



# MISSIONARIES IN ACTION

## DOMINICAN MISSION FOUNDATION

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### *Practicing What St. Dominic Preached*



Dear Mission Friends:

As you know from reading our newsletters, I'm always on the go. Much of my time is divided between my current home base, Mexicali, and our mission office in San Francisco. While up north in February, I was invited to lunch by two friends, Fr. Stephen Lopez and Fr. James Moore, to celebrate my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. After a toast (or two), these [much younger] fellow Dominicans asked me about my plans now that I am 80 and eligible to slow down and put my feet up. I responded that I had no plans other than to keep going! (*Were they actually thinking I might retire?*)

I am entrusted with three major, interrelated, ministries: I serve as Vicar for Religious in the Diocese of Mexicali (1), the

*Fr. Martin Walsh, O.P., a true friar  
preacher in the tradition of St. Dominic,  
seen in a familiar pose,  
preaching with zeal—and his hands!*

city which is home to one of the missions administered or supported by our Mission Foundation, of which I am the director (2). And as director, one of my primary duties in securing financial support is to preach mission appeals (3).

Beginning around September each year, Lesley in our mission office sends out letters to numerous dioceses requesting assignments to their annual Mission Coop Plan—that is, to be assigned to one or more of their parishes for a weekend, preaching at all their Masses so as to reap the proceeds of their second collections. We contact every diocese within our Western Dominican Province, the boundaries of which encircle Alaska, California, and Utah, but the dioceses are always inundated with such requests and so we anxiously await their responses, breathing easier with each assignment we receive. And then, after contacting each assigned parish and settling upon mutually convenient weekends between May and October, I begin darting around all over the west, preaching and celebrating Masses from sunrise to sunset, in alternating

O glorious Saint Dominic,  
who, being filled with zeal  
for the salvation of souls,  
didst preach the Gospel in season and  
out of season and didst establish the  
Order of Friars Preachers to labor for the  
conversion of heretics and poor sinners,  
pray thou to God for us,  
that He may grant us to love all our  
brethren sincerely and to cooperate  
always, by our prayers and good works,  
in their sanctification and salvation.

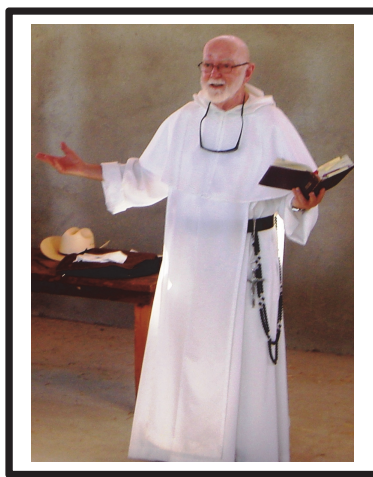
English and Spanish, in big city cathedrals or tiny, remote chapels, and in weather ranging from ferocious blizzards to scorching heat.

**Indeed, each parish is unique and every year is unpredictable, so there's always some trepidation.** More often than not, I'm encountering churches and neighborhoods and even towns for the first time in my life. And frequently, the pastor, taking advantage of having a "substitute" for the weekend, has left on a getaway and is not there to show me around.

I always plan to arrive at a parish around 2:00 pm on Saturday afternoon, in time to get my bearings and hear confessions before parishioners begin arriving for the vigil Mass around 5:00 pm, which is typically followed by one in an alternate language around 7:00 pm. But the best-laid plans...



I've discovered that people like confessing to priests they'll never see again, so the line is always long, and by the time I walk out of the confessional, the ministries are often already lined up at the front of the church, behind the processional cross, ready to begin Mass. I dash to the sacristy to try to find the microphone, figure out the sound system and, if time, freshen up. Somehow I make it through the first Mass and after recessing down the aisle, I stay outside to greet the people coming out of the church, who are always friendly and welcoming but have lots of questions. While making my way back to get ready for the next Mass, I realize that I have no idea how to get into the rectory and I can't remember the last time I ate. By the final blessing of that Mass, someone has usually appeared with a rectory key so I can grab a snack and get some welcome sleep, even if restless and sporadic due to the unfamiliar surroundings. My last prayer before closing my eyes is the *Memorare* in a desperate appeal to the Blessed Mother to intercede in whatever awaits me the next day, when I can sometimes have Masses every hour all day.



I generally celebrate all the Masses, but my primary task is to preach the homilies, spreading awareness of the needs of those in our mission areas which, besides Mexicali, currently include Chiapas, Mexico; Rabinal, Guatemala; Ayene, Equatorial Guinea; and Mosul, Iraq. I provide an overview of our projects and then focus and expand on one area of great need.

*Inevitably, though, I myself come away having learned a lot. As you can imagine, these parish visits offer direct insight into the state of the Catholic Church in the west,* and it is my humble but first-hand impression that we are in good shape on the parish level. Generally, the Spanish Masses, packed out to the street with families, are filled with distractions, from crying babies to teens sneaking glances at their phones, but such energy can often translate to invigorating and spirited participation. The youth are the future of the Church in the west and time and again I'm pleasantly surprised with Masses run by dynamic and enthusiastic youth, cell phones notwithstanding. The English Masses, particularly in rural towns, are much more calm and sedate, mostly attended by the more reserved seniors and elderly.

Everywhere, however, I find that the liturgies are pre-planned and well organized and, if not perfectly solemn throughout, they are celebrated with a genuine devotion and sense of community.

Increasingly, diocesan priests are asked to serve as pastors of two or more parishes, often without assistants, and have much more work than they can effectively handle. But it's gratifying to observe how eagerly the faithful and dedicated lay people step up in those cases, serving their communities as catechists, liturgy planners, lectors, Eucharistic ministers, youth ministers, RCIA instructors, and administrators or members of social service groups serving the poor and needy. Many such parishes are in fact flourishing!

Also due to the vocation shortage in the U.S., the parishes that I visit have an increasing number of foreign priests. I cringe whenever I hear, *"His accent is so strong that I can never understand what he's saying!"* because these are true missionaries who have given up their native countries and homes to serve here (and also because that's what the Mexicali parishioners say about my Spanish, even after all these years!)





Truly, these priests are a blessing for us and it is through their presence that the Church can provide the faithful with the sacraments that might not otherwise be accessible. **Please pray for parish priests, especially diocesan priests who serve alone, often in remote and challenging places.**

And of course, pray for more vocations, but also encourage youth you know to reflect on a **religious vocation**. Everywhere I go, young people ask me about the priesthood and I often discover that they've never before talked to a priest or brother or sister. Our Promoter of Vocations, Fr. Stephen Maria Lopez, O.P., always reminds us friars to talk freely and often about religious life and he is in fact optimistic about *Dominican* vocations.

If he proves to be right, I might consider slowing down, but I honestly wouldn't know how to stop altogether, nor would I want to. I thank God that my Dominican brothers, who are just as busy as I am, have always graciously made time to take appeal assignments for us. This year our Provincial, Fr. Mark Padrez, O.P., made a formal request to the friars and I will receive even more relief. Nevertheless, [please add this elder missionary to your prayers, that he may continue his threefold ministry with zeal and enthusiasm](#). I admit that it does take more and more effort to stay healthy and active and that I may be slowing down a bit, but put my feet up? Never, if I don't have to!

In Christ's Peace,  
Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P.



### Upcoming Summer Mission Appeals

*If you are in the area, please come and say hello to our preacher.*

- June 2-3:** St. Finbar in Burbank, *Fr. Michael Fones, OP*
- June 30-July 1:** Sacred Heart in Lindsay, *Fr. James Moore, OP*
- July 7-8:** Our Lady Help of Christians in Los Angeles, *Fr. James Moore, OP*  
St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus in Oakland, *Fr. Michael Sweeney, OP*
- July 14-15:** St. Peter in San Francisco, *Fr. Mark Francis Manzano, OP*  
St. Charles Borromeo in San Francisco, *Fr. Dismas Sayre, OP*
- July 21-22:** St. Anne/Holy Cross in Porterville, *Fr. Mark Francis Manzano, OP*
- July 28-29:** Sacred Heart in Exeter, *Fr. Dismas Sayre, OP*
- Aug. 11-12:** St. Augustine/St. Elizabeth Seton in Pleasanton, *Frs. Martin Walsh and James Moore, OP*
- Aug. 18-19:** St. Hilary in Pico Rivera, *Fr. Martin Walsh, OP*
- Sept. 1-2:** St. Joan of Arc in Yountville, *Fr. Martin Walsh, OP*
- Pending:** St. Theodore in Gonzales, *Fr. Martin Walsh, OP*  
Blessed Sacrament in Seattle, *Fr. Martin Walsh, OP*

I've had to ease up on the treadmill a bit,  
but it's still where I formulate my best homilies.  
Imagine if St. Dominic had used the treadmill!

~Fr. Martin

*If you'd like to remember us in your will, our legal title is:*

Province of the Holy Name, Inc.  
Dominican Mission Foundation  
2506 Pine Street  
P.O. Box 15367

San Francisco, CA 94115-0367

**Our 501(c)3 non-profit tax Identification # is: 94-3086454**





*A few of the parish assignments I'll never forget...*



In proportion to its small congregation, **St. Matthew Korean Church in Tujunga, CA** presented us with the most generous collection that we have ever received. And thanks to the welcoming director, Fr. Jiwan Kim, and his congregation, I ate delicious Korean food three times a day for two days. I also gained a new appreciation of the history of the Church in Korea and its martyrs, sparked by my interest in this dramatic painting (*right*) hanging in the rectory.



**St. John the Baptist Church in Laughlin NV** is, according to its beloved pastor, Fr. Charlie Urnick, the only Catholic church in the U.S. that holds three of its regularly scheduled weekend Masses in a casino. He explained, *"Jesus went where the people are. And when you're in a casino town, this is where the people are!"* And indeed, around 2,500 people attended the three Masses (before hitting the All-You-Can-Eat Buffet.)



I was assigned to **St. Mary of the Assumption** on the outskirts of **Park City, UT**, along with alternating Masses at **St. Lawrence Mission**, an old historic downtown chapel. I had said the Sat. evening and early Sun. morning Masses at St. Mary's, driven downtown to say the 8:45 am mission Mass and had just enough time to get back to St. Mary's for its next Mass. I'd learned my way around and I was on a roll! Upon leaving (*above*), I was delighted to see the snow, but once in the car, which was dangerously slipping and sliding, I was blinded by the storm and got lost, arriving quite late. Another priest had begun Mass for me, but I finished it, drove back downtown for the mission's last Mass, and back again to St. Mary's for one more there. Then I drove through the night toward the Mexicali sun and collapsed in my bed for a day and a half.

The Fresno Diocese has many small parishes in remote towns and it's not uncommon for two or more to share one pastor. Last year I preached at **St. Patrick in Kerman** and the following weekend at **St. Paul in Tranquility** and **St. Vincent de Paul in San Joaquin**, all overseen by the pastor, Fr. Rayanna Pudota, and the vicar, Fr. Gonzalo Siller. On one side of the rectory refrigerator was Fr. Rayanna's Indian food and on the other side was Fr. Gonzalo's Mexican food, and I was allowed to cross the line and take my pick for two consecutive weekends! Shortly thereafter Fr. Gonzalo was transferred to another parish and Fr. Rayanna has since been serving all three parishes by himself! Here he is (*right*) celebrating Mass in St. Patrick's against a dramatic backdrop depicting the San Joaquin Valley.

