, Convent of St. Albert the Great, Calamba, Laguna.

105. We recommend that cooperator-brothers undertake their two year theological formation at the UST Institute of Theological Formation for Lay and Religious or any theological or catechetical centers approved by the Regent of Studies.

¹¹⁴ Statutes of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, October 20 to November 13, 1996.

55. The Master of Students shall be assisted by at least two other formators in the formation of student brothers and co-operator-brothers. One of them shall be designated as Director of Pastoral Formation. They shall be appointed by the Provincial Chapter, or outside the chapter, by the Provincial and his council.

¹¹⁵ Acts of the Eighth Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines.

33 (30). Considering the needs of Our Province and the role of our cooperator-brothers within the community, the Provincial may permit or designate, upon recommendation of the Prior and the Regent of Studies, qualified co-operator-brothers to take up courses in special institutes and colleges.

longest legislation devoted to cooperator-brothers and their formation. The legislation deserves to be quoted in full:

- # 128. We ordain at least two other formators be appointed to assist the Master of students in the formation of the student-brothers and cooperator-brothers.
- # 129. We ordain that the post novitiate program of formation for the cooperator brothers be as follows.
 1. The cooperator-brothers shall spend the first three years of the post-novitiate formation in the studentate under the care of the Master of Students with the senior cooperator-brothers assisting, who will help brothers in formation to discover and live the charism proper to them in the Order (LCO 217, RFG 97).
 2. In the first year of this period of formation, the brothers shall be given ample time, opportunity and assistance in putting into practice their novitiate training as professed cooperator brothers. In view of this, they shall not undertake any academic course, but shall give themselves more to the actual sharing and participation in the life and apostolic engagements of the community to which the studentate belongs, under the guidance of the senior cooperator-brothers, in order to give them an initial experience of living out their charism as cooperator-brothers in the Order.
 3. In the next two years, the brothers shall have their theological formation as a priority, giving them the possibility at the same time to acquire professional competence and training in the arts and skills suited to the needs of the ministries of the Province (LCO 220, RFG 93).
 4. For theological formation, the cooperator-brothers shall follow the courses at UST's Sisters' Institute for Theological Formation.
 5. The cooperator-brothers shall be given the same spiritual, religious and liturgical formation as the student brothers.
 6. The cooperator-brothers shall also participate in the apostolic activities of the student-brothers according to their own personal gifts and talents.
 7. During the Christmas and summer holidays, they shall be sent to the other convents and houses of the Province to facilitate their integration into the full and active life of the communities of the Province.

8. After the first three years in the studentate, the cooperator-brothers shall be given their first assignation to another house or convent preferably where there is a senior cooperator-brother assigned and where their formation shall be continued for at least two years under the care of the superior or the prior (LCO 218). This period of formation will have the following goals:
9.
 - a. To facilitate the full integration of the cooperator-brothers into active community life;
 - b. To provide them an opportunity and experience in fully collaborating in the Order's mission by way of a full time assignment or task in the community; and,
 - c. To assist them in acquiring the ability to integrate the fundamental values of their life as brothers.¹¹⁶

The Philippine Province has always maintained the unique role of its cooperator-brothers, together with their competence in the various aspects in the ministry of the Order. An evidence of this is when Bro. Rolando Granada preached in the Seven Last Words¹¹⁷ on Good Friday of 1974 at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in Manaoag. It was a clear gesture of the capability of the cooperator-brothers to preach in the pulpit. It was the first time in the history of the Philippine Dominican Province that a cooperator-brother preached before a church crowd.¹¹⁸ Another significant moment in the history of cooperator-brothers in the Philippines was the assignation to Santa Sabina by, Fray Raymundo Bayaras and Fray Jose Francisco.¹¹⁹ Bro. Raymundo Bayaras holds the distinction of being the first Filipino Dominican to be assigned to Santa Sabina.¹²⁰ The crowning glory of the cooperator brothers was

¹¹⁶ Chapter VII, On Formation of the Brethren, Acts of the Fifth Provincial Chapter, Convent of Sto. Domingo, October 19, November 12, 1992.

¹¹⁷ The Seven Last Words is a traditional Good Friday preaching event, much awaited by many faithful.

¹¹⁸ Three priests, three laymen and a cooperator-brother, Fray Rolando Granada, were the preachers during the seven last words services in Manaoag parish. This was the first time that a cooperator-brother preached a sermon before a church crowd. (Dominicans in the Philippines, Vol 3, No. 2, March 1974, 4, as cited by Bernadas, 135).

¹¹⁹ Acts of the Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, December 16, 1979 to January 28, 1980, Convent of San Juan de Letran, Intramuros Manila, # 27. We make it known that two Filipino cooperator-brothers namely, Bro. Raymundo Bayaras and Bro. Jose Francisco have been assigned to the venerable convent of Santa Sabina, Rome at the request of the Master General.

¹²⁰ The cooperator-brothers in Greater Manila Area gave a despedida party to Brother Raymund Bayaras on March 14. He left for his new assignment in Santa Sabina Convent, seat of the Curia Generalicia in Rome, in the afternoon of March 15. He holds the distinction of being the first member of the Philippine Province to be assigned to Santa Sabina in Rome. Provincial Notices, Vol II, No. 5., December 15, 1978, 3 as cited by Bernadas, 143.

when Brother Gregorio Hontomin received the ecclesiastical award for Service ‘Pro Ecclesia at Pontifice’ on May 9, 1977.¹²¹ More importantly the Provincial Chapters beginning 1988 until the most recent, 2008, made provisions for opening the cause of his beatification.¹²² Among the most recent was the renewal program for the cooperator-brothers held in 2004. In the said event, the Filipino cooperator-brothers arrived at two resolutions. The first resolution was to pursue the beatification of Bro. Gregorio Hontomin,¹²³ the first Filipino to enter the Dominican religious formation and the first Filipino Dominican cooperator-brother.

E. The Move for the Beatification of Bro. Gregorio Hontomin

Gregorio Andres Lima Hontomin was born on November 21, 1909 in the barrio of *Savidug* of the small island town called *Sabtang* in the Batanes Islands.¹²⁴ His parents were Angel Hontomin and Anatolia Lima.¹²⁵ Gregorio was the first-born of the six children. His siblings were (from the eldest) Bienvenida, Emilia, Evaristo, Juana Bibiana and Jorge.¹²⁶ Angel and Anatolia, the parents of Gregorio, were farmers as most of the natives of *Sabtang* were.¹²⁷ The couple were devout Catholics and among the respected leaders of the town of *Sabtang*.

¹²¹ Acts, 1980, Intramuros Manila # 26. We make it known that on May 9, 1977, Brother Gregorio Hontomin, together with some Fathers of the University of Santo Tomas and other prominent laymen, received the award “Pro Ecclesia at Pontifice” in a solemn ceremony held the chapel of the University of Santo Tomas.

¹²² Acts of the Fourth Provincial Chapter, # 69; Acts of the Fifth Provincial Chapter, # 93; Acts of the Sixth Provincial Chapter, # 93; Acts of the Seventh Provincial Chapter # 93; Acts of the Eighth Provincial Chapter, # 137.

¹²³ # 38. On March 5-7, 2004, eight of our cooperator-brothers: Bro. Rolando Granada, OP, Bro. Valentin Benavides, OP, Bro. Rodolfo Atienza, OP, Bro. Oscar Manalapaz, OP, Bro. Reynaldo Bayaras, OP, Bro. Romulo Angeles, OP, Bro. Bonifacio Mergal, OP, and Bro. Raul Obsioma, OP, took part in the renewal program of the cooperator-brother. Fr. Enrico Gonzales, OP gave a talk on friendship on March 6, which became the point of departure for the sharing and reflection. Fr. Provincial talked about prayer and its importance in their daily and personal lives. Fr. Boyd Sulpico, OP presided over the liturgy on the last day, and Fr. Vicente Cajilig, OP, preached on prayer and companionship.

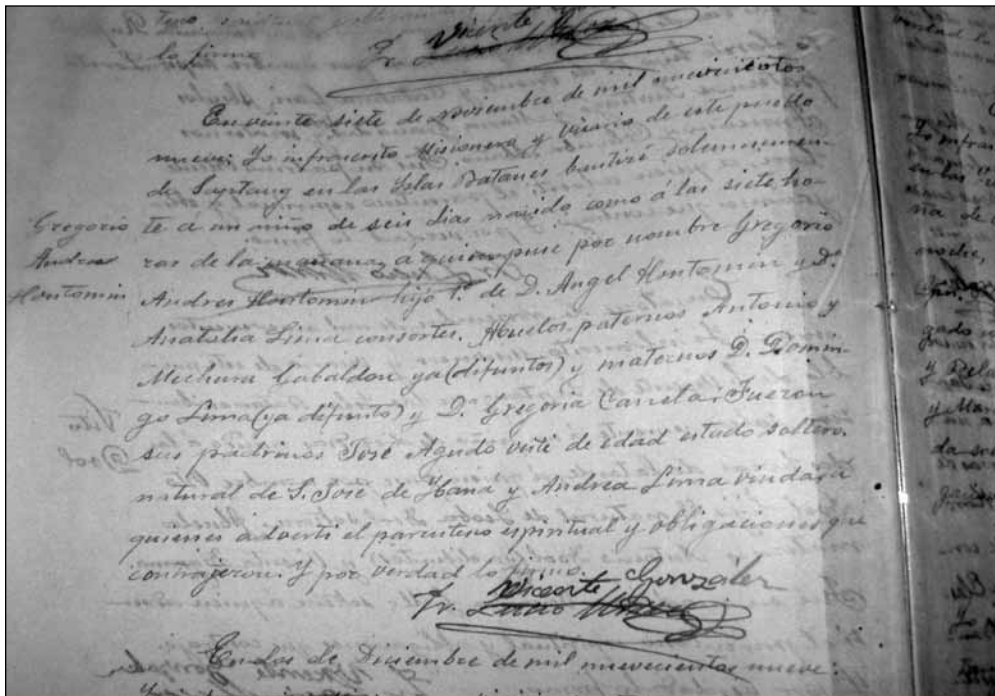
Two practical resolutions came out of the three days of integration: first, to help in the proposed efforts to study the case for the beatification of Bro. Gregorio Hontomin, OP; and second, to schedule the annual gathering of cooperator brothers every November, close to the feast of St. Martin de Porres.

¹²⁴ Based on Baptismal Record of Gregorio Hontomin, and Birth Record of Gregorio Hontomin which are found in the Church records of *Sabtang*, Batanes. The Batanes is a group of small islands situated in the northernmost tip of the Philippines.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Based on the Baptismal Records of the siblings of Gregorio which are found in the Church records of *Sabatang*, Batanes.

¹²⁷ Bro. Gregorio Hontomin was born of a humble and pious couple, Angel and Anatolia Lima Hontomin, in the barrio of *Savidug* (*Santo Tomas de Aquina* in Church Records), in the municipality of *Sabtang*, Batanes, on 21 November 1909. Written testimony of Dr. Florentino Hornedo dated September 12, 1982.



In his early twenties, he left Batanes and went to Manila to find a living.¹²⁸ In Manila, Gregorio was employed as a worker in San Juan de Dios Hospital in Intramuros.¹²⁹ It was also in Manila where he was recruited to enter the Dominican Order as a cooperator-brother. Hence, on the nineteenth of March 1936, Gregorio arrived in Rosaryhill together with some Spanish missionaries from the Philippines. He was turning twenty seven years old that time. The following day, on March 20, he was formally admitted as a candidate for cooperator-brotherhood after getting unanimous approval from the conventual council.¹³⁰

Less than a year after his admission, on January 1, 1937, Gregorio received the habit of a cooperator-brother. On January 2, 1938, Gregorio made his temporary vows and six years after, on January, 1944, made his solemn profession.¹³¹ Gregorio is

¹²⁸ An evidence that Gregorio was still in Sabtang at least before 1931 i.e., when he was twenty-two years old, is the appearance of his name in the Church records of Sabtang in *Padron General* 1931. Also from the written testimony of Dr. Florentino Hornedo dated September 12, 1982.

¹²⁹ Ramirez and Reginald D. Cruz, *Modern Time Prophets of Contradiction: Models of Holiness for Contemporary Christians* (Philippines: Msgr. Josefino S. Ramirez and Reginald D. Cruz, 1993), 423. Written testimony of Dr. Florentino Hornedo dated September 12, 1982. Interview with Fr. Teofilo Maximiano about the life of Bro. Gregorio Hontomin, OP, March 16, 2007.

¹³⁰ *Cronicas*, March 26, 1936, as cited by Rolando V. Dela Rosa, OP, *Beginnings of Filipino Dominicans: History of the Filipinization of Religious Orders in the Philippines*, revised ed. (Manila, UST Publishing House, 1996), *Ibid.*, 189.

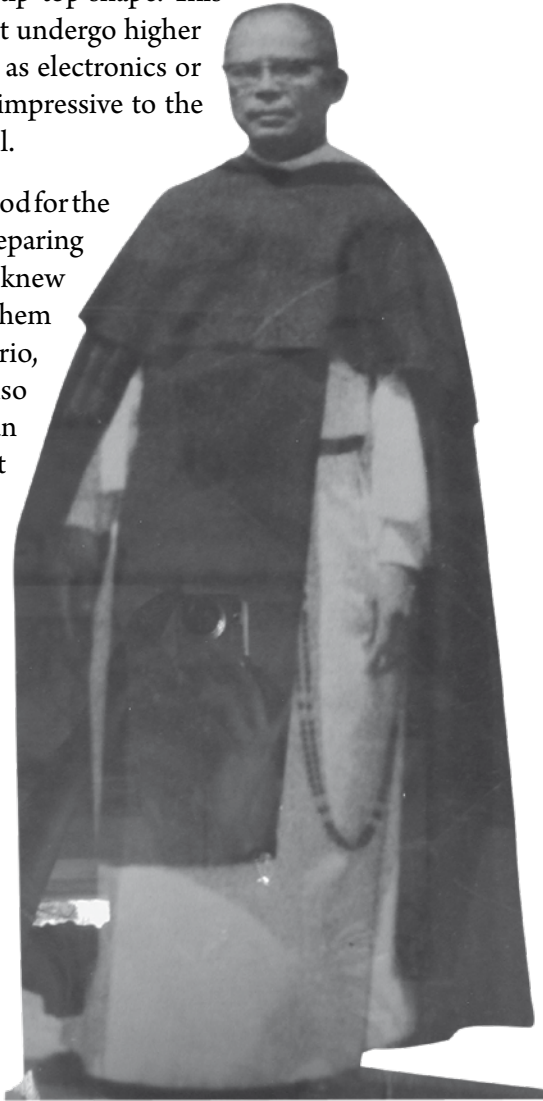
¹³¹ Eladio Neira, O.P., Hilario Ocio, O.P. and Gregorio Arnaiz, O.P., *Misioneros Dominicos en el Extremo Oriente* (Vol. 2, 1836-1940) (Manila: Eladio Neira, 2000), 664.

considered the first Filipino native in the 20th century to be admitted to the Dominican formation and the first Filipino Dominican cooperator-brother.¹³²

In Rosaryhill, Hong Kong, Bro. Gregorio served as an all around and always on call handyman of the Dominican brethren. He displayed remarkable talents on almost everything, if not all, which required technical and manual skills. He was the friar who was mainly responsible for keeping the convent in tip-top shape. This was astonishing especially for a person who did not undergo higher studies in any technical field of specialization such as electronics or engineering. His ingenuity in fixing things was so impressive to the amazement of his Dominican brothers in Rosaryhill.

He was also impressive in terms of providing food for the brethren. He devotedly performed his chore of preparing meals for the brethren so much so that the brethren knew if it was Bro. Gregorio who prepared the food for them or not. As witnesses would say, "With Bro. Gregorio, best food was always served."¹³³ Furthermore, he is also always remembered as the community infirmarian who never found it tiring to nurse anyone who got sick. In addition, the ingenuity of Bro. Gregorio was instrumental to the survival of the Dominican community in Rosaryhill and the continuance of studies of the Dominican students during the World War II. During those years he was practically the one feeding the community.

In 1959, when Dominican House of Studies in Rosaryhill was closed down, Bro. Gregorio was assigned to the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. In UST, he took the post of head of the General Services Department of the hospital. It was in the said hospital where Bro. Gregorio spent the second-half, or twenty three years of his Dominican life. The ingenuity of Bro. Gregorio blended with a deep spirit of service was clearly seen when he served the University of Santo Tomas Hospital. He was not only good in repairing broken hospital



¹³² Fr. Benito Vargas who arrived five months after Gregorio and admitted to the clerical formation is considered the first Filipino to profess. He made his profession on October 12, 1937, two months ahead of Gregorio. See also Dela Rosa, 189.

¹³³ Oral Testimony of Monsignor Mario Baltazar, OP, undated.

apparatuses but also in inventing various kinds of equipment for the benefit of the patients and the rest of the health care workers.¹³⁴

On July 6, 1982, Gregorio was found leaning on his table.¹³⁵ He was working on several watches and other apparatuses he was entrusted to repair.¹³⁶ His frail body had given up, something that he knew was imminent since he was first hospitalized in 1979. Apparently having had collapsed while working, Bro. Gregorio was rushed to the emergency for medical treatment. His physical decline was inevitable. Before six in the evening he joined his Creator.

How Bro. Gregorio lived as an exemplary cooperator-brother, besides being the first Filipino Dominican cooperator-brother, is a legacy to be regarded. The status of the cooperator-brothers in the Order today is evolving as a result of the changing needs of the time. Along with this evolution of status is confronting the dearth of vocations to the cooperator-brotherhood that is being experienced by the whole Order, especially the Philippine Province. Bro. Gregorio could be considered a modern-time persona that serves as a strong reminder of the attractiveness and uniqueness of the vocation to the Dominican cooperator-brotherhood today.

When the possibility of cooperator-brothers being ordained deacons in the view of helping the priests in their ministry was being floated, the other Filipino cooperator-brothers first pointed to Gregorio and said, “Ordain first Bro. Gregorio and we will follow.”¹³⁷ Since the life of Bro. Gregorio affirmed what St. Dominic and the Dominican Order have envisioned from the start i.e., cooperator-brothers, being unordained, have their unique role in the preaching ministry of the Order, which is clerical in nature. Vocation to the cooperator-brotherhood is part of the rich heritage which St. Dominic handed on to his brethren which the brethren today should continue to promote for the Order to remain strong. Citing again what the General Chapter in Quezon City said, “Where the clerics and cooperator-brothers are seen and were together, there the Order is present truly and fully.”¹³⁸ That is why it would be hard to imagine for instance if the downtrend in the number of cooperator-brothers in the Philippine Province will continue, since having cooperator-brothers is a constant reminder to the brethren, that what really binds them is their common profession as religious brothers. Again in the word of the Quezon City General Chapter, “When

¹³⁴ Ramirez and Cruz, 429.

¹³⁵ Acts of the Third Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, 70.

¹³⁶ Written testimony of Dr. Florentino Hornedo dated September 12, 1982. Interview with Bro. Valentin Benavides, OP about the life of Bro. Gregorio Hontomin, OP, December 9, 2006. Interview with Mr. Teofilo Bayaras about the life of Bro. Gregorio Hontomin, OP, March 10, 2007.

¹³⁷ Acts of the Third Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, 70. Vicente Cajilig, OP, “Bro. Gregorio Genius and Holy”, *Life Today*, 38, October 1982, (7).

¹³⁸ Acta Capituli Generalis 1977, 62 no. 3.

the cooperator-brothers are not fully present and active in the apostolate of the Order ... our Order as St. Dominic intended it to be is diminished and also the nature of our common profession is obscured.”¹³⁹

Summary

The above discussion presented an understanding of the nature of the lay brothers in the Dominican Order. It cannot be denied, from the point of view of history that lay brothers are indeed an integral part of the Friars of the Order of Preachers. Herewith, the Dominican Order once more, manifests the benefit of the genius of its founder as a great synthesizer of traditions. St. Dominic included lay brothers as an essential entity to fulfill its mission despite the nature of the Order being clerical. Hence, what came out was a harmonious blend of vocations within a wider religious vocation. Evidently, the role of the lay brothers in the Order has evolved and is still evolving. This does not mean that the Order has lost touch of her tradition. In fact, these changes, kindled at the same time by the changes within the Church and society, were fulfillments of its original inspiration.

Regarding Filipino Dominican cooperator-brothers, the Dominican Order in the Philippines has been constantly at work so that the status of its cooperator-brothers would always be attuned with the spirit of the reforms that happened in Church and the Order and, likewise, in line with the present times. The first native Filipino vocation to cooperator-brotherhood came in the 1930s in the person of Gregorio Hontomin. Besides being the first native to be admitted to the Dominican formation, he was also regarded as an outstanding Dominican.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

