

5-2018

# Dominican Prayer for Young Vietnamese Americans

Phuong Nguyen

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/jst\\_dissertations](https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/jst_dissertations)



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Nguyen, Phuong, "Dominican Prayer for Young Vietnamese Americans" (2018). *Jesuit School of Theology Dissertations*. 26.  
[https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/jst\\_dissertations/26](https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/jst_dissertations/26)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Jesuit School of Theology Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [rscroggin@scu.edu](mailto:rscroggin@scu.edu).

**DOMINICAN PRAYER FOR YOUNG VIETNAMESE AMERICANS**

A Thesis by

Phuong Nguyen, O.P.

Presented to

The Faculty of

Jesuit School of Theology

of Santa Clara University

In partial fulfilment of the

Requirements for the degree of

LICENTIATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY

Berkeley, California

May, 2018

Committee Signatures

---

Hung T. Pham, S.J., STD (Director)

Date

---

John Hilary Martin, O.P., PhD (Reader)

Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

From my heart, I dedicate this Thesis in honor and thanksgiving to God for His love, mercy and providence which I have experienced in my life and in my study.

I would like to express my gratitude to Fr. Hung T. Pham, S.J. for his scholarly guidance and constant availability which helped me complete this work. I am grateful to Fr. John Hilary Martin, O.P. for his reading and correcting my thesis. I would like to thank all the Professors and Staff of Jesuit School of Theology and all those who have contributed to this study. I am thankful to the John Lydon, O.P.L. for correcting my written English. I am also grateful to the Dominican community of St. Albert Priory for providing me with a home and a community with which to share the Dominican life.

I would like to express my gratitude to Rev. Joseph Nguyen Duc Hoa, O.P, the Provincial Superior of the Vietnamese Dominicans. I am thankful to Regent Rev. Joseph Phan Tan Thanh, O.P. who encouraged me to study. I am grateful to Rev. Peter Pham Huong, O.P., Vacariate Provincial, to Rev. Joseph Trung Liem O.P., coordinator, and to fathers who live at the Dominican House in Houston, Texas for their great concern and support of me during my stay in the United States.

May God bless all of them and poured down His grace upon them.

Berkeley, 1 May 2018.

Phuong Nguyen, O.P.

## **ABSTRACT**

Young Vietnamese Americans refer to those who were born in Vietnam but have been raised and educated in the United States (1.5 generation), and those who were born and reside in America (2 generation). Residing in the United States, they receive many opportunities which come from sociological, cultural and religious aspects. Nevertheless, they also face many challenges that come from those aspects as well. The challenges which the youth face may make them isolated from themselves, others and God. Dominican spirituality essential for members of the Dominican friars, nuns, sisters and professed laity, many of whom are older people. However, Dominican prayer, which combines inner life and external activities, is not just for Dominican Order, friars or for the old, but it is very suitable for young people. In my thesis, I will demonstrate how Dominican prayer is abundant and flexible; how it combines inner life and external activities through human gestures, liturgy and contemplation; and how it can help young Vietnamese Americans who are living in a bi-cultural context to overcome their challenges. The personal and spiritual challenges of the youth would benefit from Dominican spirituality and the various way of Dominican prayer. Dominican prayer would not only help the youth to understand their relationship with God so that they can accept themselves as they are, but would also help them to accept the good in each culture, cherish their place within the community of their families and society, and experience the joy of life in relationship with others and especially with God Himself.

## Table of Content

Acknowledgement .....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter I:</b>	
<b>The Opportunities and Challenges in the Life of Young Vietnamese Americans</b> .....	6
1.1. The sociological aspect.....	6
1.1.1. The opportunities for the youth .....	6
1.1.2. The challenges of the youth .....	11
1.2. The cultural aspect.....	17
1.2.1. The opportunities for the youth .....	17
1.2.2. The challenges of the youth .....	25
1.3. The religious aspect.....	29
1.3.1. The opportunities for the youth .....	29
1.3.2. The challenges of the youth for living a spiritual life .....	32
<b>Chapter II:</b>	
<b>Prayer in Dominican Spirituality</b> .....	39
2.1. The definition of Christian prayer and spirituality.....	39
2.1.1. The definition of Christian spirituality .....	39
2.1.2. The definition of Christian prayer .....	42
2.1.3. The relationship between prayer and spirituality .....	45
2.2. Looking at Dominican spirituality .....	49
2.2.1. St. Dominic and Dominican spirituality .....	49

2.2.2. Four aspects of Dominican spirituality .....	52
2.3. Theological dynamic in Dominican prayer .....	62
2.3.1. God .....	62
2.3.2. Experiencing God’s presence in all aspects of life .....	68
2.3.3. Understanding the human person .....	71
2.3.4. Various forms of encounter with the Divine .....	75
<b>Chapter III:</b>	
<b>How Can Dominican Prayers help young Vietnamese Americans? .....</b>	<b>83</b>
3.1. Private Prayer –	
A flexible way to nourish spiritual life in all circumstances .....	83
3.1.1. Experience of encountering God in private.....	83
3.1.2. Encouraging the youth to understand the value of the body.....	87
3.1.3. Encouraging the youth to devote themselves to praying.....	91
3.2. Mental prayer – A way to contemplate God and search for Truth.....	97
3.2.1. Experiencing God in contemplation.....	97
3.2.2. Encouraging the youth to search for the Truth .....	102
3.2.3. Encouraging the youth to obtain transcendence .....	107
3.3. Communal prayer –	
A way to reflect on family community and the relationship with others...	112
3.3.1. Experiencing God’s presence in community .....	113
3.3.2. Encouraging the youth to transform themselves .....	118
3.3.3. Encouraging the youth to transform community .....	123
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>133</b>

## INTRODUCTION

Before 1975, Vietnamese immigrants were a small numbers living in the United States. Most of them were students or families of diplomats and businessmen.<sup>1</sup> After the victory of Communist North Vietnam over the South Vietnam in April 1975, millions of Vietnamese faced crises in their lives and moved overseas as refugees in the United States, Australia, Canada, and European countries.

The number of Vietnamese refugees to the United States came in five waves. The first wave was those who arrived in the United States right after the aftermath of the collapse of South Vietnam (1975), numbering around 130,000 people. The second wave of refugees (1978-79) consisted of the ethnic Chinese, who lived in Cho Lon (China Town- Sai Gon) and were expelled by the Vietnamese government. The third wave (1978-1982) included “boat people,” those who fled Vietnam by boat and ship and estimated about 300,000 people. The fourth wave (1983-1989) was those permitted to reunite with their family through some official programs such as Orderly Departure Program and Humanitarian Operations. The fifth wave came after March 14, 1989, when the political relations between Vietnam and the United States was normalized. It consisted of those who were sponsored by family members or those who came to the United States as tourists and students.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, “Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States,” *MPI*, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/vietnamese-immigrants-united-states>, accessed February 3, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Alicia Campi, “From Refugees To Americans: Thirty Years Of Vietnamese Immigration To The United States,” *Immigration Daily*, [http://www.ilw.com/articles/2006\\_0313-campi.shtm](http://www.ilw.com/articles/2006_0313-campi.shtm), accessed February 20, 2018.

According to the 2015 US Census report, there were 1,980,000 Vietnamese refugees relocated in the United States,<sup>3</sup> of which around 30 percent were Catholic.<sup>4</sup> Of all the States, California has the highest number of Vietnam refugees (834,635 people), next Texas (396,522 people), Washington (75,415 people), Florida (71,831 people), and Virginia (60,510 people).<sup>5</sup>

After having settled in the United States, a free and democratic country, Vietnamese in general, and the youth in particular, have enjoyed their human development, dignities and rights. They have opportunities to receive good educations and are free to practice their religious lives in public. However, being loyal citizens of the United States, being of Vietnamese descent and being faithful members of the Catholic Church, Vietnamese Americans, especially the youth facing some challenges, such as a rift in the relationship with their parents, a crisis of self identity or a crisis in finding the meaning of life. Being affected by relativism, pluralism and other negative things in American culture, the youth may also meet difficulties in defining moral values: what is right or what is wrong. These challenges impact their spiritual lives.

According to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, “They [the faithful] must assist one another to live holier lives in their daily occupations.”<sup>6</sup> After several years of living in the United States, I have learned that young Vietnamese Americans

---

<sup>3</sup> “Vietnamese population in the U.S., 2000-2015,” *Pew Research Center*, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/fact-sheet/asian-americans-vietnamese-in-the-u-s-fact-sheet/>, accessed February 2, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Phan, *Vietnamese-American Catholics*, Pastoral Spirituality Series (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 98.

<sup>5</sup> “Vietnamese population in the U.S., 2000-2015,” *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 36, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html), accessed December 21, 2017.



are encountering social and cultural conflicts that impact their spirituality. Being trained and formed as a Vietnamese Dominican friar, I would like to introduce to these young Catholic Vietnamese Americans a Dominican spirituality that may help them to overcome their challenges and support one another in their faith.

Dominican spirituality is meant for everyone. From the very beginning, it was designed for the First Order (Dominican friars), the Second Order (Dominican nuns), and the Third Order (lay people) who to this day practice Dominican Spirituality. Furthermore, there are many Dominican associates, consisting of clergy, married, single, and widowed persons, who are also committed to the Dominican charism. These layers of the Dominican family show that Dominican spirituality is available to diverse group of people. For young Vietnamese Americans who are facing challenges that affect their moral and spiritual lives, Dominican prayer can serve as a flexible and adaptable remedy which may help them to overcome their challenges, independent of their membership into the Order.

The phrase “young Vietnamese Americans” refers to young Vietnamese who are the 1.5 and 2nd Generations and between the ages of 15-40. The 1.5 Generation refers to those who were born in Vietnam but came to the United States as children and have been raised and educated here. The 2nd Generation refers to Vietnamese children who were born, raised and reside in America.<sup>7</sup> Both the 1.5 and 2nd Generations are encountering some problems of culture and lifestyle that impact their spirituality. For these reasons, I will point out some specific theological dynamics that are found in the

---

<sup>7</sup> “Cultural Crossroads: The Formation of Vietnamese American Consciousness for the 1.5 Generation”, *OAC* [http://www.oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb5x0nb45r&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire\\_text](http://www.oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb5x0nb45r&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire_text), accessed January, 25, 2018.

Dominican spirituality that can be used effectively by young Catholic Vietnamese Americans who are in these 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Generations.

In my research, I will demonstrate how Dominican spirituality is adaptable and flexible; how it integrates an incarnational and sacramental theology which includes an inner life and external activities through human gestures, liturgies and contemplation; and how it can help young Vietnamese Americans who are living in a bi-cultural context (Vietnamese and American cultures) to overcome the challenges that impact their spiritual lives. For my research methods, I will use the social method to analyze the experiences of these Vietnamese refugees who fled Vietnam to the United States. The analytic and synthetic method will be used to indicate what are the advantages and disadvantages that these young Vietnamese Americans are facing. It is also helpful for me to use the contextual and historical methods to analyze the formation of Dominican Spirituality. Finally, I will employ theological method to analyze and explain how Dominican prayers can be understood, interpreted and used by the young Vietnamese Americans.

Accordingly, my thesis consists of three chapters. After the Introduction, Chapter One presents the opportunities and challenges in the lives of the youth from the three perspectives of sociology, culture and religion. From the sociological perspective, the youth have been protected in their human development and dignity and nurtured by modern education and employment opportunities. However, they are facing challenges, such as tensions caused by rifts in their relationships with their parents, and challenges in their moral lives. From the cultural perspective, the youth have the opportunity to enjoy both cultures and to integrate the positive aspects of the two cultures as well as

dealing with the negative dimension of both cultures. Located in the in-between cultures, they are often found facing identity crisis, struggling to define themselves racially and culturally. From the religious perspective, the youth have been free to practice their lives as Catholics in public. However, working long hours, they do not have time for their spiritual lives, and they may fall into a crisis regarding the meaning of life.

From these three aspects of sociology, culture and religion, I will draw a conclusion. The opportunities which these young people are given help them to develop their personalities and dignity in the modern world. At the same time, the challenges they are presented with affect the youth morally and spiritually in relation to themselves, to others and to God. I will recommend Dominican spirituality, which combines relationships to oneself, to others and to God, as a means to be used by the youth to work through these challenges.

In Chapter Two, I will provide a brief definition on spirituality and on prayer in the Christian tradition. I will show the relationship between prayer and spirituality. Prayer, in relationship to spirituality, can be considered as a means that helps people enter into a personal relationship with God. In the light of these definitions, I will examine Dominican spirituality in its four aspects: prayer, community, study and ministry. Then I will focus on the first of these aspects which is prayer. Furthermore, all Christian prayer requires three elements: the human person, God, and the encounter between God and the human person. Therefore, in an effort to explain prayer in the light of Dominican spirituality, I will examine: how Dominic understood the human person and how the human person participates in Dominican prayer; how Dominic understood

God, and how God is experienced in these prayers; and how Dominicans encounter God in prayer through liturgy (communal prayer), contemplation (mental prayer) and bodily gestures (private prayer).

Lastly, Chapter Three shows how the Dominican ways of prayer can help young Vietnamese Americans. The challenges which the youth face can be summed up in the three relationships: relation to oneself (individual), relation to others (community) and relation to God (Divine). These challenges can be overcome by introducing the youth to the three ways of Dominican prayer: the Liturgy (communal prayer), contemplation (mental prayer), and the Nine ways (private prayer). The practice of private prayer, which includes the use of the body in prayer, encourages the youth to devote themselves to praying in all circumstances so that they can nourish their spiritual lives. Mental prayer is a way to contemplate God and search for Truth. In searching for the Truth, the young people will hopefully accept themselves as they are and, as a result, overcome their identity crises. Communal prayer is a way to reflect on the community of the family and one's relationship with others. Communal prayer will encourage the youth to reflect on the community of their family and heal the rifts in their family, especially with their parents. Also, communal prayer will help them to combat the effects of the negative influences in American culture.

**Chapter I**

**THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE LIFE**

**OF YOUNG VIETNAMESE AMERICANS**

Residing in the United States, young Vietnamese Americans receive many opportunities which come from the aspects of society, culture and religion. However, they also face many challenges that come from those aspects as well.

**1.1. The sociological aspect**

**1.1.1. The opportunities for the youth**

*Being protected in their human development and dignity:* The Catholic Social Teachings on the theme of Human Dignity are based on the foundation that humans were created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-31). Each person has value and is worthy of great respect. “Human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society.”<sup>8</sup> In the *American Constitution*, namely in the *Bill of Rights*, we can see that some of these rights. The *Constitution* sets forth the freedoms that all Americans enjoy. They have the freedom of religion (all American have the right to practice any religion), the freedom of speech (all Americans are free to express their thoughts and ideas about anything), the freedom of assembly (all Americans are free to meet together to discuss problems and to plan their actions), and so on.<sup>9</sup> These rights are guaranteed by the rule of law and give the citizens plenty of scope to exercise their responsibilities. Living in the United States, young Vietnamese

---

<sup>8</sup> “Life and Dignity of the Human Person”, *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/life-and-dignity-of-the-human-person.cfm>, accessed January, 12, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> *Constitution Of The United States Of America—1787*, Amendment 1, <http://uscode.house.gov/static/constitution.pdf>, accessed January 15, 2018.

Americans can appreciate these priceless rights which protect them and give them the opportunity to live in freedom and democracy. All of which they did not experience in their homeland or prior to coming to the United States.

For Americans who have not suffered persecution and oppression, these basic freedoms and democratic institution are seen as a normal part of life. However, for immigrants and refugees, “these [freedoms] are very things they have risked life and limb for, and they treasure them as opportunities for a full flourishing of their human potential.”<sup>10</sup> Particularly, Vietnamese Americans, who have experienced restrictions on freedom speech and freedom of religion when they were in Vietnam, can enjoy these opportunities to develop their own dignity. Furthermore, the American Catholic Church has “provided Vietnamese-American Catholics with a welcoming home in which to live their faith and preserve their religious heritage.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the youth have a lot of opportunities to have comprehensive human development and to practice their Christian faith.

***Being nurtured by the modern educational system:*** The United States is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in Best Countries for Education.<sup>12</sup> In fact, American colleges and universities are the most attractive for the international students. A study shows that “the number of foreign students on F-1 visas in U.S. colleges and universities grew dramatically from 110,000 in 2001 to 524,000 in 2012.”<sup>13</sup> Living in the United States, the immigrants in general, and young Vietnamese Americans in particular, can be nurtured by the modern

---

<sup>10</sup> Peter Chan, *Vietnamese-American Catholics*, 128.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> “Best Countries for Education”, *U.S. News*, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/education-full-list> accessed January 13, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> “The Geography of Foreign Students in U.S. Higher Education: Origins and Destinations”, *Brookings*, <https://www.brookings.edu/interactives/the-geography-of-foreign-students-in-u-s-higher-education-origins-and-destinations>, accessed January 13, 2018 .

educational system from the lowest to the highest levels, from parochial schools to universities.

The Vietnamese people highly regard education and literature. In traditional Vietnamese culture, learned people were placed at the top of the social scale.<sup>14</sup> Family is the source of the motivation for the children's educational success. As Zhou Min and Bankston Carl say: “Vietnamese students who have strong orientations to family values tend to spend more time on their schoolwork and to receive better academic grades than their counterparts with weak family-value orientation.”<sup>15</sup> Being in the United States, the youth are encouraged by their families to pursue higher education. In fact, the percentage of Vietnamese youth attending school is quite high. For example, in 1990, almost half of Vietnamese Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 were in college, compared with 39.5 percent of white Americans and 28.1 percent of black Americans in the same age group.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, the high school dropout rates among young Vietnamese Americans were lower than those of other Americans. Namely, “only 6.5 percent of Vietnamese Americans from ages 16 to 19 were neither enrolled in high school nor school graduates, compared to 9.8 percent of white American youth and 13.7 percent of black American youth.”<sup>17</sup> However, young Vietnamese Americans tend to have slightly lower educational attainment compared to the overall foreign- and native-born populations. For example, according to the US Census 2014, “approximately 25 percent of

---

<sup>14</sup> The learned people (sĩ) were at the top of the social scale, followed by the farmers (nông), the skilled workers (công) and lastly, the businessmen (thương).

<sup>15</sup> Zhou Min and Carl L. Bankston, *Growing Up American: How Vietnamese Children Adapt to Life in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998), 223.

<sup>16</sup> Carl L. Bankston III, “Vietnamese Americans,” *Countries and Their Cultures*, <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Sr-Z/Vietnamese-Americans.html>, accessed January 15, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Vietnamese immigrants (ages 25 and over) had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 29 percent of the total foreign-born population and 30 percent of the U.S.-born population."<sup>18</sup>

***Employment opportunities and high income:*** As it has been pointed out, in the five waves of Vietnamese refugees to the United States, the first wave of refugees was part of a United States sponsored evacuation and consisted mainly of military personnel; they were well-educated professionals associated with the U.S. military.<sup>19</sup> The four later groups consisted of mostly students, small-business owners, farmers, fishermen, craftsmen and unskilled laborers.<sup>20</sup> Generally speaking, these people came from rural areas and were often less educated. After settling in the United States, most Vietnamese immigrants, who had experienced socioeconomic deprivation and, in some case, extreme poverty in Vietnam, found suitable jobs, and work hard to earn money. Therefore, although most of the Vietnamese Americans were not well educated, they still have relatively high and stable incomes.

Vietnamese Americans may be found in most jobs, but they seem to show a preference for technical jobs, such as electrical engineering and machine assembling, and the fishing industry. Many Vietnamese Americans are finding economic success in restaurants, small businesses such as food stores, and import-export shops. Nail salons are an important source of living for Vietnamese Americans. It is said that "nearly 45 percent of the nail salons in the United States which employ Vietnamese technicians are

---

<sup>18</sup> Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, "Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States," Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Phan, "Vietnamese Catholics in the United States: Christian Identity Between the Old and the New", *US. Catholic Historian*, 18, no.1 (Winter, 2000), 20.



Vietnamese owned.”<sup>21</sup> In all professions, according to a US Census report in 1990, about ten percent of Vietnamese Americans were self-employed- owned businesses, including 25,671 firms, with 13, 357 employees.<sup>22</sup> The unemployment rate for Vietnamese Americans is quite low, only 5.3 percent, even for those people who belong to the second-wave refugees, the unemployment rate is only 6.3 percent.<sup>23</sup>

From these statistics, we can realize that the first generations of Vietnamese who immigrated into the United States, although limited in education, have worked hard, using their talents and abilities. As a result, they enjoy high incomes and low unemployment rates. The youth (1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations), who are more educated, will have even more opportunities to get good jobs and higher incomes.

### **1.1.2. The Challenges of the youth**

*The rift in a relationship with their parents:* Being grounded in Confucianism, Vietnamese consider family as the “basis of all society.” The family bond calls for the unity of all members. However, the relationships between parents and children are showing signs of cracking down in three ways when they live in the context of the American culture.

First, language is a barrier in the relationship between parents and children. Mentioned by the US Census 2014, Vietnamese immigrants were much less likely to be proficient in English than other immigrant groups. “There is about 67 percent of Vietnamese immigrants (ages 5 and over) reported to have limited English proficiency, compared to 50 percent of the overall foreign-born population. Approximately 8 percent

---

<sup>21</sup> “Vietnamese Nail Salons”, *Asian Nation*, <http://www.asian-nation.org/headlines/2007/04/vietnamese-nail-salons/#sthash.ZlPbWiRV.dpbs>, accessed January 14, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Carl L. Bankston III, “Vietnamese Americans,” *Ibid*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*.

of the Vietnamese immigrants spoke only English at home.”<sup>24</sup> That means parents do not have enough English to speak to their children, or parents want to maintain Vietnamese language for their children by not speaking English at home. However, the statistics above proved that parents do not have enough English. Because of the barrier of language, the young (2<sup>nd</sup> generation) at home are not understood by their parents, since they often do not speak Vietnamese well. At school, they are pressured to succeed to please their parents. However, they are handicapped academically because, although they were born and raised in the United States, they may not have a good command of English since it is not the language spoken at home.<sup>25</sup> The parents who have problems with English feel deficient and helpless. They also feel dependent upon their children when they ask them to be interpreters or to teach them English. When parents do not learn enough English and the young do not learn enough Vietnamese, communication between parents and children tends to break down, leading to misunderstanding and tension.<sup>26</sup> The parents do not know how to reduce the tension or misunderstandings, which develop between them and their children. The young people get caught in the middle.

Second, the rift between parents and children is also seen with regard to cultural adaptation. While the older people emphasize structure and tradition, the young people (1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations) emphasize freedom and change. As a result, parents complain that their children living in the United States are stubborn and disobedient; the young people in turn argue that their parents are too conservative. Furthermore, while the

---

<sup>24</sup> Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, “Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States,” Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Dominika Baran, *Language in immigrant America* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 63.

<sup>26</sup> Hien Duc Do, *The Vietnamese American* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 126.

young choose different ways of adapting to new cultures, the older people like to keep their traditions. Parents want their children to keep up the traditions which they believe to be valuable, but children do not like nor associate with these values.<sup>27</sup> The youth feel constrained and not comfortable at home. They rebel against the views of their parents and find other pleasures outside of the family.

Third, the rift between Vietnamese parents and children can be exacerbated by adherence to the traditional culture. For example, talking about sex is taboo in the Vietnamese culture. Parents think that sexuality is private, and they seldom talk about it to their children. Unlike Vietnamese parents, modern American parents are more open on this topic; they can talk about sex when their children appear to be more mature. Vietnamese children (2<sup>nd</sup> generation) born in the United States may see a contrast between the Vietnamese and the American family in that there is a certain distance between Vietnamese parents and their children which makes it hard for the generations to share openly about sexuality. Vietnamese parents can find it hard to adapt to the new culture and, as a result, hard to get along with their children.<sup>28</sup> Although living in the same house, children feel separated from their parents. They may also be curious to learn about sexuality and turn to movies or websites for information and guidance. As the result, the curiosity of the children may lead them to unhealthy resources and immoral behavior.

These differences make the relationship between parents and children tense. This can make the young withdraw from their family, rebel against their parents, withdraw

---

<sup>27</sup> Yoonsun Choi, "Intergenerational Cultural Dissonance, Parent–Child Conflict and Bonding, and Youth Problem Behaviors among Vietnamese and Cambodian Immigrant Families", *J Youth Adolescence* (2008) 37: 85–96, 86.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 87.

themselves from society, or even fall into suicidal thoughts. As Jerry Johnston warns, “The reason for youth suicides is that parents and young people don’t get along.”<sup>29</sup> As a results of these rifts, children feel lonely within the family and isolated in the Vietnamese culture.

***Challenges in their moral lives:*** The first challenge is that the youth have been affected by relativism and pluralism. Relativism was originated from Sophist Protagoras, a Sophist of ancient Greece.<sup>30</sup> His first statement about relativism was quoted by Plato: “The way things appear to me, in that way they exist for me; and the way things appears to you, in that way they exist for you.”<sup>31</sup> Gradually, relativism has been framed in this way: “The truth is rooted in the individual hearer, receiver, and observer rather than the source fact, ... truth is determined by whatever you want to it to be, that all truths are the same, and all truths are equally valid.”<sup>32</sup> In this sense, relativism claims that all ideas or beliefs are equal and lead to the same results. The problem of relativism is that it drives each person to find his or her individual truth but denies the truth which is recognized by society or religions. Especially, it denies God who is the absolute Truth.

---

<sup>29</sup> Jerry Johnston, *Who’s Listening?: What Our Kids Are Trying to Tell Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 24.

<sup>30</sup> Protagoras of Abdera (c.485-415 BCE). See more: “Protagoras”, *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, <https://www.ancient.eu/protagoras/>, accessed January 23, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> *Theaetetus* 152a in “Relativism”, <http://www.friesian.com/relative.htm>, accessed January 23, 2018.

<sup>32</sup> “Dangers Behind Relativism”, *Worldview*, <http://exploreworldviews.com/dangers-behind-relativism/>, accessed December 2, 2017.

Similar to relativism, pluralism originated from the ancient philosopher Epicurus<sup>33</sup> when he spoke of the “plurality of worlds”<sup>34</sup> and held that reality consists of many parts. There are many kinds of pluralism: Religious pluralism (different religions contain truth even if these truths contradict each other); Ethical pluralism (different moral systems are equally valid, although some may be better than others), and cultural pluralism (different cultures are equally valid, although some may be more utilitarian and beneficial to society than others.)<sup>35</sup> Pluralism’s argument sounds reasonable, but it actually contains many problems. For example, religious pluralism argues that all religions contain some truths. That can mean that all religions are more or less valid or even equally true. However, the truth found in other religions are not adequate to bring about salvation. Pluralism has become a core problem for the Christian faith. Cardinal Ratzinger stated the problem this way: “Pluralism has thus become the central problem for the faith at the present time... It is presented as a position defined positively by the concepts of tolerance and knowledge through dialogue and freedom, concepts which would be limited if the existence of one valid truth for all were affirmed.”<sup>36</sup>

In the history of Western philosophy, there have been a lot of arguments on the issues of relativism and pluralism. Although debates on relativism and pluralism do not appear front and center in public discourse, the themes of relativism and pluralism create an undercurrent of tension in many issues which our society faces. One such issue

---

<sup>33</sup> Epicurus (341–270 BCE), see more: Epicurus, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Epicurus>, accessed January 22, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Norman, “The Idea of Pluralism in the United States”, <http://ourpluralhistory.stcc.edu/resources/Curriculum/TheIdeaofPluralism.pdf>, accessed January 23, 2018.

<sup>35</sup> “What is Pluralism?”, *CARM*, accessed December 2, 2017, <https://carm.org/what-is-pluralism>, accessed January 15, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> “Cardinal Ratzinger on Religious Pluralism,” [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057%2F9780230510685\\_8](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057%2F9780230510685_8), accessed December 2, 2017.

is the role of religion in public life and the debate over moral standards. Youth who have not been properly educated to discern right from wrong may come to believe that what is acceptable in society is normal and good or at least not deserving of disrepute. For example, according to many in the prevailing culture, sex can be enjoyed in many circumstances, but the Catholic Church teaches that sex is for procreation and is to be enjoyed by those who have taken the marriage vows.<sup>37</sup> For those in married life, their sexual relationship is an expression of total dedication to one another (husband and wife) and is directed toward reproduction. In contrast, the argument of relativism and pluralism muddy the waters, so to speak. They not only promote a misunderstanding about sexuality, but they also lead to the acceptance of same sex union and abortion.

The second challenge is that, while the youth are looking for role models and hungry for spiritual support, they are often affected negatively by the media. Although media has many benefits, it promotes the endorsement of premarital sex, encourages same-sex marriage, and promotes abortion rights. These messages can affect the young people, consciously or unconsciously, especially when they look up to idols whose immoral lives are promoted and accepted in the media. Living in the American culture, the youth are often affected by people who disregard ethical issues. According to the Gallup Poll research on values and beliefs, 8 percent of Americans consider American morality as positive, 14 percent have a neutral point of view, and 76 percent say that American morality is negative.<sup>38</sup> Obviously, if the youth follow the negative lifestyle

---

<sup>37</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 352.

<sup>38</sup> “Four Decades of Trends in Attitudes toward Family Issues in the United States: The 1960s through the 1990s,” *HighBeam Research*, <https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P3-91696700.html>, accessed November 25, 2017.

which they so often find in the media, they may be drawn to an immoral life. However, this proves that young people are looking for something: an idol or an ideal to live by.

From a Catholic perspective, the negative things in American culture, such as premarital sex, abortion, same-sex marriage, and materialism, make it difficult for young Vietnamese American to be faithful in their moral lives. According to *The New Dictionary of Theology*, “Moral life has a very high significance for Christians. It is the place where one meets God. It is a form of discipleship. It expresses one’s faith, hope and love.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, in order to meet God, young Vietnamese Americans need to form a right conscience so that they can determine for themselves what is right and what is wrong in this relativistic society. However, what will help them form a correct conscience? A guide to a moral life and spiritual life is very necessary for the youth so that they can gain self-knowledge and evaluate what is happening in their lives and in the society.

## **1.2. The cultural aspect**

### **1.2.1. The Opportunities for the youth**

*Enriching themselves with the both cultures:* Living in the context of two cultures, young Vietnamese Americans have many opportunities to inherit the values of the Vietnamese culture as well as the values of the American culture. Furthermore, they may integrate the two cultures together and use them well.

*Inheriting the values of Vietnamese culture:* Vietnam was under the domination of China for a total of ten centuries (111 B.C.E - 939 C.E).<sup>40</sup> During that time,

---

<sup>39</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson, J. I. Packer, and David F. Wright, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 677.

<sup>40</sup> Phan Phat Huon, *History of the Catholic Church in Vietnam*, (California: Cúu Thế Tùng Thư, 2000), 33.

Vietnamese people were affected by the Chinese culture, especially by Confucian ethics that were “based for the existence of and extended family<sup>41</sup>” with reverence for ancestors and respect for elders.<sup>42</sup> The structure of extended family has been maintained through 2,000 years of Vietnamese history and has contributed to the values of the Vietnamese culture.

The first of the Vietnamese values is the allegiance to the family. Family has been considered as a system of mini society which has the strongest voice and authority over the activities in the house.<sup>43</sup> The family members should take care of each other. The obligation of filial piety is considered the most essential of all virtues in the Vietnamese society. The highest status in a Vietnamese family is given to the man (father) who provides the main source of income for the household. Traditionally, women took a secondary place in the family; they were not allowed to participate work in society, but were responsible for housework and taking care their children. Vietnamese families desire to have a boy in order to have a male descendant. Today, the roles of the father and mother are becoming more equal, but the value of the extended family, which led to strong relationships among family members, still remains, even though the relationships today are more focused on the nuclear family.

The second Vietnamese value is to show respect for each other. Respect, which is expressed to people who are senior, elderly, or of higher status and position, is considered to be the basis of relationships in the family. At home, parents, older

---

<sup>41</sup> Extended family means the extended multi-generation pattern: grandparents, the parents, their sons and their wives, their children, and unmarried siblings.

<sup>42</sup> “Vietnamese Traditional Family Values”, Vietnamese Culture, <http://www.vietnam-culture.com/articles-53-6/Vietnamese-traditional-family-values.aspx>, accessed January 15, 2018.

<sup>43</sup> Hoang Nguyen, Vietnamese Identity: “Vietnamese traditional family values”, *Looking in the Popular Culture Mirror*, <https://lookinginthepopularculturemirror.wordpress.com/2016/06/01/vietnamese-identity-vietnamese-traditional-family-values/>, accessed January 15, 2018.



siblings, and older relatives are respected by the younger family members. Outside the family, elderly people, teachers, clergymen, supervisors and people in high positions are shown respect by those who are in a lower status. This respect is one of the essential factors in Vietnamese culture and has led to a lifestyle that is based upon the order of relationships found in the Confucian tradition rather than on rational analysis.<sup>44</sup> As a Vietnamese proverb says, “a hundred rational thoughts does not weigh as much as one sentimental thought” or “one should put compassion above logical thinking.”<sup>45</sup> The lifestyles of the Vietnamese people, being based upon the traditional order in relationships, emphasizes respectful sentiments over reason.

The third value in Vietnamese culture is the yearning to have a good name. For Vietnamese people, a good name is better than any material possession. In order to acquire a good name, a person must avoid all words and actions that damage his dignity and honor. There are at least three ways by which a person can acquire a good name, namely by heroic deeds, by intellectual achievements and by moral virtues.<sup>46</sup> These values encourage people to talk and do useful things. The proverb “After death, a tiger leaves behind his skin, a man his reputation” inspires people to live this life in such a way that their good name remains forever. Therefore, the Vietnamese tend to think that they must live not just for themselves but for something bigger than themselves.

---

<sup>44</sup> Tan Phan, “Interdependent self: self-perceptions of Vietnamese American youths,” *Adolescence*, Vol. 40, No. 158, Summer 2005, 436.

<sup>45</sup> Vietnamese language: “một trăm cái lý không bằng một tí cái tình”, translated by Thi Thuy Minh Nguyen, “Requests and Politeness in Vietnamese as a Native Language”, <http://www.jbe-platform.com/docserver/prag.23.4.05ngu.pdf?expires=1516991996&id=id&acname=guest&checksum=257A26EF03DD90E2A0F6BCD7E4E79E2F>, accessed January 23, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> Tan Phan, “A Qualitative Study of Vietnamese Parental Involvement and their High Academic Achieving Children”, *Journal of Authentic Learning*, Volume 1, 2004, 56-57.

The fourth value is love of learning. In Vietnamese culture, learning is considered more valuable than wealth and material success. Knowledge and learning (scholars, writers and teachers) are ranked first, before the farmer, artisan, and tradesman.<sup>47</sup> Learned people not only are highly respected but also have the essential stepping stone to the social ladder and to good job opportunities. This fourth value explains why parents always encourage their children to study.

*Enjoying the values of the American culture:* Besides the values of the Vietnamese culture, the youth enjoy the values of the American culture, which is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world where more than 300 languages are spoken.<sup>48</sup> American culture, which has no a dominant culture in a mixture of many cultures, has been described as a “melting pot.” Nowadays, people prefer to describe it as a “salad bowl.” The author Gary R. Weaver show us its meaning: “In a salad, each vegetable adds its own texture and taste just as men and women or black, white, yellow or brown races combine to create a society where individual differences in gender, race, religion, or ethnic background are valued.”<sup>49</sup> Truly, there are diverse cultures, but each nation or culture can keep its differences and still be part of the overall society. These diversities of ethnic groups and cultures have helped shape the American culture which is expressed through the attitudes and behaviors of Americans. Being in American culture, young Vietnamese Americans can enjoy the following typical values:

The first is independence. From a young age, American citizens are encouraged not to depend (too much) on others, but to be independent. Therefore, American people

---

<sup>47</sup> “The Vietnamese Value System”, *Vietnam Culture*, <http://www.vietnam-culture.com/articles-18-6/The-Vietnamese-Value-System.aspx>, accessed January 18, 2018.

<sup>48</sup> “American Culture: Traditions and Customs of the United States”, *LIVESCL=NCE*, <https://www.livescience.com/28945-american-culture.html>, accessed January 15, 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Gary Weaver, “American Cultural Values”, *Intercultural Training*, Winter, 1997, Vol. 14, 19.

consider themselves to be separate individuals who are in control of their own lives.<sup>50</sup> They believe in the concept of individualism and try hard to reach their goals and to affirm themselves in whatever they do. The second American value is equality. This value is written into *The American Declaration of Independence*: “all [people] are created equal.”<sup>51</sup> Americans believe that all people, including men, women, and all ethnic and cultural group, are of equal standing. This equality is expressed in the manner of address. Americans rarely use a term of address such as “sir” or “madam,” but they often use the first name or given name, even if they address those who are known as managers, directors, presidents and even university instructors.

The third is informality. The value of equality causes Americans to be rather informal in their behavior toward other people. This informality is expressed in speech, dress, and posture.<sup>52</sup> For example, a student may go to class in shorts and a t-shirt. The informality does not mean rudeness or irreverence; simply, it is a part of American culture and American lifestyle. The fourth American value is directness. In dealings with other people, Americans tend to value frankness and openness. Americans are encouraged to speak up and give their opinions. For them, discussions among the people involved is the best way to solve conflict and disagreements. Therefore, if someone has a problem with someone else, he or she should tell the person directly and clearly in order to come up with a solution to the problem.

***Integrating the two cultures together and beyond:*** Gray Weaver makes the comparison that “culture is like an iceberg. The tip of the ice is the smallest part. Most

---

<sup>50</sup> David G. Hackett (ed), *Religion and American Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 540.

<sup>51</sup> The Final Text of the Declaration of Independence July 4 1776, *American History*, <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/documents/1776-1785/the-final-text-of-the-declaration-of-independence-july-4-1776.php>, accessed January 16, 2018.

<sup>52</sup> “American Culture: Traditions and Customs of the United States,” Ibid.

of the iceberg is submerged...the behaviors of people are the smallest of culture.... The greatest part, internal culture, is beneath the water level of awareness.”<sup>53</sup> This statement means that the manifestation of a culture is the values that one can see, but the root of culture is the system of values that one can't see. However, that system of values is the decisive factor which shapes the behaviors of people. When people come together from different cultures, it is like two cultural icebergs coming together. As the two icebergs collide, people see and learn the differences in their behaviors and hopefully begin to understand some of the system of values of the other culture.

In the context of Vietnamese American cultures, the collision is not between people coming from different cultures, but inside a person who is living a bi-cultural life. That person must get in touch with and sink deeply into the structural values of both cultures. In this way, young Vietnamese Americans can understand the differences between the cultural values and learn how to integrate the two cultures together and use them successfully in their lives. In the previous analysis I have pointed out some of the problems which the youth encounter when adjusting to the American culture and living bi-culturally. In the following section, I will suggest four different ways in which the positive elements from each culture can be combined successfully.

*Receiving independence but maintaining good relationship and cooperation:*  
American culture emphasizes independence which helps each person consider himself or herself as self-centered and not dependent on others. Even though, individualism helps people to determine their own identity, it can cause people to become isolated and lonely. In fact, when many elderly try to live self-reliant lives without depending on

---

<sup>53</sup> Gary Weaver, “American Cultural Values,” 15.

their children they feel lonely. Because the youth in America cannot stop competing as individuals, they may have difficulties cooperating with others and forming intimate relationships.<sup>54</sup> Opposite to individualism is the focus on the group which is emphasized in Vietnamese culture. This focus helps people have good relationships and cooperation with others; however, they may fall into a lifestyle dependent on others. If the Vietnamese youth take the best from the two cultures, they can both keep their independence as well as maintain good relationships in cooperation with others.

*Take equality but keep the respect for the hierarchy:* American people emphasize equality. Each person, man or woman, is important not because of which family he or she comes from but because of who they are. This belief in the fundamental value of each individual gives people opportunities to get education, employment or advancement in society; however, as a result of this belief, some people can refuse to show appropriate respect for good and honorable people who are in the hierarchy. Opposite to equality is hierarchy which is very important in Vietnamese culture and emphasizes respect based on age or gender, e.g. valuing men above women. The hierarchy maintains order in the family and in society, but the elderly and high-ranking and powerful people can easily abuse their authority in order to discriminate against others and to maintain positions of unequal status which work in their favor. From the values of these two cultures, the youth can take equality but still keep respect for the hierarchy.

*Acquiescing to a casual attitude toward others but still maintaining the value a good name:* It is said that formality is “un-American.” A casual attitude between people

---

<sup>54</sup> David G. Hackett (ed), *Religion and American Culture*, 539.

is more acceptable and promotes warmth and equality. However, this casual approach can be easily abused by people, for example, by showing rudeness or irreverence in communicating with others or wearing inappropriate dress in the sanctuary. Opposite to informality is formality which is seen in the Vietnamese culture. People are respected for age and status. As the result, Vietnamese people tend to attain a good name and save face at all cost. However, the importance of having a good name and saving face can lead people to life of dishonesty; as the proverb says: “It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest.”<sup>55</sup> From the American perspective, the youth learn to adopt a casual attitude in their behavior toward others, but from the Vietnamese perspective, they are challenged to maintain the value of having a good name.

*Directness but harmony:* Americans tend to tell the “truth” and not worry about saving the other person’s face, for “truth is a function of reality not of circumstance.”<sup>56</sup> Opposite to directness is indirectness which is found in the Vietnamese culture and emphasizes harmony and the avoidance of conflict. American people use the word “yes” to express agreement. Vietnamese people use the word “yes” for all questions: yes may be agreement, but it may be a polite way of saying “Yes, I am listening,” or “yes, I am confused,” or “yes, I do not want to offend.”<sup>57</sup> From these two seemingly opposite values, the youth can go beyond the two by valuing frankness but still being watchful of the other person’s dignity.

---

<sup>55</sup> The Vietnamese proverb: “Vạch áo cho người xem lưng” or “Tốt đẹp phô ra xấu xa đậy lại” (It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest). See more “Idioms – Thành ngữ tiếng Anh thông dụng nhất,” <https://tienganhaz.com/idioms-67-thanh-ngu-tieng-anh-thong-dung-nhat/>, accessed March 7, 2018.

<sup>56</sup> “US-American Values”, <http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/pub/1.4.2 - US-American Values.htm>, accessed January 15, 2018.

<sup>57</sup> Vietnamese Character, Personality And Sense Of Humor”, *Facts and Details*, [http://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Vietnam/sub5\\_9c/entry-3385.html](http://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Vietnam/sub5_9c/entry-3385.html), accessed January 15, 2018.

The values of Vietnamese and American cultures seem to contradict each other. However, each culture has positive and negative aspects. Being in both cultures, the youth have opportunities to “eliminate bad and keep beauty”<sup>58</sup> and to balance their lives between reason and sentiment. In doing so, they can fuse the two cultures together successfully. By doing this they can bring about personal and societal transformation and enrichment.

### **1.2.2. The Challenges of the youth**

*Identity crisis:* Vietnamese American youth (1.5 generation) can quickly become Americanized, either by forgetting Vietnamese culture or letting go of the nuances of their Vietnamese culture.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation can become estranged from their heritage. The two generations (1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup>) are challenged with identity crises relating to culture and race.

First, let us look at how the identity crisis relates to culture. During their childhood, individuals do not question their identities. They accept themselves as defined by their parents. However, when they venture into the adolescent years, they begin to question their identity.<sup>60</sup> The Vietnamese American youth want to explore the issues of identity and cultural connection; however, when doing so, the explanations of their identity which they encounter at home and in school are often in conflict. Like their peers in the school, the children learn about their identity in the context of the American culture. However, at home and in the Vietnamese culture, their parents talk about an identity which differs from that which they learn in school. For this reason,

---

<sup>58</sup> The Vietnamese proverb: “gạn đục khơi trong” (eliminate bad and keep beauty) means one should get rid out of the bad and the ugly but maintain and promote the beauty and the good.

<sup>59</sup> Peter Phan, *Vietnamese-American Catholics*, 75.

<sup>60</sup> Tan Phan, “Interdependent self: self-perceptions of Vietnamese American youths,” 437.

“many children suffered an identity crisis as a result of cultural conflicts between the teachings in schools and the lessons learned from the immigrant parents at home.”<sup>61</sup> The point is how can they create something new out of the tension between the two cultures and learn to live successfully.

Even though the youth live in a family of Vietnamese culture, they often feel unfamiliar with Vietnamese culture. At the same time, while in the American culture, which is diversified and pluralistic, consisting of many cultures and subcultures, the youth find it very difficult to define: what is the American culture.<sup>62</sup> They may learn that there is no one American culture. However, the identity of the youth is usually defined by what they see, hear, and learn from media.<sup>63</sup> American media suggests that the youth are supposed to live individually and materialistically. The Vietnamese American youth find these values to run counter to their home culture. They are attracted to both cultures, and, at the same time, repelled by both cultures. Consequently, they feel as if they are living at the margins of the two cultures; they belong to neither completely Asian nor completely American.

Second, how does the identity crisis relate to race? This crisis mainly happens to the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. The youth, who were born in The United States, realize that their skin color (yellow) and physical features (slanted eyes and flat nose) have originated from Asia. They may be asked by Anglos where they come from and what their country

---

<sup>61</sup> Hong Pham, “Cultural Crossroads: The Formation of Vietnamese American Consciousness for the 1.5 Generation”, *OAC*, [http://www.oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb5x0nb45r&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire\\_text](http://www.oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb5x0nb45r&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire_text), accessed January 15, 2018.

<sup>62</sup> Avery Dulles “The Uneasy Dialogue”, *Catholicism and American culture- Vantage Point: 1990*, November 30, 2015, 22.

<sup>63</sup> Tai Pham, “Interdependent self: Self-perceptions of Vietnamese American Youths”, *Adolescence*, Vol. 40, No. 158, Summer 2005, 439.



is like. Yet, they know nothing about Vietnamese history, geography, language, literature and culture.<sup>64</sup> Although they can speak English fluently as native Americans do, and they behave externally like Americans, because of their appearance, they still feel deeply that they are not completely American.

The identity crisis of Vietnamese American youth results from conflicts in culture and race and shows that the youth live in a complex and multicultural milieu. “More than any other Vietnamese-American cohort, Vietnamese youths truly live betwixt and between two cultures, belonging to neither fully.”<sup>65</sup> Therefore, being betwixt and between cultures, the young Vietnamese Americans are faced with an identity crisis. They may ask themselves: “Who am I? Am I Vietnamese or am I American?”

***How to define themselves racially and culturally:*** The challenge for the youth is not how to learn to be Catholic or how to live in American culture, but how to “define themselves racially and culturally.”<sup>66</sup> The fact is that the youth find themselves in the context of a multicultural environment. How can they deal with this successfully? Here are some suggestions:

Culturally, being in a minority Vietnamese culture and in the middle of the large and diverse American culture, the youth may feel insecure and ashamed. Erik Erickson, a psychologist, suggests that to possess a strong personal and wholesome identity, first and foremost, Vietnamese Americans must be rooted in their Vietnamese culture. They must remember where they come from, realize the impact of the present day culture, and

---

<sup>64</sup> Hong Pham, “Cultural Crossroads: The Formation of Vietnamese American Consciousness for the 1.5 Generation”, Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Chan, *Vietnamese-American Catholics*, 75.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 70.

re-evaluate the previous identification given to them by others in the society.<sup>67</sup> This suggestion may help the youth to overcome their insecurity and shame by learning to accept themselves, to accept their identity rooted in Vietnamese culture and to express themselves as they are. However, for the youth, especially the Vietnamese American youth, self acceptance is difficult because it requires the kind of self-evaluation to which Erickson refers. How can the youth be motivated and supported in such self-evaluation?

Racially, it is noted that “As for the children reared in America, the identity crisis they experienced was exacerbated by a racism that permeated many areas of public life”<sup>68</sup>. The Vietnamese American youth are unclear as to how to describe themselves and the own identity within a racial context. They feel marginalized and suppressed by the glass ceiling. Conscious of the color difference, they found it difficult to assert themselves in the society. One of the most striking means of recognizing one’s identity and identifying racism is through exposure to various cultural systems.<sup>69</sup> Acculturation will raise their awareness of personal and institutional racism. The point is, how can they be more accepted into the dominant American culture and not disown their Vietnamese culture? How can they express themselves in an American culture they are unfamiliar with when they do not accept their own Vietnamese culture?

---

<sup>67</sup> Sharon Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dream: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (Sanfrancisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 31.

<sup>68</sup> “Cultural Crossroads: The Formation of Vietnamese American Consciousness for the 1.5 Generation”, [http://www.oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb5x0nb45r&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire\\_text](http://www.oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb5x0nb45r&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire_text), accessed January, 25, 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Hong Pham, “Cultural Crossroads: The Formation of Vietnamese American Consciousness for the 1.5 Generation”, Ibid.

### 1.3. The religious aspect

#### 1.3.1. The Opportunities for the youth

*Being free to practice their lives as Catholics in public:* the United States has the most religions in the world. There are about 313 religions and denominations.<sup>70</sup> The right of religious freedom is guaranteed for all Americans; they may practice any religion they choose. There is no official religion. The American Constitution does not permit the government to support any religion.<sup>71</sup> The percentage of people who have religious belief is very high. One American survey reported that, 80 percent of Americans consider religion very or quite important and 94 percent of Americans express faith in God.<sup>72</sup> Roman Catholics are the largest single Christian group, about 81.6 million Americans, equivalent to 25% of the overall American population.<sup>73</sup> The Catholic Church has also made a great contribution to the United States in many areas, such as schools, hospitals, vast charitable works, literature, the arts, social justice, and even in science and the exploration of space.<sup>74</sup> Because of these favorable circumstances, the Vietnamese American youth are free to practice their lives as Catholics in public. The youth, who are in the 1.5 generations experienced government restriction on the public practice of their religion when they were in Vietnam. In America they enjoy the possibility of a full and untrammelled practice their Christian faith.

---

<sup>70</sup> “All Religions and Denominations in the US”, *Procon.org*, <https://undergod.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=000068>, accessed January 18, 2018.

<sup>71</sup> *Constitution Of The United States Of America—1787*, Amendment 1, <http://uscode.house.gov/static/constitution.pdf>, accessed January 15, 2018.

<sup>72</sup> Gary Weaver, “American Cultural Values”, *Ibid*.

<sup>73</sup> “Catholicism in the U.S.”, *WSJ*, <http://graphics.wsj.com/catholics-us/>, accessed January 18, 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Robert j. Fox, “The Catholic Church in the United States of America”, *CERC*, <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/history/the-catholic-church-in-the-united-states-of-america.html>, accessed January 18, 2018.

In the past, in Vietnam, the Vietnamese faithful lived “in the religious ghetto<sup>75</sup> of Vietnamese Catholicism that emphasizes the afterlife and individual salvation at the expense of the Church’s ministry for justice and peace.”<sup>76</sup> However, living in the United States, Vietnamese Americans, “are enriched by the American Church’s commitment to be a transformative agent in society, especially in issues concerning peace, the economy, gender equality, and human life.”<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, differing from the situation in Vietnam where religious organizations are not allowed to operate schools or hospitals, in the United States, many American Catholic parishes or Catholic religious Orders run schools, colleges, and universities. The US Census in 2004 found that there were 6574 Catholic Schools with 1.78 million students.<sup>78</sup> Nurtured in a Catholic environment, and with Biblical and theological study, the youth not only derive immense benefits from the understand of the Christian faith through their Catholic education, but they can also take part in many activities of the Church’s missions and bring the values of the Gospel to their activities in society.

***Having a good relationship with the hierarchy and with other Catholics:*** As I said before, with the five waves of refugees, Vietnamese people settled in many areas of the United States. They migrated to various places depending on the job opportunities, climate or religious needs. After having settled, they tend to move to establish Vietnamese communities. For example, due to downward trend of the electronics

---

<sup>75</sup> In the past in Vietnam, the faithful used to live as a clustered group of people in a village, separated from the Buddhists or other religions. This was convenient for Catholics to help each other in protecting their faith but it was not good for evangelization.

<sup>76</sup> Robert j. Fox, “The Catholic Church in the United States of America”, Ibid, 129.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> “The Current Situation of America's Catholic Schools”, *CERS*, <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/education/catholic-contributions/the-current-situation-of-americas-catholic-schools.html>, accessed January 18, 2018.

industry in California, many Vietnamese are moving to Texas, Florida and Louisiana where there is a economic boom. Opportunity in looking for work available in fishing industry and in organizing a strong Vietnamese community has attracted numerous Vietnamese. Those who originally settled in isolated, rural locales have moved to urban areas with warmer weather and a larger Asian immigrant population.<sup>79</sup> This movement of migration has led to a concentration of Vietnamese people in special areas.

Vietnamese people, like other immigrant groups, tend to settle together and form communities. Even though this may cause competition for employment or for doing business among themselves, the community still brings many advantages for Vietnamese Catholics. There are many Vietnamese-speaking only parishes around the United States. However, whether a parish is exclusively Vietnamese-speaking or simply has a significant number of Vietnamese parishioners, where there are Vietnamese-speaking priests, the parish becomes a center for Vietnamese gatherings and for celebrating holidays and the New Year. These parishes have become places where the older generation can feel at home and where the younger generation can be formed in the Vietnamese culture. Nowadays, in most dioceses where there is a sizable number of Vietnamese Catholics, there is at least one or several Vietnamese parishes, such as in Louisiana, Texas, Virginia and Washington D.C.<sup>80</sup> Living in strong Vietnamese Catholic communities, the faithful can support one another in their lives of faith and create a great environment for their children to maintain the Vietnamese language and culture as well.

---

<sup>79</sup> “Need for Solidarity and Community”, *Asian Nation*, <http://www.asian-nation.org/vietnamese.shtml#sthash.QEnXqQ5Q.dpbs>, accessed January 22, 2018.

<sup>80</sup> Peter Phan, “Vietnamese Catholics in the United States: Christian Identity Between the Old and the New,” 21.

The other advantage for Vietnamese Catholics is that there are about five hundred Vietnamese priests within the United States, and “Vietnamese seminarians make up 12 percent of the American Seminary population.”<sup>81</sup> There are a dozen male religious orders and twenty female religious societies, which have their foundations in Vietnam and are now working in the United States. Additionally, there are two official organizations for Vietnamese Catholics in America. They are the *Vietnamese Catholic Federation* and *The Community of Vietnamese Clergy and Religious*.<sup>82</sup> The relationship between the Vietnamese faithful and the clergy and the concentration of Vietnamese Catholics in certain regions, not only helps the youth to maintain Vietnamese culture and language, but also supports their faith. As we know, faith is not only a personal activity in the depth of a human person, but it also has a communal dimension. Within the Catholic community, there is the opportunity to cultivate one’s faith through prayer, education, communication and involvement in activities in the society. This community also provides opportunities for the youth to think about the relationship between the laity and the clergy and the relationship among the parishioners themselves, and to think of their vocations as Christians.

### **1.3.2. The Challenges of the youth for living a spiritual life**

*Working long hours, the youth do not have time for their spiritual lives:* As reported by the 2014 Census, there is “about 67 percent of Vietnamese immigrants (ages 16 and over) in the civilian labor force, compared to 66 percent of all immigrants and 62 percent of the native born.” The Vietnamese are “employed in service occupations (31

---

<sup>81</sup> “Vietnamese Vocations”, *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/vocation-directors/vietnamese-vocations.cfm>, accessed February 19, 2018.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

percent) and production, transportation, and material moving occupations (19 percent)<sup>83</sup> at a rate that is higher than that of the total of foreign and US born populations. Although Vietnamese refugees (1.5 generation and earlier generations) are less educated and have limited English proficiency, they participate in the labor force at a slightly higher rate than the overall immigrant and native-born populations. For instance, “compared to the total US foreign-born population, Vietnamese immigrants are more likely to be limited English proficient (LEP), but tend to have higher incomes and lower poverty rates.”<sup>84</sup> In order to get these higher incomes, while many of them are just ordinary workers, many of them have to work two or even three jobs, or they have to work with long hours to earn money to support their family or themselves.

As a result of working long hours, like many other Americans, people can feel that they become like machines which are only valued for how much they can produce. Because of that, they are tired, have less energy and feel more stressed; their lives become burdened with intense effort. Working long hours, the youth do not have time for themselves. Consequently, the time they have for other significant aspects of their lives, such as family, relationships and especially spirituality is reduced. If daily prayer is done, it is usually more personal and mental than physical and communal.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, any spiritual that given to be meaningful to them has to be integrated and adaptable to their busy life.

***Equating spirituality with spiritual practice:*** It is important to distinguish between “spirituality” and “spiritual practice” because many people believe them to

---

<sup>83</sup> Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, “Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States.” Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> “Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States,” *MPI*, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/vietnamese-immigrants-united-states#>, accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>85</sup> Nguyen, “Adapting Ignatian Spirituality,” 27-29.

mean the same thing. “Spiritual practices” are activities such as praying, reciting the Rosary, reading the Bible and so on. On the other hand, the definition of “spirituality” is much broader. David Perrin, a scholar in Christian spirituality defines it in this way: “Spirituality is the experience of transformation in the Divine human relationship as modeled (formed) by Jesus Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>86</sup> Simply speaking, spirituality refers to the relationship between a human person and God; it refers to having living experience of God. Spiritual practices are means which people employ to deepen their spirituality.

The danger for many people, the youth included, is that young Vietnamese American Catholics may adopt certain spiritual practices such as praying the rosary, but because of their time pressures, these practices can be done as a matter of routine and out of a sense of obligation to God. In doing so, these practices do not necessarily help their spiritual growth. We must help them to experience a close relationship with God which is not necessarily found in routine practice. Anthony Ciorra said: “the holy is found in the midst of the mundane..., the sacred is in the ordinary.”<sup>87</sup> We must help young people to experience this.

Spirituality is a living experience of God and an awareness of God’s presence in all things and in all places. As such, prayer cannot be limited to specific times or to a specific location. God can be found not only in churches and chapels, in the sacraments, and in quiet places, but also in schools, and in places of business. Dominican tradition emphasizes that God is in all, and all is in God. St. Catherine saw God as a place in

---

<sup>86</sup> David B. Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 32.

<sup>87</sup> Anthony J. Ciorra, *Everyday Mysticism: Cherishing the Holy* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 15.



which everyone has a space.<sup>88</sup> Starting from where they are in the spiritual life, human beings can find many ways to experience God's presence and to enter into a relationship with Him. Spiritual practices are a useful means that help people enter into a relationship with God, and these practices can be very helpful to the youth as well. The point is: how can the youth be brought to understand the difference between engaging in spiritual practices and having an intimate relationship with God? We want them to know how they can employ spiritual practices in order to develop a closer relationship with God.

***The impact of the identity crisis on the spiritual life:*** In *The Interior Castle*, St. Teresa of Jesus explains that self-knowledge is necessary to achieve holiness and that personal development is necessary for spiritual growth.<sup>89</sup> Following this line of thought, accepting one's self is part of attaining a mature sense of identity and a closer relationship with God. In other words, self-knowledge is indispensable to spiritual growth.

Young Vietnamese Americans are challenged with an identity crisis because they are living in two cultures, Vietnamese culture nor American culture, at the same time they belong to neither. David Bosch asserts that "only persons who have found themselves can give themselves; otherwise, there is nothing to give."<sup>90</sup> When Vietnamese American youth reject the Vietnamese culture, they suffer from a lack of cultural and personal identity that may hinder them from growing spiritually. If they want to be fully within the American culture by embracing the American identity, they

---

<sup>88</sup> Erick Borgman, *Dominican spirituality: an exploration* (Continuum, 2001), 51.

<sup>89</sup> Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au, *Urging of the Heart: A Spiritual of Integration* (New York: Paulist Press, 1955), 24.

<sup>90</sup> David J. Bosch, *A Spirituality of the Road* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1979), 51.

may be told “you are not like them.” Torn between two cultures, young Vietnamese Americans have a ambiguous identity. The youth may be taught in this society that American norms and values are the “sine quo non” (Without something, something else won't be possible) so they may fully embrace the American way of life.<sup>91</sup> Then, they may feel they are in a “melting pot” culture, and no longer accept the values of the Vietnamese culture, as part of the American “salad bowl.” The impact of this identity crisis, when they do not accept themselves as they are, hinders the youth from developing a spiritual life with a deep relationship with God.

Discovering and owning cultural and spiritual identities is necessary for the youth so that they can gain inner peace, and self-worth. In this sense, young Vietnamese Americans need to accept themselves as they are and as they have become so that they may grow in relationship with God and with others. The question is what can motivate them to see themselves as they really are and accept themselves? And, once they understand their true identity, how can their spirituality integrate the values of the two cultures that they are living in?

In brief, From the aspects of society, culture and religion, we can see that young Vietnamese Americans have a lot of opportunities. If they take advantage of these opportunities, they may become confident people in society. Truly, their human dignity is protected by freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of assembly. They are nurtured by a modern education system so that they can have more jobs opportunities and get higher income. This will help the youth to aware their own dignity and personality in the modern world. Furthermore, the youth may become multicultural

---

<sup>91</sup> Jonathan Bendor, “The Evolution of Norms1”, *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 106, Number 6, May 2001, 7.

people when they enrich and fuse the values of the Vietnamese and American cultures. They can adopt the values of independence, equality, having a casual attitude and speaking frankly, values which are part of the American culture and which also emphasize reason and affirm individual ability. At the same time, they can still keep the values of cooperation, respect for hierarchy, maintaining a good name, and saving the other person's face, values from the Vietnamese culture which emphasize sentiment and affirm those from whom they come. The values of both these cultures not only help the youth to be multicultural people but also to learn to balance reason and sentiment. Finally, the youth may become spiritual people because their faith is nurtured by their family, supported by American and Vietnamese Churches, and can be freely expressed in public. General speaking, with these opportunities, the youth can become confident people, social beings and religious people. Relying on this they may have confidence in life, be opens to dialogue with people who belong to different cultures and participate in the activities of the Church.

Even though the youth receive many opportunities from the social, cultural and religious aspects of life in America, we realize that they still face challenges. In relationship with themselves, the youth are facing identity crises, connected to their culture, race and ethnicity, especially when they are not ready to accept themselves as they are. This hinders them from self-knowledge and affects their spiritual life. In relationship with others, because of the barriers of language, cultural adaptation and institutional culture, the youth may not get along with their parents. Because of complexity of their situation, including their parents' refugee background and their own appearance (their face, skin color, and posture), some youth may withdraw from family, friends and others. In relationship with God, the youth meet difficulties in their moral

lives, which is where they can meet God. They are affected by relativism, pluralism, and the negative aspects of the media, all of which make it difficult for them to determine what is right and what is wrong in society. Because of a lack in time for prayer, and of a misunderstanding about the difference between spirituality and spiritual practice, the youth may fall into a crisis regarding the meaning of life and their relationship with God. In general, the challenges of the youth can be summed up in these three aspects: relation to oneself (individual), relation to others (community) and relation to God (Divine).

There are many saints whose spiritual guidance can help the youth to overcome their challenges, to have a good relationship with God, and ultimately to become saints. Dominican spirituality, which combines inner life and external activities, can help the youth to overcome their challenges through practice and prayer. In the next chapter, I will introduce what Dominican spirituality is and how Dominican prayer is expressed through the Liturgy (communal prayer), contemplation (mental prayer), and the Nine ways of prayer (private prayer).

## Chapter II

### PRAYER IN DOMINICAN SPIRITUALITY

Before introducing Dominican Spirituality and prayer in Dominican spirituality, I would like to examine what is Christian spirituality? And, what is Christian prayer?

#### 2.1. The Definition of Christian prayer and spirituality

##### 2.1.1. The definition of Christian spirituality

The word spirituality originates from the Latin *spiritualitas* (noun) and *spiritualis* (spiritual). These ultimately derive from the Greek noun *pneuma*, spirit, and the adjective *pneumatikos*.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that “spirit” and “spiritual” are not opposite of “physical” or “material” (Greek *soma*, Latin *corpus*) but of “flesh” (Greek *sarx*, Latin *caro*), which refers to everything that is contrary to the Spirit of God.<sup>2</sup> In the widest sense, spirituality refers to any religious or ethical concept which is centered on something immaterial. In the strict sense of the word, the only authentic Christian spirituality is a spirituality centered in Jesus Christ (the One anointed of God) and through Him to the Trinity.<sup>3</sup> In my paper I just focus on spirituality in the strict sense: Christian spirituality.

There are many definitions of Christian spirituality. Here are some typical definitions. According to Jordan Aumann, Christian spirituality is “a participation in the mystery of Christ through the interior life of grace, actuated by faith, charity, and the other Christian virtues.”<sup>4</sup> While Jordan Aumann stresses the participation in the mystery

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael Downey, *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 931.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: a Brief History* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, (New York: Continuum, 2006), 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

of Christ, George Ganss places his emphases on living experience, saying “Spirituality is a lived experience, the effort to apply relevant elements in the deposit of Christian faith to the guidance of men and women towards their spiritual growth, the progressive development of their persons which flowers into a proportionately increased insight and joy.”<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Richard O'Brien emphasizes the experience of God, saying: “Spirituality has to do with our experiencing of God and with the transformation of our consciousness and our lives as outcomes of that experience.”<sup>6</sup> In agreement with Richard O'Brien, David Perrin emphasize the experience of transformation, saying: “Christian spirituality is the experience of transformation in the Divine-human relationship as modeled by Jesus Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>7</sup> Drawing from these definitions, I draw some general characteristics of Christian spirituality:

First, Christian spirituality is concerned with the whole human person. For George Ganss it is “a lived experience,” for Richard O'Brien “it has to do with our experience of God. Christian spirituality is a fully integrated approach to life, to life as a whole body, mind, soul and relationship. In this sense, Christian spirituality helps people establish a relationship with God know using their entire make up as persons.

Second, Christian spirituality is a lived experience of participation in the mystery of Christ (Jordan Aumann), the experience of applying relevant elements from the deposit of Christian faith (George Ganss), the experience of God in the transformation of their consciousness (Richard O'Brien), and the experience of one’s transformation in the Divine-human relationship (David Perrin). In general, Christian spirituality involves

---

<sup>5</sup> “Christian Spirituality,” *St. John in the Wilderness*, <http://www.stjohnadulthood.org/spiritul.htm>, accessed February 3, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> David Brian Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 32.

experiencing and knowing God (not just knowing about God) through both knowledge and action. These experiences involve the weaving, together by a dynamic synthesis, of the elements of the deposit of Christian faith into the fabric of our lives so that they animate and give fire to our lives and involve a growth, development, and flowering of our lives, in a word, a transformation of our consciousness and lives.<sup>8</sup> After hearing the voice of the Lord saying, “You have written well of me, Thomas. What reward wilt thou have?” Thomas Aquinas replied: “None other than Thyself, Lord!”<sup>9</sup> The experience of meeting God can transform a person’s life and bring him or her closer to union with God Himself.

Third, Christian spirituality relies on the power of the Holy Spirit which empowers one to live according to God’s will. The role of the Holy Spirit is to inspire the believers (David Perrin) and grant them the inner life of grace (Jordan Aumann). Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would lead us “into all truth” (Jn 16:13). Truth involves knowing God’s Word and applying it to our lives. The believer must make a choice to allow the Spirit to lead and control his or her life. The pursuit of Christian spirituality will hopefully result in the believer receiving the fruit of the Spirit.

In other words, Christian spirituality refers to a transformative experience of God. The purpose of having a spiritual practice is to have a close relationship with God so that one can be transformed or changed. Such a transformative experience is not only individual but also communal. Spiritual practices encourage people to have a quest for

---

<sup>8</sup> “Christian Spirituality,” *St. John in the Wilderness*, Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Jean-Pierre Torrel, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol.1, *The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 285.

meaning and a sense of purpose in their lives direction, lives that honors God, personal maturity, and serve as a blessing to others.

### **2.1.2. The definition of Christian prayer**

The word prayer, which means a petition or request, comes from the Latin verb *precari* (to entreat or beg). This ultimately is derived from the Hebrew of the Old Testament *pâlal* (to mediate or intercede).<sup>10</sup> Although its meaning refers to prayer for another, it is used in a more general sense of simply “to pray.” In the Greek of the New Testament, *euchomai* or *proseuchomai* means to pray (the root of the meaning of the verb is connected with “wish” or “vow”). The New Testament also uses *deomai* (want), *erotao* (ask) and *parakaleo* (call for).<sup>11</sup> Although these words may be used to mean a petition, they express the fact that “human beings always stand in need before God, even in moments of joyful gratitude.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the word *prayer* shows us the different attitudes and goals to achieve.

In the Scripture Tradition, Scripture reveals the meaning and purpose of prayer. Pray is seeking God’s favor (Exodus 32:11), pouring out one’s soul to the Lord (1 Samuel 1;15), and drawing near to God (Ps 72:28). God always listens to our prayers. He knows what is good for us. In prayer we should admit that God is greater than we are and ultimately knows what is best in any given situation (Rom 11:33-36). Therefore, essentially, in prayer, we should say, “not my will, but your will be done” (Lk 22:42). The Scriptures also contain many examples of prayer and plenty of exhortations to pray (Lk 18:1). God’s house is to be a house of prayer (Mk 11:17), and God’s people are to be

---

<sup>10</sup> Joseph A Komonchak, et. *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 788.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Downey, *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 764-765.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 76.



people of prayer (Jude 1:20-21). Generally speaking, prayer is not seeking our own will, but rather seeking to align ourselves with the will of God (1 John 5:14), to live in an intimate relationship with God.

In the Christian Tradition, we also see many definitions of prayer. Each definition emphasizes an aspect of prayer. St. Augustine believes that, “Prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him.”<sup>13</sup> According to St. John Damascene, “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.”<sup>14</sup> St. John Chrysostom says that, “Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry, a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness, a protection against sadness.” The *Catholic Church* presents the definition of prayer: “Christian prayer is a covenant relationship between God and humanity in Christ. It is the action of God and of humanity, springing forth from both the Holy Spirit and ourselves, wholly directed to the Father, in union with the human will of the Son of God made humanity.”<sup>15</sup> Generally, Christian tradition defines prayer as the manufacture in which human beings lived experience of God.

From the foundation of prayer which we find in Scripture and Tradition, we can realize that prayer is seeking God’s will, encountering God, raising one’s mind and heart to God. People can pray at all times and in all circumstances: sadness, suffering, anger, worry, cheerfulness, and happiness. Coming to God, humans can ask for directions so that they may learn to: praise God for His wonderful works, give thanks to God for the grace He has given them, express joy in front of God’s presence and tell Him what is

---

<sup>13</sup> St. Augustine, Sermons 56.9, in “Sermons (51-60) On Selected Lessons Of The New Testament,” <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PATRISTC/PNI6-5.TXT>, accessed February 3, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2590.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 2564.

going on in their lives, seek guidance and ask for wisdom. The fruit of this quality of prayer is interior peace and loving union with God. In a word, through prayer, one can be nurtured in his or her relationship with God.

Also from the foundation of prayer in Scripture and Tradition, we can isolate three common dimensions of prayer, including the human person, a transcendence to God, and an encounter with Him. The first dimension is the human person. Prayer assumes that people recognize themselves as small creatures and that there is a higher Godhead or Creator (Rom 11:33-36). This is the beginning of the faith, when the human person no longer considers himself as the center of the universe but belongs to something much bigger. For some there is a sense of surrendering on a higher God. One can pray with his or her whole being: the body, the mind and the soul, which is the deepest element of the human being.

The second dimension of prayer involves with something mysterious, beyond human capacity yet constantly reaching out to the world. We often name this mystery as God. God, first and foremost, is the God who takes initiatives to communicate, work, and labor. He is a God who speaks to people. For Christianity, God is He Whom we pray to as the Creator, the God who established the covenant with humanity. The Christian liturgical tradition describes the object of prayer according to three formulas: "Pray to the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit."<sup>16</sup> In this sense, all prayer must be offered in faith (Jas 1:6), in the name of Jesus Christ (Jn 16:23), and with the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26). In the Christian perspective, human beings only worship God alone.

---

<sup>16</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2746, 2672, 2657, 2629, 2766.

The third entails the encounter between such an individual person and that mystery. There is a restlessness, a fire innate within the individual person. Such a fire leads pushes the person to act, to respond, to channel its energy. St. Augustine experienced: “Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.”<sup>17</sup> The human being is in search of God, but in fact God calls humanity first because “God tirelessly calls each person to this mysterious encounter with Himself.”<sup>18</sup> Prayer is fundamental to living the Christian life in response to the love of God.<sup>19</sup> The human person can use many kinds of prayer to respond to God’s love: in private or in secret (Mt 6:6), in family, in social worship, and in public in the service of the sanctuary. One can pray all day long and in all circumstances. Prayer can be done in a formal or an informal way, can be oral or mental, occasional or constant, and can be expressed for by different purposes: thanks, repentance, confession, petition, or experiencing the presence of God.

### **2.1.3. The relationship between prayer and spirituality**

*Spirituality encourages one to find expression with God:* God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ so Christian spirituality is centered on the engagement with God in Jesus. Through the revelation in the Hebrew Bible, we know that each person is called into existence by God as someone special: “I have called you by name: you are mine.” (Is 43:1). In the New Testament, Jesus teaches us about His relationship with the Father and He wants us to have that same relationship with Himself: “As the Father loves me, so I

---

<sup>17</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* 1,1,1:PL 32,661.

<sup>18</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2567.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 2745.

also love you. Remain in my love” (Jn 15:9). This is not the relationship of the slaves to the master, but an intimate relationship in friendship with Him.

Relationship has to manifest itself through symbol and verbal. When being in close relationship with God, human beings can utter many expression felt prayers. St. Augustine, in his reflection, wrote: “Lord Jesus, let me know myself and know you... Let me do everything for the sake of you... Let me humble myself and exalt you. Let me think of nothing except you. Let me die to myself and live in you.”<sup>20</sup> Living in close relationship with God, one wishes to live by God’s will and thereby have all of one’s activities become prayers. That is the reason why Origen says “the entire lives of those who closely follow the teaching and spirit of Jesus Christ can be considered to be prayer.”<sup>21</sup> In this sense, living a deep spiritual life will encourage human beings to get in touch with God. The more one has a close relationship with God, the easier one can pray with his or her whole heart.

***Prayer for nurturing and growing spirituality:*** Prayer as an expression or symbol reflects or speaks about a deeper reality or undercurrent of what is meant to be a human person, thus its spirituality. The Lord’s Prayer is the model for our prayer. What Jesus taught about prayer is the core of our understanding of prayer. “The central message behind Jesus’ invitation to prayer is to nurture a relationship with God and, as a result, with other people and with all of creation.”<sup>22</sup> Prayer reflects human beings many ways to communicate with God and relate to others and creation so that they can be nurtured

---

<sup>20</sup> “Prayer of St. Augustine”, *CNA (Catholic News Agency)*, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resources/prayers/devotions/to-our-lord-jesus-christ/prayer-of-st-augustine>, accessed February 10, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> David Brian Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 277.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 277.

through prayer. That is why St. Paul prayed that the inner life of the faithful would grow so that, enthroned in Christ, they would more deeply understand the mystery of salvation, the mystery of God's love manifested in Christ (Eph 3:14-21).

God calls people to an intimate friendship with Himself so that each person can respond to God's love by a vibrant and dynamic faith. Prayer is the most direct way to communicate with and be intimate with God. Pope John Paul II said that "In prayer you become one with the source of our true light – Jesus Himself."<sup>23</sup> Clearly, through prayer the human person can become intimate with God and be nurtured in his or her spiritual life. Catholic tradition has two kinds of prayer: formal prayer (including Mass, sacraments, and the Liturgy of the Hours<sup>24</sup>) and informal prayer (including the Rosary, adoration, contemplation, and so on). These ways of prayer help people to communicate with God. However, spirituality and prayer needs to be integrated. Spirituality without prayer becomes abstract ideal; prayer without spirituality becomes lack of deep meaning. For example, prayer is not only something such as reciting the Rosary or singing psalms from Scripture but is something that is lived, a lifestyle, the spirit in which people live and do all things as they grow in their relationship with God, with others, and with creation.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, prayer remains an effective means to nurture one's relationship with God.

***The role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual life and prayer:*** The words *prayer* and *spirituality* both refer to the role of the Holy Spirit. However, each word emphasizes a

---

<sup>23</sup> Jeannie Ewing, "10 of the Most Beautiful John Paul II Quotes on Prayer," *The Mystical Humanity of Christ Publishing*, <https://www.coraevans.com/blog/article/10-of-the-most-beautiful-john-paul-ii-quotes-on-prayer>, February 4, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1174.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 277.

different aspect of the activity of the Holy Spirit. Believers can face distraction in vocal prayer which affects the words and their meaning. They can also experience periods of dryness which make their hearts feel separated from God and may cause temptations, such as a lack of faith or acedia. The faithful want to pray earnestly, however they do not know how to pray. For this reason, the faithful need the help of the Holy Spirit who “comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.” (Rom 8:26). In this sense, the Holy Spirit makes one’s groaning and sighing an impassioned prayer to the Father. In other word, the Holy Spirit helps and guides the faithful in their prayer.

Regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual life, St. Paul distinguishes between Spirit and flesh. The sin of the flesh consists of every act of immortality and injustice that stem from a disordered love of the world. These grave sins keep offenders from Christ (Gal 5:4) and block their entrance into heaven if repentance is neglected.<sup>26</sup> However, when the faithful have a close relationship with God, the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Truth (Jn 15,26) will advance them in the field of knowledge (Jn 16,13), help them to remember all the things that Jesus has taught them (Jn 14:26), and guide them into All Truth (Jn 16:13). The Holy Spirit helps us to live like Christ Who live fully human nature and fully divine nature in the flesh. The Holy Spirit integrates body and gift together bring individual to a life of wholeness.

In summary, we have seen how a general understanding of spirituality gives us a foundation for understanding Christian spirituality and prayer. We have seen that the foundation of Christian spirituality is an experience of God, which leads to an experience

---

<sup>26</sup> Cor 9: 25-27 & *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2515-16, 1426, 2744.

of transformation. Christian prayer is a way that helps people grow closer in their relationship with God. If Christian Spirituality encourages one to communicate with God through many ways of prayer, then through these ways of prayer, the faithful can be nurtured and grow in an intimate relationship with God. Our understanding of Christian spirituality and Christian prayer gives us a foundation from which we can explore prayer in Dominican spirituality.

## **2.2. Looking at Dominican Spirituality**

### **2.2.1. St. Dominic and Dominican Spirituality**

*St. Dominic and the establishment of the Order of Preachers:* When we talk about Dominican spirituality, we are talking about the spirituality of St. Dominic. Dominic de Guzman was born in Caleruega, Spain in 1170. His mother, before conceiving him, had a dream in which “she saw a puppy emerge from her womb carrying a blazing torch in its mouth; it appeared to be setting the whole world on fire.”<sup>27</sup> Later, some interpreted the dream to be the future mission of St. Dominic. Like the “blazing torch in its mouth,” the words from St. Dominic is preaching and from his religious Order would reach out to throughout the world. When Dominic was seven years old, he was sent away to live with his uncle, the parish priest of Gumiel d’Izan, who would instruct him in Latin and music. Dominic furthered his education in Palencia and was ordained to the priesthood in 1196.<sup>28</sup> The virtues of the young man Dominic came to the attention of the Bishop of Osma who summoned Dominic and made him a Canon Regular in his diocese.

---

<sup>27</sup> Simon Tugwell, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 51.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas McGonigle, *Dominican Tradition* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2006), xiv.

In 1206, Bishop Diego of Osma became the unofficial leader of a papal mission to Languedoc, in Southern France. There the heresy of the Albigensians known as Catharism was widely spread. The Albigensians, whose ideology was based on Manichaeism, believed that there were two Gods. The good God was divine and similar to the Christian God and the evil God who created the world and all evil and darkness. Consequently, the Albigensians believed that all the material world was created by the evil god. In addition, they also believed that Jesus was not a real human being but that He just had the appearance of one. In order to have a religious life as a “perfective,” Albigensians abstained from meat, alcohol, sex and marriage.<sup>29</sup> These heretical beliefs and theories went against Church’s teachings that Jesus is fully humanity and fully divinity. Moreover, Christian theology affirms all creations came from God and God sees as “good” (Gen 1:1-2:2).

Dominic was chosen to be the companion of Bishop Diego and to help him convert the heretics. By living a life of humility, poverty and virtue, Dominic was successful in preaching and convincing some Cathar believers to abandon their heresy. Concerned for the salvation of those who were perishing outside of the Church, Dominic was inspired to establish a group of preachers. He petitioned Pope Innocent III to grant official status to his new Order of Preachers. The Pope asked Dominic to adopt an approved Rule in order not to violate the law of the Council of Lateran IV (1215) that prohibited the establishment of new religious Orders. Dominic and his followers chose the Rule of St. Augustine.<sup>30</sup> In a bull entitled Religious Life, dated December 22, 1216,

---

<sup>29</sup> Beth Richardson, “The Cathars”, *Historical Honey*, <http://historicalhoney.com/cathars/>, accessed February 10, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> The Rule of St. Augustine has 12 chapters; the content of the Rule emphasizes the love of God and love of neighbour. Love is the goal of the community. The Rule gives direction to prayer an instruction for the practice of viture. It also helps to develop a proper attitude for buiding community and promoting a



Pope Honorius confirmed the Order as an Order of Preachers.<sup>31</sup> Since this confirmation, the Order of Preachers has existed for over 800 years and has been developed and represented in most countries around the world.

***Definition of Dominican Spirituality:*** Pope Honorius III, in his letter to Dominic and his followers in 1216, describes the purpose of the Dominican Order with remarkable simplicity: "... a life of poverty and regular observance and... preaching the Word of God and proclaiming the name of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world."<sup>32</sup> This letter shows that the main purpose of the Order is the retlessness preaching the Word of God. This is also written in the *Constitution of the Order*. The Order "is known from the beginning to have been instituted especially for preaching and the salvation of souls."<sup>33</sup> The life of St. Dominic, who formed Dominican spirituality, was a life characterized by seeking the truth, contemplative prayer, a devotion to the Mass and the Divine Office, living the common life, and zealous preaching. It is not easy to give a brief definition of Dominican spirituality. The elements of Dominican life can be summed up in the following:

Dominican spirituality is a share in Jesus Christ the Word in his mission of announcing the Good News of salvation which He Himself is; (2) This calling is fulfilled by a community out of its experience of living for God and for neighbors; (3) The source of its light is prayer, especially liturgical prayer, for which one is freed by ascetic discipline and simplicity of life; (4) this prayer is fed by assiduous study of the Scripture and of all sources of truth that help us to understand the Word of God.<sup>34</sup>

---

free spirit. See more Walter Cornelius Wagner, *Dominican Life: A Commentary On the Rule of Saint Augustine* (Summit, N.J.: The Dominican Nuns, 2012), 7-15.

<sup>31</sup> Simon Tugwell, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, 55-56.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in Ashley 1990, 16. See more in "Pope Honorius Confirms Order of Preachers", *Dominican Friars Foundation*, <https://dominicanfriars.org/pope-honorius-confirms-order-preachers/>, accessed February 15, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Prologue to the Primitive Constitutions, in *The Book of Constitution and Ordinations of the Brothers of the Order of Preachers* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2012), 39.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Woods, *Mysticism and Prophecy: The Dominican Tradition*, Traditions of Christian Spirituality (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998), 24.

From this definition, we can see that when one lives a life of Dominican spirituality, one follows Jesus both by an inner life of prayer and by external activities of preaching for the salvation of souls. Preaching and teaching proceeds from an abundance of contemplation, study and community. Therefore, Dominican spirituality is “not about special ways of praying. It is about being alive in God and for others”<sup>35</sup> in a more integrated way. Such an integrated spirituality manifests itself through four aspects: community, prayer, study, and preaching.

### **2.2.2. Four aspects of Dominican spirituality:**

*Community – Reflection of the Holy Trinity* : The common life which emphasizes brotherly love is considered to be the heart of Dominican life. St. Dominic chose the *Rule of St. Augustine* which states that all things are held in common.<sup>36</sup> However, common life is much deeper than holding material things in common; common life is based on upon the sharing of the spiritual riches of soul and mind, and the sharing of obedience and chastity, of virtue and talents, and of all that the religious person has and is. In short, in Dominican community life one shares in a joyous place where members of the community support each other's growth toward God and help each other in the work of preaching the Good News. Hurley wrote, “Dominic chose the common life as one of the principal means of achieving the ends of the Order: the sanctification of his children, and the salvation of souls through preaching.”<sup>37</sup> Dominic’s choice of the

---

<sup>35</sup> Paul Murray, *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality: A Drink Called Happiness* (New York: Burns & Oates, 2006), v.

<sup>36</sup> *The Rule of St. Augustine* 1,3: “Call nothing your own, but let everything be yours in common. Food and clothing shall be distributed to each of you by your superior, not equally to all, for all do not enjoy equal health, but rather according to each one's need. For so you read in the Acts of the Apostles that they had all things in common and distribution was made to each one according to each one's need (4:32,35).”

<sup>37</sup> Hurley, “The Four Pillars of Dominican Life,” <http://www.dominicanwitness.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/4pillars.pdf>, accessed February 22, 2018.

common life is based on his understanding that “God has saved the individual through the community. God united himself to a particular community in the old covenant, and insofar as we join the community of the new covenant—the Church.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, Dominican spirituality is not about an individual and God, but about the members of the community in God.

Indeed, the common life is an image of the life of the Holy Trinity. The Trinity’s common life is the life of love. The value of the common life is to prepare Dominican friars for contemplation. Imitating the common life of Divine Trinity, the common life of the priory or convent is a school of contemplation. Common life prepares one for contemplation because it exercises the professed religious in one’s love for God and for neighbor, just as Jesus teaches us to love God and to love our neighbors (Mt 22:37-39). If a Dominican loves the brothers in his community, he knows how to love God. Blessed Jordan of Saxony, the second Master General of the Order, stressed this close relationship between loving neighbor and seeing God: “Dear brethren, have a constant mutual charity among yourselves, for it cannot be that Jesus will appear to those who have cut themselves off from the community.”<sup>39</sup> This saying was based on Jesus’ teaching: love God and love your neighbor (Mk 12: 30-31). Loving one’s neighbor is concretized by a Dominican brother when he loves the brothers in his community. St. Augustine said: “Where you see charity, there you see the Trinity.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, living community life, Dominicans can contemplate and witness their belief in the Trinity.

---

<sup>38</sup> William Hinnebusch, *Dominican Spirituality: Principles and Practice* (Washington, DC: Thomist Press, 1965), 119.

<sup>39</sup> Blessed Jordan of Saxony, in his letter sent to the friars of Paris, Easter, 1233 in Simon Tugwell, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, 122.

<sup>40</sup> Hinnebusch, *Dominican Spirituality*, 125-127.

Living the community life also helps a religious to protect his chastity through the vows, the habit and silence. The most important vow is obedience because it protects the religious from the misuse of his talents, brings him under the guidance of his superiors, and ensures him constancy of purpose and steady progress toward perfection. Dominic did not want the practice of obedience to be burdensome but rather a joyful cooperation in a common task.<sup>41</sup> Dominican obedience is “marked by a tension between two characteristics: an unqualified gift of our lives to the Order, and a search for consensus based on debate and mutual attentiveness and respect.”<sup>42</sup> In this sense, obedience, which is not negative but positive, has always been a strong virtue in the Order. Through obedience the religious fulfills his personality because it makes the religious like the Only-Begotten Son of God who was obedient unto death.<sup>43</sup> The imitation of Christ is one of the finest tributes that a Dominican friar can render to Christ by being faithful to his vows.

The common life also helps Dominicans prepare themselves for the apostolate. Dominic chose the common life as one of the principle means of achieving the ends of the Order which are the sanctification of his children and the salvation of souls through preaching. St. Augustine teaches: “Before all things dear brethren, love God and after him your neighbor.”<sup>44</sup> St. Dominic from early on showed charity toward others. When he was a student at Palencia, he sold his personally annotated books to buy food for the poor

---

<sup>41</sup> “Dominican Spirituality,” *Provincial Planing Process*, <http://opcentral.org/blog/the-dominican-life-is-the-image-of-st-dominic/>, accessed December 1, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> “What Is Religious Life?,” *The Dominican Friars – England & Scotland*, <https://www.english.op.org/about-us/dominican-order/dominican-spirituality/what-is-religious-life.htm>, accessed March 12, 2018.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> *The Book of Constitution and Ordinations of the Brothers of the Order of Preachers*, 26.

who were suffering from famine. Years later as a priest his love for souls kept him up all hours of the night praying and doing penance for them. His love for souls also awakened his ardent heart to preach and to have the friars preach.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, when a Dominican can love the brothers in his community, for love is expansive, he can also go out to his neighbors and talk to them about God's love.

For human, the common life still has its difficulties because a community includes different types of people: the old and the young, the healthy and the sick, the educated and manual workers. Each member has a different personality, lifestyle and culture. How do Dominicans overcome the differences among themselves? Dominican Spirituality emphasizes the virtue of humanity.<sup>46</sup> Relying on that, Dominican friars can share with others their personalities, their troubles and their passions in ministry; this allows them to understand and sympathize with each other. And if there is a disagreement or even a conflict, by being humble in silence and contemplation, brothers can be reconciled with each other. In this sense, community is also a place of reconciliation, healing and recovery. That is why St. Catherine advises us: "Let us behave like drunkards"<sup>47</sup> - forgetting about oneself letting go of oneself but only hang on to the love of God and the love of others. In this way, Dominican friars can find joyfulness in community life.

***Prayer - Expression of the relationship with God:*** Dominican prayer emphasizes the need to pray for petition: grace and strength, first for its own sake and then to enable one to carry out the Order's task. When a friar prays, he hopes his prayer will become

---

<sup>45</sup> "Dominican Life is Fraternal," *Provincial Planning Process*, Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Walter Cornelius Wagner, *Dominican Life: A Commentary On the Rule of Saint Augustine*, 149.

<sup>47</sup> Murray, *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality*, 170.

deep and profound, filling his own soul with grace and spiritual energy. In praying, the Dominican friar resembles the Incarnate Word, who is both God and Man. As a man, Jesus stands at the head of the whole human race and is the supreme Adorer of the heavenly Father. When Christ, as a man, adores the heavenly Father, his worship is infinite. Acting thus, he fulfills the first obligation of every person, that is, he adores the heavenly Father. The Dominican friar, participating in the liturgy, continues the adoration which Christ the Lord performed on earth.<sup>48</sup> St. Dominic was a man of prayer; he could pray in all circumstances. He did not write about prayer or teach his followers a specific method of prayer. However, looking at his life, we can realize certain elements that shaped his Dominican prayer.

The first is expression in the liturgy. St. Dominic was completely committed to the liturgy. For St. Dominic, the Eucharist was his life. He celebrated Mass every day,<sup>49</sup> his eyes and cheeks were filled wet with tears during the Canon. He loved to sing during the Mass, and he wanted his brothers to sing the liturgy with lively enthusiasm. Dominic's love for the liturgy included not only the Mass but the Divine Office.<sup>50</sup> He was devoted to the Divine Office and taught the early friars to chant the canonical hours at the incorporated time. Dominican liturgy, which includes reciting the Eucharist, Morning Prayer (Lauds) Evening Prayer (Vespers) and Night Prayer (Compline) each day, is "characterized by its extensive use of bodily gestures: bowing, kneeling, prostrating, and processing."<sup>51</sup> Through its solemn worship, the Order of Preachers follows the mandate

---

<sup>48</sup> "Dominican Life is Contemplative," *Provincial Planing Process*, <http://opcentral.org/blog/the-dominican-life-is-the-image-of-st-dominic/>, accessed December 1, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Now priests celebrate daily Mass, but this was not so in the thirteenth century.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas McGonigle, *Dominican Tradition*, xix.

<sup>51</sup> "Dominican Spirituality." *Dominican Central Province*, <http://opcentral.org/blog/dominican-spirituality/>, accessed October 8, 2016.

of the Church to praise and adore the Supreme Creator. Love for the liturgy is a precious heritage which Dominicans owe to their Founder.

The second is expression in bodily gestures. Dominican tradition usually mentions the *Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic*. Dominic did not write or teach any way of prayer. The *Nine Ways of Prayer*, which is found in several manuscripts, was written after St. Dominic's death by an unknown author who observed St. Dominic himself. It was probably written between 1260 and 1288.<sup>52</sup> The *Nine Ways of Prayer* includes (1) Inclinations (bowing towards the altar humbly) (2) Prostrations, (3) Penance, (4) Genuflections, (5) Contemplation (standing before the altar, or holding his hands out in front), (6) Earnest Intercession, (7) Supplication, (8) Thoughtful Reading, and (9) Praying on a Journey.<sup>53</sup> From The Nine Ways of Prayer, we learn some of the bodily gestures St. Dominic used to encounter God: inclining profoundly, prostrating his body upon the ground, genuflecting, doing penance, and raising his arms to heaven, sitting, kneeling, prostrating, and walking. These nine ways also show us that St. Dominic devoted himself to prayer in the midst of everything by engaging his body with his soul and spirit and by praising God in various forms.

The third is expression in contemplation. When Dominic founded the Friars Preachers, some people said that it was impossible to have an Order that combined both contemplation and the apostolate. Dominic personally demonstrated that it is possible to be a contemplative of the highest type, at the same time, remain to be a zealous apostle.<sup>54</sup> The Dominican seeks contemplation for its own sake because contemplation can unite

---

<sup>52</sup> *The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*, trans. Simon Tugwell and Sheelagh Wilsden (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1978), 6.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 5-44.

<sup>54</sup> Erik Borgman, *Dominican Spirituality: An Exploration* (London: Continuum, 2001), 27.

him with God: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be given to you besides” (Mt 6:33). However, the closer the contemplative comes to God, the more he is motivated to share in Christ’s mission to save souls.

Contemplation is the means by which a Dominican fuels his apostolate. The relationship between contemplation and the apostolate can be compared to a deep well. The well fills slowly until its pure water reaches the top; then the water runs over the brim and begins to irrigate the surrounding soil. The well never empties itself in watering the fields, but gives of its abundance.<sup>55</sup> This comparison expresses the importance of contemplation. A Dominican must sanctify himself in contemplation before he can go out to help his neighbor. Through contemplation, Dominican friars can prepare themselves for preaching. As the Dominican motto says: *Contemplare, et contemplata aliis tradere* (to contemplate and give to others the fruits of contemplation).<sup>56</sup> In this sense, contemplation is not an end in itself, but it is intended to bear fruit, to become “pregnant with the Word and then through preaching giving birth to it in the world.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, Dominicans do not selfishly retain what they have contemplated but share it with others.

***Study - Deepening knowledge:*** In Dominic’s time, preaching was exclusively limited to the bishops; the duty of priests was to celebrate the sacraments. The lavish lifestyles of the clergy back then separated them from the people. Being sensitive to his times, Dominic wanted to establish a group of religious for preaching. The proverb says, “Nobody gives what one does not have.” For Dominic, study was very important for preaching, because it deepens knowledge, intellectual, and wisdom of the world; thus, he

---

<sup>55</sup> Thomas McGonigle, *Dominican Tradition* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 188, a.6.

<sup>57</sup> Robert J. Wicks, ed, *Prayer in the Catholic Tradition: A Handbook of Practical Approaches* (Cincinnati, OH:Franciscan Media, 2016), 240.



sent his brothers to the University of Paris to study, to preach, and to found a priory.<sup>58</sup> It can be said that St. Dominic was the first founder to bring study into religious life.

According to Dominic, studying the Word of God is not merely an aid to prayer but also an act of worship which sanctifies us. Dominican study initially concentrated on the Word of God found in the Sacred Scriptures. These Scriptures were interpreted by the Tradition of the Church. St. Albert and St. Thomas Aquinas suggested that, after the study of Scriptures, studying needed to be extended to other subjects, such as the liberal arts and philosophy, not for their own sake but because they saw that this was necessary to develop a theology adequate to meet the needs of the times.<sup>59</sup> Dominic knew that his brothers might be tempted to pursue academic degrees for their own sake. Therefore, he emphasized that Dominican study needed to be safeguarded by three factors: the love of wisdom, prayer, and community dialogue.<sup>60</sup> Loving the wisdom helps Dominicans to be content with superficialities and the deeper in study; prayer helps combining study and prayer help Dominicans be humble to realize that how little they really know in comparison with the divine mysteries; community dialogue helps Dominicans have the free exchange of their ideas in the community. These factors help Dominicans to be humble and enthusiastic in study and to fulfill the mission of the Order.

St. Dominic, who was also named “The Light of the Church, Doctor of the Truth,”<sup>61</sup> wanted his brothers to use all available resources to come to the knowledge and possession of the truth. Thanks to the great sources that are revealed through Scripture,

---

<sup>58</sup> Hinnebusch, *Dominican Spirituality*, 102.

<sup>59</sup> “Dominican Spirituality,” *Provincial Planning Process*, Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Anthony Dao Quang Chinh, *Dominican Laity and the Year 2000* (Houston, TX: Magnificat Institute Press, 1997), 22.

Dominican friars can discover the real Truth which is God Himself. As Jesus said: “I am the way the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). Though human beings have great intelligence, they can never grasp the whole truth in God. St. Thomas Aquinas said: “Neither a Catholic nor a pagan knows the nature of God as he is in himself.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, the purpose of study in the Order is not to know about God as an object, but to acknowledge Him through meditation, and then to preach.<sup>63</sup> Study helps Dominican friars become more profound in their ministry and in their unity with God.

Preaching is the charism of the Order. However, Dominican friars have to study carefully before preaching. St. Jerome said, “The Word of God should be stored up in our heart and carefully examined, and only then proffered to the people.”<sup>64</sup> Although study is not the purpose of the Order, it is extremely necessary for preaching for the salvation of souls. In the context of Dominican life, study is “the activity by which we discover the presence of God’s action.”<sup>65</sup> It is the point of connection between prayer, study and ministry and this connection then leads one to a holiness of mind. In doing so, Dominicans love to study and study to love.

Thus, Dominican studying is studying in contemplation and preparation for preaching. Dominican study, which is some time considered to be ascetic, becomes sweet. Following St. Dominic, who hungered and thirsted for truth, the Dominican friars devote themselves to study and find happiness in doing so. Each Dominican friar, finding study to be this same sweetness, can become “the book of life” or “the book of love.”<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q.13.a.10. ad.5.

<sup>63</sup> Anthony Dao Quang Chinh, *Dominican Laity and the Year 2000*, 22.

<sup>64</sup> Murray, *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality*, 77.

<sup>65</sup> Hurley, “The Four Pillars of Dominican Life,” *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Murray, *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality*, 126-127.

***Preaching- Interpreting the Word of God:*** Nowadays, all ordained priests and deacons can preach. However, in St. Dominic’s time, in the thirteenth century, only the bishops could preach. When he wanted to establish a new congregation, Dominic was asked: “Do you want to found a congregation of bishops?”<sup>67</sup> Of course, St. Dominic did not have such intentions; he only wanted to help God’s people to hear and to live God’s Word. Pope Honorius III entrusted Dominic and his brothers with the mission of preaching.<sup>68</sup> This is the charism of the Dominicans, and that is why the Dominicans are called Preachers.

The term “preaching” as delineated by the Vatican, can be understood by its broad meaning as witnessing to the Gospel. However, according to St. Dominic’s original purpose, the term preaching is more specifically connected to the ministry of the Word<sup>69</sup> (preaching, teaching, evangelizing, and prophesying). Although this preaching is most commonly associated with the preaching of the homily at the Eucharist by an ordained priest, it is not limited to that kind of preaching. St. Paul tells us “preach in season and out of season” (2 Tim 4:2). The early Dominicans, even novices and the non-ordained, were sometimes sent to preach outside of the Mass and even outside of a church.<sup>70</sup> Thus, Dominican preaching from the beginning was very diverse.

Preaching for the Dominican takes many forms. Surely, this was not the understanding of St. Dominic. The Order has many components: the First Order, the Second Order, and the Third Order of Terteries. As such, although preaching can be understood to be the purpose of the Order as a community, it is not necessarily the

---

<sup>67</sup> Chinh, *Dominican Laity and the Year 2000*, 19.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 19-20.

<sup>69</sup> William A. Hinnebusch, *Dominican Spirituality: Principles and Practice*, 56.

<sup>70</sup> Simon Tugwell, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, 221.

purpose of each individual in the community.”<sup>71</sup> The preaching of the Dominicans is not only by words but also by example. When St. Dominic began to preach, he saw that there were many preachers who used beautiful words to proclaim the Gospel. However, many of their lives were contrary to what they preached so they were not effective in converting sinners or those living by heresy. On the contrary, by preaching St. Dominic strove to understand to be a simple life, and that simple life attracted many people, returning them to the pure doctrine of the Church.

The Dominican tradition shows that there were many saints who had different ways of preaching. For example, St. Thomas Aquinas preached by teaching, while St. Catherine of Siena preached by mediating disputes. St. Martin de Porres preached by taking care of the poor and the sick, Fra Angelico preached through his painting, and so on.<sup>72</sup> Depending on the circumstances, a Dominican can preach by teaching, taking care of the sick and the poor, and by witnessing to the Gospel by the way he or she lives a Christian life.

In summary, the principal charism of the Order is preaching. Good preaching is the fruit of a virtuous life, prayer, and study. For Dominicans, praying and contemplating take priority; however, because of the love for God, through prayer, Dominican friars can go out to preach for salvation of souls. A proper understanding of the Cross and the mystery of salvation, which Dominicans acquire through study and contemplation, is central to preaching.

---

<sup>71</sup> “Dominican Spirituality,” *Provincial Planning Process*, Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas McGonigle, *Dominican Tradition*, 19.41.71.

## 2.3. Theological dynamic in Dominican prayer

### 2.3.1. God

*God is a Trinity of Persons:* the Albigensians had a heretical misunderstanding of God. Believing in the Old Testament God of the Jews, the “one and only God,” they rejected the dogma of the Trinity and believed that Jesus was not a real human being but that He just had the appearance of one.<sup>73</sup> St. Dominic attempted to explain to them the pure doctrine of the Church. We do not know the exact arguments that St. Dominic used to fight against this heresy; however, we can know what Dominic understood about God through his prayer.

*God the Father of mercy:* In his prayer, St. Dominic prayed for himself and for other sinners, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” He said to his brothers, “if you cannot weep for your own sins, because you have none, still there are many sinners to be directed to the mercy of God.”<sup>74</sup> We know God is merciful because even though He clearly knows human sin, He did not always issue the punishment deserved by the sinners. With a humble attitude, throwing himself down on the ground, Dominic expressed his trust in God’s mercy. Because of sin, human beings can not meet the standard of righteousness that God intended for human people; however, through His mercy and grace, God provides forgiveness to them. Becoming more and more assured of God who shows mercy, Dominic would devotedly pray for himself and for all sinners.

*Suffering Christ, the source of salvation.* The Fourth Way of Prayer reflects mirror of “St. Dominic, standing before the altar or in the Chapter Room would fix his

---

<sup>73</sup> “Cathari”, *New World Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Cathari>, accessed February 28, 2018.

<sup>74</sup> The Second Way of Prayer, in in *The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*, 18.

gaze on the crucifix, looking intently at Christ on the Cross and kneeling down over and over again.”<sup>75</sup> Contemplating Christ on the Cross encouraged Dominic to suffer in union with Christ. In doing so, identified with Christ, Dominic became free to love and to be loved in God. Thus he came to realize how God loves him, how God loves sinners, and how God loves the world. Also in contemplating Christ on the Cross, Dominic came to learn about the human nature of Jesus: “Christ the virgin and the poor man who, by an obedience which carried him even to death on the cross, redeemed men and made them holy.”<sup>76</sup> This proves that Jesus is a real man who was born as a human, lived as a human except for sin, and died as a one of us. This knowledge helped Dominic fight against the heresy that denied the humanity of Jesus. Thanks to His death on the Cross, human beings can receive salvation.

*The Holy Spirit as the source of wisdom:* Dominic who was sensitive to the needs of his times, established an Order whose’s mission was to preach for the salvation of souls. In *Acts 2*, the Holy Spirit, who anointed the disciples of Jesus, sent them out to preach the Good News to the world; this same Spirit breathed the same apostolic charism of preaching into Dominic and his companions. He realized that without grace the sinner cannot be converted to move toward his true goal and life.<sup>77</sup> Dominic used many ways to pray, and he prayed zealously. Under the Holy Spirit’s guidance, Dominic made headway on the path of preaching and praying (Rm 8:26). The Spirit knows the mind and the heart of God (1Cor 2:10-11) and draws human beings ever closer here on earth to the divine

---

<sup>75</sup> The Second Fourth of Prayer, in in *The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*, 26.

<sup>76</sup> *Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life*, n.1,  
[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_perfectae-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html), accessed February 15, 2018.

<sup>77</sup> Benedict M. Ashley, *Spiritual direction in the Dominican tradition*, 58-65.

life predestined for us from the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4).<sup>78</sup> Through prayer, Dominic understood the role of the Holy Spirit as the source of wisdom who guided him in his prayer and helped him to live intimately with God.

In short, Dominic understood that God is the God of mercy, the Son is God who saves, and God the Holy Spirit is the source of wisdom. Therefore, they remain three distinct Persons; they are one perfect communion. For Thomas, “the Trinitarian processions provide the doctrinal foundation of the *exitus-reditus* (all things come from God and, in different ways, return to him) structure of the world and of history.”<sup>79</sup> As mentioned previously, Dominic was devoted to the liturgy; he commanded his brothers to make a profound bow during the final verse of the hymns of the Office: “Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.” In doing so, he expressed the special glorification to the Trinity, which is the source of Dominican prayer.

***God is in all, and all is in God.*** Dominic prayed at all the time, when he was walking, eating, sleeping, studying, and so on. St. Dominic prayed everywhere. For Dominic, everywhere can be served as a place to encounter God. Thus, he prayed when he was in the chapel, in the dining room and on the road. Dominic was devoted in prayer because he deeply and consciously realized the presence of God in his life, in all people and in all natures.<sup>80</sup> He could realize the presence of God because he was open in his mind and in his heart to see and to listen to the Word of God. In Dominican prayer and contemplation, we can intimate this God.

---

<sup>78</sup> Robert J. Wicks, ed. *Prayer in the Catholic Tradition*, 248.

<sup>79</sup> “Trinity, Exitus, Reditus”, <https://www.firstthings.com/blogs/leithart/2008/09/trinity-exitus-reditus> (accessed April 3, 2017).

<sup>80</sup> William A. Hinnebusch, *Renewal in the spirit of St. Dominic*, 114.

Following the spirit of the Founder, many saints of the Order have recognized the presence of God in a special way. St. Catherine of Siena came to know God and to see Him, with the eyes of her living soul, in countless forms and in many moments in her life. She thus came to know the goodness, involvement and compassion of God which were manifest in her life and the lives of others, all of whom are bound up in God. She saw God as a place in whom everyone has a space, but in Whom the appearance of everything changes because the spaces differ and different light falls on things.<sup>81</sup> In this sense, to live in the world of God and to experience the world in God is, at the same time, to be sent into the world.

When addressing the Athenians in the Acts of the Apostles (17: 28), St. Paul said “For in Him we live and move and have our being.” St. Thomas Aquinas repeated these and presented three ways of knowing God and unknowing God. The first is the *via positiva* or affirmative way, which allows us to make definite but limited statements about God, such as God exists, and God is good. The second way is the *via negativa*, by which, we can establish certain things which God is not. The third way, the *via eminentiae* or way of transcendence, goes beyond both affirmation and denial.<sup>82</sup> In this way of understanding God, we can express the transcendent nature of positive way (knowing God) or negative way (unknowing God). However, it is important that we recognize the presence of God in the way that St. Dominic and the Dominican traditions understand it: God is in all, and all is in God.

***God, the source of Grace:*** Blessed Jordan of Saxony tells us: “God gave Dominic a special grace to weep for sinners, for the afflicted and oppressed; he bore their distress

---

<sup>81</sup> Erik Borgman, *Dominican spirituality: an exploration*, 50-51.

<sup>82</sup> Richard Woods, *Mysticism and Prophecy: The Dominican Tradition*, 71.



in the inmost shrine of his compassion, and the warm sympathy he felt for them in his heart spilled over in tears which flowed from his eyes.”<sup>83</sup> Blessed Jordan’s words shows that the grace of God was embodied in the life of St. Dominic. Dominic did not explain how God’s grace was given to him. However, through his life we can see that God was present, in his Dominican spirituality, as the Giver of grace.

By the grace of God, Dominic was able to accomplish many things. Motivated by the Albigensian heresy, he establish an Order devoted to preaching the Word of God and the truth in order to save souls. He was able to establish an Order which combined contemplation and apostolic work, something that people of the time thought would be impossible.<sup>84</sup> Further, by the grace of God, St. Dominic was the first founder to send his followers to the University for study,<sup>85</sup> and his brothers then were endored to be preachers, which at the time was an office reserved for bishops.<sup>86</sup> Speaking in the language of St. Paul: from God’s fullness, St. Dominic had all received grace in place of grace (Ga 1:16).

During his life, Dominic always strived to work with God’s grace in order to fulfill his mission. In other words, Dominic combined the use of his natural abilities with supernatural grace. St. Thomas Aquinas helps us to understand the relationship between nature and grace. According to him, God, Who created human beings for His honor and glory, endowed human beings with wonderful natural powers. By using our natural powers, human beings can do many wonderful things. However, the natural power of a

---

<sup>83</sup> Simon Tugwell, *Jordan of Saxony: On the Beginnings of the Order of Preacher*, Parable: Dominican Publications, 1982), xi.

<sup>84</sup> Erik Borgman, *Dominican Spirituality: An Exploration* (London: Continuum, 2001), 27.

<sup>85</sup> Hinnebusch, *Dominican Spirituality*, 102.

<sup>86</sup> Dao Quang Chinh, *Dominican Laity and the Year 2000*, 19.

human person is nothing in comparison with supernatural grace, which come from God. Grace unites human beings to God in charity, super-naturalizes every good action, and elevates and perfects human beings as creatures of an infinitely superior world.<sup>87</sup> Without grace, the human person cannot love God above all things.

In showing us the relationship between nature and grace, St. Thomas Aquinas explains that grace builds on human nature and also perfects nature.<sup>88</sup> Christ is the source of grace, and the sacraments are the instruments which Christ uses. Christians receive grace through the sacraments, both through Christ and in Him. Believing that human beings come to God through prayer, Dominic was devoted to prayer so that God's grace could flow over himself and on others.

### **2.3.2. Experiencing God's presence in all aspects of life**

All Christians are invited to seek a personal relationship with God, and prayer is an expression of communication with God which nurtures in soul an intimate relationship with Him. Dominican spirituality is complex and made up of four elements that are closely linked with and complement each other. These four elements (community, prayer, study, and ministry) are called the "four pillars" of the Dominican life and are the foundation of Dominican spirituality. Through the spiritual dynamic of living out the four pillars, the Dominicans develops an intimate relations with God personally and in community. This relationship supports the primary work of the Order, which is to preach the Gospel for the salvation of souls.

---

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.111, ad.1.3.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.109.

According to the Albigensians, material creation was evil because it came from the evil god.<sup>89</sup> Using the revelation in Scripture and the Tradition of the Church, St. Dominic helped to clarify for many heretics the true doctrine of the Church and the goodness of material creation. God created the universe and human beings, so all things are good (Gen 1:1-8). In this sense, Dominican spirituality encourages people to enjoy the world where people live, to explore God's revelation in the Scriptures and to know God's Word as it was spoken to human beings.<sup>90</sup> Since prayer is an act of communication with God, Dominicans prioritize their relationship with God in prayer. Dominican prayer is communal when celebrating the Mass and praying the Liturgy of the Hours, and it is individual when the Dominican is engaged in contemplation or reflection. However, one's personal relationship is not static or isolated but grows when one also experiences communication with God and others through remaining pillars of study, community and preaching.

Dominican study concentrates on the Word of God so that the Dominican can possess the truth about God through learning his Word and contemplating on it. Since the real Truth is God Himself (Jn 14:6), Dominican study helps people to experience and contemplate God. When Dominicans preaching and teaching on contemporary social issues and social justice, they do so based on their study of the truth. Focusing on finding the truth, Dominicans can "try to put right what is wrong in the world."<sup>91</sup> In this sense,

---

<sup>89</sup> Zia H Shah, "Tracking Unitarian Tradition in Christianity: The Cathars", <https://themuslimtimes.info/2013/03/18/tracking-unitarian-tradition-in-christianity-the-cathars/>, accessed February 9, 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Erik Borgman, *Dominican Spirituality: An Exploration*, 27-28.

<sup>91</sup> "Dominican Order", *New World Encyclopedia*, [http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Dominican\\_Order#cite\\_note-0](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Dominican_Order#cite_note-0), accessed February, 8, 2018.

through Dominican study, one can contemplate the Truth, God Himself, and help to make this world better by protecting the truth and social justice.

In a Dominican community, one can share the spiritual riches of common life and share a joyful place where the members of that community support each other to grow in the love of God and, together, carry out the Order's mission. A Dominican community also is a place of reconciliation, contemplation and preparation for the apostolate. There is a saying "if you go fast, go alone; if you go far, go together." By living in the Dominican community, one can go far on the road to communicating with God who is always in the midst of people who gather together in the name of Jesus (Mt 18:19); and one can go far on the road to achieving the solidarity and sympathy with others in the society and helping to bring reconciliation to social issues.

Dominic was a person who loved to study and loved books. However, he was willing to sell his books to help the poor. He said: "I refuse to study dead skins while men are dying of hunger."<sup>92</sup> St. Dominic sent his followers to the university to study and, when studying, wanted them to "realize that there must be a spirit of prayer, contemplation, and reflection that would connect to the world of ideas, the life of the mind, and the spirit of truth, to the reality of the goodness of the Creator."<sup>93</sup> Dominican preaching must grow out of contemplation in order for it to help others achieve the salvation of their souls. Through Dominican preaching, one can share the knowledge and love of God with people in the world and, at the same time, engage him or herself in useful social activities.

---

<sup>92</sup> William Hinnebusch, *Dominican Spirituality: Principles and Practice*, 33.

<sup>93</sup> "Dominican Order", *New World Encyclopedia*, [http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Dominican\\_Order#cite\\_note-0](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Dominican_Order#cite_note-0), accessed February, 8, 2018.

In summary, the dynamics of Dominican spirituality involve the experience of a personal relationship to God combined with other aspects of life. Dominican prayer can help people to directly communicate with God; however, community, study and preaching, the other pillars of Dominican Spirituality can also help people to enter into an intimate communication with God. In this sense, one can be intimately united with God in all the aspects of one's life. This dynamic can not only be applied to Dominican friars but also to anyone who wants to have an intimate relationship with God, a personal relationship with Him that grows by communicating the Word of God to others.

### **2.3.3. Understanding the human person**

*The human person is sinful but has dignity.* Dominic did not teach or define what a human person is. However his fight against the Albigensian heresy and his prayer reveal to us how St. Dominic understood the human person. On the one hand, Dominic was aware of the sinful state of human beings. In prayer, he asked for the mercy of God: "God, be merciful to me a sinner." He recited the words of David: "It is I who have sinned and have done unjustly" (II Samuel 24:17).<sup>94</sup> Dominic also asked for God's mercy on others: "Oh Lord have mercy on your people. What is to become of sinners?"<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, Dominic believed in the goodness dignity of the human person and therefore against the Albigensian belief that the human body was bad because it belonged to the material world. The Albigensians believed that in order to be perfect in the spiritual life, they needed to abstain from meat, alcohol, sex and marriage.<sup>96</sup> According to St. Dominic,

---

<sup>94</sup> Second Ways of Prayer, in *The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*, 18.

<sup>95</sup> *Canonization Acts, Toulouse*, n.18.

<sup>96</sup> Beth Richardson, "The Cathars", *Historical Honey*, <http://historicalhoney.com/cathars/>, accessed February 10, 2018.

human person can come to the perfection by practicing the virtues and the help of God's grace.

Dominic asks us to distinguish between sin and the sinner. As we know, "sin is an offense against God, an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience, and a desire contrary to the eternal law."<sup>97</sup> Essentially, sin is an act that rejects the love of God. Human beings are not permitted to have any compromise toward sin, but nevertheless, they must show mercy toward sinners. Sinners are "like the sick who are healed, and in order to be cured the doctor must be close to them, visit them, touch them."<sup>98</sup> That is the reason why St. Dominic, while fighting against heresies, always asked God's mercy for sinners. When Dominic was aware of his own sin and others' sin, he prayed to the "Doctor" so that he and others would be healed.

The human dignity is "rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God."<sup>99</sup> Dominic asks us to understand the dignity of the human person. To show respect for the dignity of a person, his or her material and spiritual needs must both be met. Dominic's compassion for people made him sell his books to help the hungry.<sup>100</sup> He established an Order for preaching for the salvation of souls. In his prayer, Dominic prayed for God's mercy for sinners. These instances show that Dominic was concerned with the value and dignity of the human person, including material and spiritual needs. Dominicans reject any dissociation between the spiritual and the material in human beings, for God loves and blesses the world He made and called it "very good" (Gen 1:31).

---

<sup>97</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1849-1850.

<sup>98</sup> "Sin and the Sinner: What is the difference?" *Catholic Online*, <http://www.catholic.org/news/hf/faith/story.php?id=68545>, accessed March 3, 2018.

<sup>99</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1700.

<sup>100</sup> William A. Hinnebusch, *Dominican Spirituality*, 33.

***The human person thirsts for the perfection:*** As has been stated, the heresy the Albigensians believed that in order to be devoted in their religious life, they needed to abstain from meat, alcohol, sex and marriage.<sup>101</sup> Although their belief was excessive and misdirected, it showed that they were trying to reach perfection. Jesus invited His disciples: “be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5: 48). Understanding their aspirations, St. Dominic made an effort to preach to them and pray for them with his whole person: all his abilities, physical gestures, voice and mental power.

St. Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican, explains to us how to attain perfection. According to him, at the time of creation, God endowed human beings with wonderful natural powers and properties: a soul with an intellect, a will, imagination and memory, and a body with the physical ability to achieve perfection.<sup>102</sup> However, with the sin of Adam and Eve, the human race was deprived of grace, and the splendid image of God, of which Genesis speaks (Gen1:26-31), was destroyed in human beings. However, since Jesus is truly human and truly God, He was able to free human beings from sin and bring him back to be children of God.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, the grace of God can make humans perfect, for, according to St. Thomas, grace perfects nature.<sup>104</sup> The grace of Jesus penetrates into the very depths of our being, transforming every element of our human nature, the body and the soul. Without grace the sinner cannot experienced conversion which enables him to move toward his true goal and life.<sup>105</sup> Since natural wisdom is a gift of God, human beings ought to try to acquire it, not only by study but also by prayer. By prayer, one can

---

<sup>101</sup> Beth Richardson, “The Cathars”, *Historical Honey*, <http://historicalhoney.com/cathars/>, accessed February 10, 2018.

<sup>102</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, qq. 47-170.

<sup>103</sup> Benedict M. Ashley, *Spiritual direction in the Dominican tradition*, 58-65.

<sup>104</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, 109.

<sup>105</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, qq.111, ad. 1.3.

receive the grace of God (Mt 7:7-12), recognize God as the sole Author of all good, and realize one's total dependence upon God. That is why Dominic devoted himself in prayer with his whole person, with internal devotion and external humbling of the body, to ask God's grace for perfection and for the salvation of souls. At the same time, Dominic encourage his brothers to study biology, philosophy and theology. Using human knowledge is to understand deeper much a grace.

***The Human person as a spiritual unity in a human community:*** The truth and love which are needed for human beings to live in society can be found in Dominican spirituality. Love is at heart of the Dominican life. Dominicans contemplate the truth (Veritas) and then share this same truth.<sup>106</sup> St. Dominic wanted to establish a fraternal community so that his brothers could share the riches of spiritual life and perform the mission of the Order.

In his life, Dominic was aware of the harmony between communal and individual prayer. He loved to be present with his brethren in communal prayer and in community life, but he also loved to withdraw from others to a solitary place to pray in private. This does not reveal to us an internal contradiction in the person of Dominic but instead shows us the two aspects of spiritual life. Dominic understood the human person as a spiritual unity of mind and body. The mind or soul can operate and continue in existence independently of its material embodiment; therefore, one can contemplate on his or her own. However, the unity of the mind and the body is imperfect.<sup>107</sup> The individual is a person from conception whose natural capacities need community. This needs for community is based not only on a person physical needs but also on a person's spiritual

---

<sup>106</sup> "Dominican Mottos: Veritas," The Dominican Friars – England & Scotland, Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Richard Woods, *Mysticism and Prophecy: The Dominican Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 65.



need to communicate with others.<sup>108</sup> From the life of St. Dominic, we can say that the human person as individual and a member of a community, a spiritual unity in a human community.

#### **2.3.4. Various forms of encounter with the Divine**

**Liturgy:** As I have said before, St. Dominic was devoted to the liturgy, including Mass and the Divine Office. Paul of Venice, a witness at the canonization of St. Dominic, said that “Even when he was traveling... if he could find a church, he wanted to sing a high Mass every day.”<sup>109</sup> Another witness said that “I frequently saw him celebrate Mass and always noticed that his eyes and cheeks were wet with tears during the Canon.”<sup>110</sup> For Dominic, Mass was his life, so he celebrated Mass daily and zealously whenever possible. Dominic was also devoted to the Divine Office. He was always present with his brethren at Matins, Vespers, and Compline. He recited the psalms devoutly and exhorted the brethren to sing well.<sup>111</sup> From the example of the its founder, Mass and the Divine Office have become the heritage of the Order. The *Constitutions of Order of Preachers* encourages Dominicans to “celebrate publicly the conventual Mass and the liturgy of the hours.” These celebrations need to become “the center of the community liturgy and in choir.” Each day all priests are encouraged to “celebrate the Eucharistic sacrifice and those who are not priests should participate in the Mass.” All Dominicans “are bound to participate in the liturgy of the hours.”<sup>112</sup>

---

<sup>108</sup> Benedict M. Ashley, *Spiritual direction in the Dominican tradition*, 54-55.

<sup>109</sup> Ceslaus Hoinacki, “The Holiness of St. Dominic,” *Dominicana* 42, no. 1, 37.

<sup>110</sup> Angelus m. Walz, “The Character and Influence of St. Dominic,” *Dominicana* Vol. 38, no. 1, 22.

<sup>111</sup> William A. Hinnebusch, *Renewal in the Spirit of St. Dominic* (Washington, D.C.: Dominicana, 1968), 98.

<sup>112</sup> *The Constitutions of Order of Preachers*, Chapter II, n. 57-63.

Through St. Dominic's devotion to the liturgy and through what is written in the *Constitutions of Order of Preachers* we can see how the Dominicans encounter God in the liturgy. They first encounter God through the use of text, which is chanted in Dominican liturgy. Chant plays an important role in the communal worship of Dominicans. Dominican liturgy adopts the Roman rite which uses psalms in the Divine Office. In this sense, "Dominican prayer is ordered to text. Dominican prayer is an encounter with a text."<sup>113</sup> When Dominicans sing the Mass and the Office, they are proclaiming and hearing the Word of God. In doing so, they are encountering a series of Biblical texts and other hymns. Therefore, Church Tradition and Scriptures are very important in Dominican spirituality.

The second way in which Dominicans encounter God in the liturgy is by a combination of chants and postures. The varying bodily postures helps to express the meaning of the chant. For example, during the final verses of the hymns of the office, Dominicans make a profound bow, singing the "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit." They also make a profound bow when the priest reads or sings the collect at the Mass and Office.<sup>114</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas explained the significance of using the body in prayer in that it allows one to serve God "with everything that he has from God, that is, not only with the mind, but also with the body."<sup>115</sup> The use of the body is integrated into the chant and creates a distinctive feature of Dominican liturgy. Dominicans also make use of the body in private prayer.

---

<sup>113</sup> Walter Cornelius Wagner, *Dominican Life: A Commentary On the Rule of Saint Augustine*, 72.

<sup>114</sup> Innocent Smith, "Dominican chant and Dominican identity," *Religions* 5 (September 29, 2014), 962.

<sup>115</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 83, a. 12.

The solemnity of Dominican liturgy is a third way in which Dominicans encounter God in the liturgy. Dominican liturgy emphasizes the singing of the psalms. St. Dominic, who had a strong and clear voice, loved to sing the liturgical hymns; he encouraged his brothers to sing well in the liturgy.<sup>116</sup> According to St. Augustine, “singing is praying twice.” St. Thomas Aquinas also shows us the value of singing: “the use of the body and the voice in divine worship helps arouse devotion in the heart of the worshiper.”<sup>117</sup> Obviously, singing helps people to pray more zealously. For this reason, Dominicans are required “to sing at least apart from the divine office, especially those sections which of their nature require to be sung.”<sup>118</sup> It can be said that singing, which contributes to make liturgical solemnity, is important and indispensable in Dominican liturgy. Although a Dominican liturgy emphasizes solemnity by singing, in order that people can pray earnestly, it does not take much longer than the normal liturgy. This helps the Dominicans to pray earnestly and have time to fulfill other duties.

***Physical bodily gestures:*** *The Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic* is meant to be used in private prayer. These ways use bodily gestures in prayer. *The Nine Ways* can be summed up by these nine observations of Dominic praying: (1) bowing humbly before the altar, (2) throwing himself down flat on his face on the ground, (3) take the discipline with an iron chain, (4) looking intently at Christ on the cross and kneeling down over and over again, (5) stand upright before the altar... hold his hands out, open, before his breast, like an open book, (6) hands and arms spread out like a cross, stretching himself to the limit and standing as upright as he possibly could, (7) stretching his whole body up

---

<sup>116</sup> Innocent Smith, “Dominican chant and Dominican identity,” 963.

<sup>117</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 81, a. 7.

<sup>118</sup> *The Constitutions of Order of Preachers*, Chapter II, n. 65.

towards heaven, like an arrow being shot straight up in the air, (8) sitting there (in a room or somewhere) quietly, he would open some book before him, arming himself first with the sign of the cross, and then he would read, (9) going on his own he would pray as he walked, and a fire was kindled in his meditation.<sup>119</sup>

From the nine postures of St. Dominic, we can see that with each of his postures he meditates on God's Word. For example, when bowing humbly before the altar, he says: "the prayer of the humble and meek has always been pleasing to you" (Jdt 9:16); when he throws himself down on the ground, he says: "my soul is laid low in the dust, my heart is stuck to the earth" (Ps 43:25); when he takes the discipline with an iron chain, he prays: "Your discipline has set me straight towards my goal." (Ps 17:36).<sup>120</sup> Dominic uses these holy gestures as an exterior manifestation to express an interior intention. Truly, through these gestures, Dominic shows that human beings, who are sinful and imperfect, need to be humble before God, to ask His mercy and to listen to God's Word. We also see that there are levels of union between exterior manifestation and interior intention. For example when he throws himself down on the ground, he is aware of his sins and asks God for His mercy; when he sits down on some place, he opens a book, reads a passage and hears the Lord speaking to him; when he stands with his hand and arms stretched out, he wishes to be moved towards God through the power of prayer.<sup>121</sup> It has been said that the lower his posture is, the deeper his soul is dedicated to God.

---

<sup>119</sup> Ways of 1-9 in *The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*, trans. Simon Tugwell and Sheelagh Wilsden (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1978), 15-48.

<sup>120</sup> The First, the Second and the Third way of prayer, in *The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*, 15.18.22.

<sup>121</sup> The Second, the Seventh and the Eighth way of prayer, in *The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*, 18.38.42.

When Dominic shows us the value of the body in prayer, he counters the heresy of the Albigensians who considered that all material things, including the human body, were bad or evil. Dominic argued that human beings are a part of the world, that all creatures God made are good, and that human beings are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26). Using the body in prayer, Dominic manifests that the human body is valuable in worshipping God. In addition, the body engages the soul to do penance for sin, to praise God, and to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus who was incarnated in a human body. “The soul, as it causes the body to move, is in turn moved by the body.”<sup>122</sup> Therefore, the soul and body are interrelated in the praise of God.

**Contemplation:** The word contemplation is rooted in Latin: *templum*, which means temple and refers to a place where “certain sacred persons look at the insides of reality to discover divine meanings and purposes.”<sup>123</sup> *Contemplatio* in Latin has a meaning which is close to the Greek noun *theoria* and its verb *theorein* which refers to the “experience of oneness with God.”<sup>124</sup> In the Christian sense, “contemplation is a conscious and graced receptivity to the divine life, allowing oneself to partake of the divine nature.”<sup>125</sup> What is the meaning of the word contemplation as it applies to the Dominican life? Dominic did not define, what contemplation was. Instead, Dominic encouraged his followers: “to speak only to God or about God.”<sup>126</sup> Thomas Aquinas developed Dominic’s idea into a formula that became the Dominican motto: *Contemplare, et contemplata aliis tradere* (to contemplate and give to others the fruits of

---

<sup>122</sup> Erik Borgman, *Dominican Spirituality: An Exploration* (London: Continuum, 2001), 62.

<sup>123</sup> Michael Downey, *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 210.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Robert J. Wicks, *Prayer in the Catholic Tradition: A Handbook of Practical Approaches* (Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media, 2016), 241.

<sup>126</sup> *Canonization Acts*, n.37.

contemplation).<sup>127</sup> This motto shows us that Dominican contemplation has two dimensions: it involves the time spent in “monastic” contemplation and the time spent applying the fruits of this contemplation to apostolic work.

The “monastic” contemplation is shown by the two aspects of Dominican spirituality: community and prayer. In the aspect of community, Dominican school or priory is a wonderful space for solitude, for Dominicans together contemplate on the love of God through the celebration the Eucharist, sacraments, the liturgy and recite the beloved mysteries of the Rosary, which focus on the events in the life of Jesus and Mary. Community is to prepare Dominicans for contemplation because it exercises the professed religious to love God and others. Furthermore, common life is an image of the life of the Holy Trinity. Contemplating the love of the Persons in Holy Trinity helps Dominicans love each other in the community.

In the aspect of prayer, Dominicans need a space for solitude so that they can focus attention on the love of God in Jesus Christ Who is present in the Eucharist and in His Word.<sup>128</sup> In silence, St. Dominic also contemplated the crucifix. An iconic portrayal of St. Dominic, painted by Fra Angelico, shows him at the foot of the cross contemplating zealously. However, God is beyond all human thoughts and all human words. St. Thomas said: “God is horned by silence, not because we may say or know nothing about Him, but because we know that we are unable to comprehend Him.”<sup>129</sup> Therefore, in silence of mind, one can be utterly at rests in the contemplation of truth, in listening to God’s Word and in honoring God so that one may receive many benefits

---

<sup>127</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 188, a.6.

<sup>128</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7.

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html), accessed February 15, 2018.

<sup>129</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, 2,1, ad 6, 94.

from that contemplation. In contemplation, Dominicans gain intimate relationship with God and, move closer towards the ultimate goal of human life.

The apostolic contemplation is shown by the other's aspect of Dominican spirituality: study and preaching. The first is intellectual contemplation which relates to study. When St. Dominic went on his trips, he often carried with him the Gospel of Matthew and the epistles of St. Paul so that he could study and contemplate the Word of God. Dominic sent his brothers to Universities to study Bible and theology so that they could better understand the Word of God, discover the real Truth, and become more profound in uniting with God.

Dominicans do not keep the good fruits which he or she attains in contemplation for him or herself alone, but a Dominican shares these fruits with others; that is preaching which shows most clearly the apostolic contemplation. For St. Catherine of Siena, becoming pregnant is to give birth, and one cannot give birth without becoming pregnant.<sup>130</sup> This suggests that in order to preach the Word of God in the world, Dominicans need to become pregnant with the Word of God. Contemplation is a preparation for preaching and through preaching to those whom Dominicans meet becomes a source for contemplation. In other words, Dominicans take their experience of interacting and preaching with people back to their monastic contemplation.

Dominican contemplation includes prayer, community, study, and preaching. These aspects are not separate but instead they complement each other. This makes Dominican contemplation become a unique point. Dominicans need a space for solitude; however, this space is not necessarily a physical place but, rather, a place within him or

---

<sup>130</sup> Catherine, *The Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 45.

herself. In this sense, each Dominican can become a “temple” where he or she can intimately communicate with God. Therefore, Dominicans do not need to go into the wilderness for contemplation as monks, but they can contemplate in their community, in study, in preaching, in school and in the city. “Monastic” contemplation with Apostolic contemplation help Dominicans to find a balance between their interior lives with their exterior lives.

In brief, Christian spirituality, by definition, refers to a transformative experience of God. The four pillars (prayer, community, study and preaching) of Dominican spirituality can help a person to achieve this kind of experience. Christian prayer requires three elements: the human person, God, and the encounter between God and the human person. In Dominican prayer, the liturgy, prayer gestures, and contemplation are used to encounter God. While St. Dominic recognized the sinfulness of men and women, he also saw their dignity as part of God’s creation. He understood that men and women ultimately thirst for perfection and need to grow together in community. Dominican prayer emphasizes God as the Father of mercy, the source of redemption and wisdom, and sees that God, who is the source of grace, is in all and that all is in God. The dynamic of Dominican spirituality not only helps Dominicans enter an intimate union with God at any time and in any place, but also helps all those who want to enter into an intimate communication with God. In the next section, I will present how Dominican prayer can help young Vietnamese Americans to grow in their spiritual lives and to negotiate the challenges which living in two cultures presents to them.



## Chapter III

### HOW CAN DOMINICAN WAYS OF PRAYER HELP YOUNG VIETNAMESE AMERICANS?

As I have presented before, with the social, cultural and religious opportunities which young Vietnamese Americans have, they can become self-reliant people both socially and religiously. However, these youth still face challenges having to do with their relations with themselves (individual), with others (community) and with God (Divine). Dominican spirituality, which integrates inner life and external activities, can help the youth to overcome their challenges through practicing the three types of Dominican prayer: private prayer, mental prayer and communal prayer.

#### **3.1. Private Prayer - A flexible way to nourish spiritual life in all circumstances**

##### **3.1.1. Experience of encountering God in private**

*Being more aware of the presence of God:* St. Dominic devoted himself to prayer. In the Nine Ways of Prayer, he incorporated his body, with his spirit, in various physical postures. He could also pray anytime and anyplace because he recognized that God is everywhere. By opening his mind and his heart, he could listen to the Word of God speaking through other people and creation. By engaging the various forms of Dominican prayer, young Vietnamese Americans can become aware of the presence of God in all aspects of their lives, complex and confused as they may seem.

As are all the faithful, the Vietnamese youth are taught to believe that Christ is present in His Church, in liturgical celebrations, in the sacrifice of the Mass, under the Eucharistic species, in His Word,<sup>1</sup> and in those who gather in the name of Christ (Mt

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7.

18:20). Dominican prayer suggests a way for the youth to experience the presence of God in others. For St. Catherine, in order to know God, one needs to see “the countless forms and moments with the eyes of a living soul,” and to know how “the goodness, involvement, and compassion manifest themselves in one’s life and in the lives of the others with whom one is bound up.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches: “God is the One who reveals himself in reality, as the One from Whom all things come, in Whom all things consist and to Whom all things go.”<sup>3</sup> These quotations show that God does not live somewhere far away but is present actively in one’s life and in the world. Obviously, spirituality has not only to do with God, but also with people and creation. The Dominican theological dynamic helps people experience the presence of God in many aspects of life: communicating directly to God in prayer, sharing the spiritual riches in community life, contemplating the Truth, God Himself, in study and sharing the knowledge and love of God through preaching. When they apply Dominican spirituality while participating in church services interacting with their parents, and communicating with their friends and others, the youth can realize the presence of God not only in church, in school, in the workplace, and in creation, but also in those people with whom they meet. The teaching of Jesus, “whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40), prompts the youth to do good things for others as they would do for God Himself.

How can the youth realize that they are living in God’s presence? The word of God reveals that “You will show me the path to life, abounding joy in your presence, the delights at your right-hand forever.” (Ps 16:11). In this Psalm, king David shows the

---

<sup>2</sup> Erik Borgman, *Dominican Spirituality*, 50.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.1,a.3.

joyfulness of being intimate with God and contemplating the presence of God. In the New Testament, St. Paul invites us to “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (Rom 12:15). This empathetic principle helps the faithful to be brothers with one another. St. Dominic was filled with joy when he was with his brothers; however, he was crying with tears when he prayed to ask for God’s mercy for his sins and the sins of others.<sup>4</sup> When the youth learn to express their joyfulness or their sorrow with their parents, their friends, their colleague, all in the love of God, they will come to understand that they are living in the presence of God. In other words, for the love of God, one can be joyful or empathetic depending on the circumstances, the situation. By this, one can experience the presence of God.

***Asking for grace and cooperating with God’s grace:*** St. Dominic was blessed with grace to recognize that the times in which he lived needed preaching for the salvation of souls. For him, “preaching is a work of prayer, not of human eloquence, and consequently must receive its power from prayer.”<sup>5</sup> The book of Sirach teaches us about the value of grace: “A man without grace is like an idle tale” (Sir 20:21). That is why Dominic always asked God to give the gift of the Holy Spirit to himself, to his brothers and to the Order. Dominican Tradition also emphasizes that grace perfects nature and Jesus’s grace converts sinners. Dominic’s *The Nine Ways of Prayer* ask for grace and emphasize cooperation with God’s grace.

In the Catechism class, as the minister, I can teach the youth about grace and its values. By learning about Dominic’s experience of living in grace, the youth will be prompted to explore the source and value of grace. “Grace is the help God gives us to

---

<sup>4</sup> Richard Woods, *Mysticism and Prophecy: The Dominican Tradition*, 31-33.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict M. Ashley, *Spiritual direction in the Dominican tradition*, 7.

respond to our vocation of becoming his adopted sons. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life...”<sup>6</sup> In this sense, God is the source of grace, and the Trinitarian life of God is the source of infinite and eternal grace. Grace can convert sinners and is a means of salvation.”<sup>7</sup> By better understanding the value of grace which can help them to overcome their bad passions and become good people, the youth will diligently pray and actively participate in the sacraments, especially in Mass, to receive God’s grace. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* emphasizes that “Grace responds to the deepest yearning of human freedom, calls freedom to cooperate with it, and perfects freedom.”<sup>8</sup> Human beings not only need to receive grace, but also need to cooperate with grace. The youth may ask how can they cooperate with God’s grace? Repentance is a way in which the human person can cooperate with God’s grace. In the Third Way of Prayer, St. Dominic expresses his repentance by taking discipline with an iron chain.<sup>9</sup> The youth do not need to follow this specific example of St. Dominic, but they can repent by sincerely recognizing their mistakes and making some personal sacrifices, such as reducing the amount of time spent on video games. Repentance for one’s sin does not reduce human dignity but makes one more aware of one’s dependence on God's grace.

Although St. Dominic did not talk about all the grace he received from God, certainly we can see the grace filled life which he lived. The young Vietnamese Americans may not realize the graces they have. However, in a retreat for the youth, the retreat master can help the youth to look back on their lives and come to realize how

---

<sup>6</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Philip A. Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*, Sacra Doctrina (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 2007), 190.

<sup>8</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> *The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*, 22.

many graces they have received. While many international students have to leave their families and homeland for a better education in United States, these young Vietnamese Americans live in peace and security with their families while they receive their education. Likewise, while many people in the world are faced with indignity and injustice, the young Vietnamese Americans can enjoy the rights and freedom of Americans to develop and grow with human dignity. They can also practice their religious freedom while many believers in the world are being persecuted. As a minister, I would make sure that the youth are aware of these blessing and at the same time, understand that they still need the grace of God so that they may overcome the challenges in their moral and spiritual lives. I would suggest that they pray and learn the Truth so that they can realize what has impacted their lives. The youth may ask how can they know if they are living in the grace of God. They will know, in the words of St. Paul, that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness” (Gal 5:22), because they will begin to experience the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. With these gifts of the Holy Spirit, the youth experience peace and joy and can conquer the opposing sinful desires.

### **3.1.2. Encouraging the youth to understand the value of the body in prayer**

*The value of the body:* In both communal and private prayers, Dominic used many gestures of his body to express his devotion to God. Both St. Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great, who belong to the Order of Preachers, have praised bodily prayer in which the soul gives thanks for the body and uses it by worshiping God wholly and

enthusiastically.<sup>10</sup> These ways of prayer, which also include the will and intellect, help people to prompt their piety through the intermingling action of the soul on the body and the body on the soul; in this way, they can enter into a closer relationship with God, who is the Creator presented everywhere. The Second Vatican Council invites the faithful to use their bodies in prayer: “To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamation, responses, Psalms, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes.”<sup>11</sup> Bodily attitudes help the faithful actively participate in prayer, and through these exterior manifestations, they can express their interior disposition. For example, when I go to a parish or a Vietnamese community to give a talk, I would invite the youth to sing Catholic songs<sup>12</sup> while using bodily gestures. Then, I would explain to the youth how these bodily gestures helped them express the meaning of the song and the explain how bodily gestures are helpful in prayer in general.

When the youth learn to use their bodies in prayer as St. Dominic did, they will experience how their bodies can help them express their in most prayer and lead them to great depth of prayer. According to Pope John Paul II, although the person, not the body itself, is the author of the language, the body expresses the person in such a way that it can be called the language of the body.<sup>13</sup> For the body expresses the person, and the body has a certain language; the body possesses the capacity to speak the truth.<sup>14</sup> In

---

<sup>10</sup> Phan Tấn Thành, “Chín Cách Cầu Nguyện của Thánh Đa Minh”, <http://www.tinmung.net/CACTHANH/ CacThanh/ Thang08/Thanh-Da-minh/TimHieu/Chin-cach-cau-nguyen-cua-Thanh-Da-Minh.htm>. (Accessed May 6, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Vatican II, *Constitution On The Sacred Liturgy*, no. 30.

<sup>12</sup> Bodily gestures can be used with many Catholic songs, such as “Con đường Giêsu”, “Xin Tin Yêu”, “Gặp gỡ Đức Kitô.”

<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body*, 359.

<sup>14</sup> Tara L. Seyfer and John M. Travaline, “The Theology of the Body and Modern Medicine: Informing the Practice of Healing,” *The Linacre Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (February): 16-30, 18.

this sense, through one's body, the person can express love and faithfulness, and thus the body can speak the truth. St. Paul reminds us that, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body" (1Cor 6:19-20). This teaching of St. Paul shows us that human body is a holy creation. Understanding the value of body is necessary for the youth who are going into married life. Therefore, in Marriage catechism class, I would explain to the youth the value and dignity of their bodies. Each person is a place where God dwells, and therefore each person needs to respect his or her body and the bodies of others by avoiding doing bad things, harming their bodies, and never seriously contemplating suicide.

The youth may ask: why if the body has such value, did St. Dominic use his body for discipline? The answer is twofold. The human body is valuable because humans were made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27). However, the image of God in human beings has been tainted by original sin. St. Paul teaches that "God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8) and that "If we have died with him we shall also live with him" (2Tm 2:11). Thus, the discipline of the body is an expression of communion with the Passion of Christ and helps one to cooperate with the grace of Christ in order to conquer one's weakness, represented by the flesh. For this reason, Dominic was given to long night vigils and to engage in physical penance by using an iron rod to beat himself while he was praying, "O God, your discipline has set me toward my goal."<sup>15</sup> (Ps 17:36) Dominic not only repented for

---

<sup>15</sup> Benedict M. Ashley, *Spiritual direction in the Dominican tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 7.

his own sins but also for the sins of others. While doing so, Dominic used his body to atone for sin and glorify God. Living in the American culture, which is far different from the context of Dominic's time, the youth, while not following the specific practices of St. Dominic, can practice discipline by fasting at certain times, especially on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The important thing is that they realize the meaning of discipline. Understanding the value of the body, and the usefulness of body in prayer, the youth may engage their the bodies to speak the truth, to respect their bodies as a place of God's dwelling, and to use their bodies in glorifying God.

***The attitude of openness and surrendering in prayer:*** St. Dominic, both in his private prayer and in his communal prayer, expresses the attitude of openness and surrender by bowing humbly in front of altar and throwing himself down on the ground.<sup>16</sup> Dominican tradition, on the one hand, emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual life; but on the other hand, it emphasizes the human person's will and intellect which gives the person the ability to know and to love God and His creatures. There is no competition here been the role of the Holy Spirit and the human person's will and intellect. Rather we recognize that no matter how hard a person applies his or her intellect and will to know and love God, he or she must ultimately surrender to the grace of God to guide their lives. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the Holy Spirit helps humans understand wisdom and draws them closer to God, and the Grace of Jesus penetrates and transforms human nature.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, prayer in the Dominican

---

<sup>16</sup> The First and Second Way of Prayer, in *The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*, 15-18.

<sup>17</sup> Donald Goergen, *Fire of Love, Encountering the Holy Spirit* (New York: Paulist, 2006), 129.



tradition is “receptivity to grace; it is a surrender to God, conforming one’s life to that of Christ’s in faith, hope, and love.”<sup>18</sup>

When talking with an individual or with a group of youth who do not know how to pray, I would encourage the youth to follow the spirit of Dominican prayer by being open to God’s invitation to respond to His love. When they are praying, God actively invites human beings to enter into a close relationship with Him. The image of Christ in the Book of Revelation gives us a picture of this invitation: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me” (Rev 3:20). In order to have an intimate relationship with God, the youth need to open their minds and hearts and listen to God’s will. Prayer “is not only our turning to God, but God’s approach to us and a mode through which God accomplishes God’s purpose.”<sup>19</sup> By opening their hearts and minds in silence, talking with God in their thoughts and listening to the Word of God speaking to their hearts, the youth may experience God’s touch in their lives.

Dominican prayer also encourages the youth to have an attitude of surrender. The attitude of openness in prayer is the beginning of the attitude of surrender to God. The youth are invited to use their natural power and reason to discover and to love God. However, human reason is limited, so one cannot love God without his grace. “We pray, then, not to induce God to do our will, but to open ourselves to God’s

---

<sup>18</sup> Robert J. Wicks, ed. *Prayer in the Catholic Tradition*, 249.

<sup>19</sup> Nancy Campbell and Marti Steussy, “Process Theology and Contemplative Prayer: Seeking the Presence of God,” *Encounter* 63, no. 1 (wint-spr 2002): 77-87, 79.

influence upon us that we may seek to do God's will."<sup>20</sup> The youth should be open to surrender to God so that God can guide their lives.

### **3.1.3. Encouraging the youth to devote themselves to praying in all circumstances**

#### ***Understanding the status of the person and the purpose of the prayer:***

Dominican prayer helps the youth understand the place of the person in God's creation. Christian prayer assumes that human beings are not the center of the universe but small creatures dependent on God. When teaching a Catechesis lesson relating to human dignity, such as a lesson on God's creation of man and woman, I would help the youth to understand more specifically the status of the human person. We are sinful; nevertheless, we do have dignity because we were created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). We do need God's mercy and grace.<sup>21</sup> St. Thomas is famous for his words "grace perfects nature."<sup>22</sup> By this he means that our natural gifts of intellect and will are not sufficient for salvation. When the youth understand that the grace of God is necessary to perfect our human natural gifts, they will realize the necessity of prayer.

Dominic, who was called a man of prayer, prayed constantly and zealously with his whole person at all times and everywhere. How can we help the youth to understand the concept of constant prayer? St. Paul also invites the faithful to pray without ceasing (1Thess 5:17; Phil 3:17; Eph 5:20). Praying without ceasing does not mean one has to bow, close one's eyes and pray throughout the day. Paul does not suggest that one should pray with ceaseless speech, instead, reflects to the fact that one should be conscious of God and obedient to Him at all times. Origen explains that prayer "can be

---

<sup>20</sup> Nancy Campbell and Marti Steussy, "Process Theology and Contemplative Prayer: Seeking the Presence of God, 79.

<sup>21</sup> *The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*, 15.18.22.26.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q.1, a. 8.

unceasing if one allows every moment of one's life to be touched by the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit."<sup>23</sup> In doing so, every moment of one's life has the potential to become prayerful. Dominican prayer suggests to the youth that they can pray without ceasing and be in constant communication with God by combining all the aspects of Dominican spirituality. These pillars of Dominican spirituality will help the youth to understand that all the events happening in their lives can become prayers to God, and they can be intimately united with God in all the aspects of their lives. For instance, on the occasion of picnic for the youth, I would have them engage in different forms of prayer. We could recite the rosary, pray before the meal, say a short prayer before games and even have some quiet time. In this way, the youth could experience what it means to pray without ceasing.

In addition, Dominican prayer encourages the youth to explore the profound meaning of prayer. Like other believers, the youth have been taught and warned to "Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test." (Mt 26: 41). They have also learned that the purpose of Christian prayer is to seek God's will, to give thanks to God for the graces received, to make requests, to seek guidance and ask for wisdom. Generally speaking, the purpose of prayer is to nurture one's relationship with God. Because of the charism of the Order, which to preach for the salvation of souls, Dominican prayer and contemplation also serve as preparation for preaching. In this sense, Dominican prayer tends toward the salvation of souls. Once the youth understand their proper relationship with God and the value of prayer, they will be motivated to

---

<sup>23</sup> David Brian Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 277.

pray in order to nurture their relationship with God, enrich their spiritual lives, and receive the benefits of salvation for themselves and others.

***An adaptable prayer: pray everywhere and pray as they can pray best:*** Dominic used body language to express his inner feelings to God. His constant prayer was performed through his flexibility, such as reading, thinking, staying put, and traveling. These activities “become ways of desiring the fulfilled life in the space of God’s presence.”<sup>24</sup> Dominic did not require his brothers to follow a certain mode of prayer. “There is no one particular way to pray, no Dominican method. Pray as you pray best. Pray as God prays in you.”<sup>25</sup> However, what Dominic expresses in his bodily or mental prayer and in private or communal prayer can be applied flexibly for those who want to follow his methods of prayer.

***Using bodily gestures:*** Aside from using his mind and heart in prayer, Dominic used his body in different ways to assist him in prayer. He prayed on his knees; he prayed with his arm open; he prayed standing, bowing and lying prostrate on the ground. When we say that Dominican prayer is flexible, we mean that these methods can be applied separated or combined in many ways – whatever is suitable to the time, place and situation. The youth can adapt these methods of prayer so that they can practice their spirituality in the midst of their busy lives. They can take advantage of the time they have on their way to work, during their break time or when they are dining by using their bodily gestures, voice, mind, and hands. In doing so, they can enter into a closer relationship with God, and their spiritual lives can be nurtured through these practices. It is said that *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the law of praying is the law of

---

<sup>24</sup> Erik Borgman, *Dominican spirituality*, 60.

<sup>25</sup> Robert J. Wicks, ed, *Prayer in the Catholic Tradition*, 250.

believing).<sup>26</sup> The youth may come to understand that spiritual practices not only nourish their spirituality (their good relationship with God) but express what they believe.

*Using text and popular devotions:* Besides using bodily gestures, the youth may also apply Dominican prayer by using text. As stated before, Dominican prayer is ordered to sacred text, and is an encounter with that text.<sup>27</sup> Sacred text is mainly used in the Liturgy and the Divine Office. However, the youth can adapt this text for private prayer by reciting or singing short biblical verses. In the *Nine Ways of Prayer*, St. Dominic often quoted a short sentences in the Psalms or hymns, such as “It is I who have sinned and done unjustly” (2 Sam 24:47), “My soul is laid low in the dust, my heart is stuck to the earth” (Ps 43:25), and “Do not reckon up to them this sin” (Acts 7:60). These short and familiar biblical verses are useful for the youth to pray at any time and anywhere.

Dominic often contemplated on the love of God through the repetition of prayer in reciting his beloved mysteries of the Rosary. Fervent faith is nourished not only by the sacraments but also by popular devotions. Vatican II teaches that the “popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly commended.”<sup>28</sup> The faith of Vietnamese people has traditionally been fostered by popular devotions, such as Marian devotions and prayers to the Vietnamese martyrs and other saints.<sup>29</sup> Young Vietnamese Americans, who have been influenced, more or less, by the devotion of their parents and

---

<sup>26</sup> Andre Marie, “Lex Orandi Lex Credendi”, <http://catholicism.org/lex-orandi-lex-credendi.html> (accessed Nov 1, 2016)

<sup>27</sup> Walter Cornelius Wagner, *Dominican Life: A Commentary On the Rule of Saint Augustine*, 72.

<sup>28</sup> Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 13.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Phan, “Vietnamese Catholics in the United States: Christian Identity Between the Old and the New,” 24.

grandparents, can learn to appreciate the value of repetition in praying the rosary and the value of benediction, pilgrimages and other popular devotions.

*Silence:* Dominic loved to withdraw from others to a solitary place in order to pray. In the midst of everyday life, he sought a solitude for his soul which would enable him love for God and devote himself in prayer.<sup>30</sup> Loving the silence of the soul, Dominic could pray in any situation, and anywhere. The story of the prophet Elijah shows us that God was not in “a great and powerful wind”, or in “an earthquake,” in “a fire” but in “a gentle whisper” (1 Kings 19:11-12). Jesus Himself often went off to a solitary place in order to pray (Mk 1:35). Living in our modern society, the youth may be confronted with too much anxiety and noise, and too many thoughts running rampant like traffic in the streets. All of these conditions make it hard for them to recognize the presence of God in their daily lives. Using St. Dominic as a model, as well as Our Lord and Old Testament Scripture, the minister can help the youth learn to appreciate the importance of silence in their lives, such as the quiet time at Mass, and quiet time for reflection, whether it be walking in nature or doing yoga. Interior silence will enable them to become aware of God’s presence even in the noise of contemporary life. They can also learn not to fear being alone but to see their solitude as an opportunity to experience the presence of God and to get to know themselves better.

A space for solitude is necessary; however, a physical place is not as important as silence in the soul. St. Faustina says that “in order to hear the voice of God, one has to have silence in one’s soul and to keep silence; not a gloomy silence, but an interior

---

<sup>30</sup> Erik Borgman, *Dominican spirituality*, 61.

silence; that is to say, recollection in God.”<sup>31</sup> Every language is limited in its ability to express our thoughts and feelings; however, in silence, one can listen to the word of God and then speak to God what he or she is thinking. Interior silence does not mean that one has to be mute. “Spiritual silence is an emptying of self to make room for God. Ultimately it is only silence that can open us to a deeper experience of God.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, it is good to find a silent place, but whether or not that is possible, a silent place within the soul will help the youth find themselves and communicate with God at anytime and any place.

### **3.2. Mental prayer- A way to contemplate God and search for Truth**

#### **3.2.1. Experiencing God in contemplation**

*Experience in uniting with God:* Dominic is known as a man of prayer and had a deep union with God in contemplation. He only spoke to God or spoke about God and prayed without ceasing; his eyes were wet with tears during prayer. Dominican tradition also shows us other examples of man's profound communion with God. St. Thomas Aquinas was deeply entranced with a personal devotion to the Eucharist and fervent prayers before the Crucifix. He had several mystical experiences wherein he was united with God. Toward the end of his life, after a vision in which he had such an experience of God, he ended his teachings and writings. He said: “Everything I have written seems like straw in comparison with what I have seen and what has been revealed to me.”<sup>33</sup> In that vision, Thomas contemplated God and realized that the finite capacity of the human

---

<sup>31</sup> Thomas L. Mulcahy, “Some Relationships are Nurtured in Silence,” *Catholic Strength*, <https://catholicstrength.com/2017/11/21/some-relationships-are-nurtured-in-silence/>, accessed March 2, 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas McGonigle, *Dominican Tradition*, 20.

person could not adequately talk or write about God. Therefore, the saint did not desire anything else than God Himself. St. Catherine also had extraordinary experiences of a progressive union with God. In a vision, Jesus Christ told her to get out of the confines of her house and walk fully in the footsteps of Dominic. Catherine objected that she was “the frailest of all” and a “poor creature”<sup>34</sup> but her union with God gave her the strength to follow His commands. Catherine was so close to God that she considered Him as a friend with whom she could dialogue. The examples of intimate union with God in the Dominican tradition can motivate the youth to desire to live in a close connection with God.

The youth may be motivated by these examples. However, they may ask how can they enter into an intimate relationship with God? Dominican tradition gives us a threefold process (purification, illumination and union) of spiritual growth that can lead the youth to such a relationship. The first step in this process is purification. Repentance and conversion are necessary for purification.<sup>35</sup> Sin refers to the original sin which effects each person as a result of the sin of our first parents. Sin also refers to actual sin and the harm people have done to themselves and others. By Baptism, “all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sin, as well as all punishment for sin.”<sup>36</sup> The human person needs the sacrament of Reconciliation for the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism. For this reason, in order to become united with God, the youth need first to have repentance and conversion. The youth can practice repentance by

---

<sup>34</sup> Erik Borgman, *Dominican Spirituality: An Exploration*, 49.

<sup>35</sup> Benedict M Ashley, *Spiritual Direction in the Dominican Tradition*, 91.

<sup>36</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1263.



learning to examine their consciences each day before going to bed and by asking for God's mercy for their shortcomings.

The second step in this process is illumination. If the first step of purification eliminates the negative hinderances to spiritual growth, illumination is the positive process toward spiritual growth. Illumination has to do with the process of growth in grace in the depths of the soul. In order to grow in grace, one must grow in virtue.<sup>37</sup> The four moral virtues which play a pivotal role in the life of people are called "cardinal" (or moral) virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.<sup>38</sup> However, growth in these virtues, which are naturally acquired by practice, are not sufficient for the Christian to grow in intimate union with God. A person needs to open up to the grace of God so that his or her natural virtues can be transformed by grace and he or she can attain intimacy with God. The youth can grow in the illumination of this second step if they are taught the four cardinal virtues and how they apply to everyday life. For example, if they are confronted with a difficult challenge at home, school or work, they can recognize the virtues which must be applied. For instance, rather than reacting with anger, they can apply prudence and temperance.

The third step in this process is union with God. While the moral virtues, which are acquired and infused, deal with created means to help people to reach their uncreated goal, the theological virtues unite humanity directly to God. The theological virtues, faith, hope and charity, are the foundation of Christian moral activity.<sup>39</sup> Faith is the virtue by which the human intelligence is transformed and made capable of recognizing

---

<sup>37</sup> Benedict M Ashley, *Spiritual Direction in the Dominican Tradition*, 118.

<sup>38</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1805, 1806-1809.

<sup>39</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 446.

the voice of God speaking through Scripture and, ultimately, through Jesus and his Holy Spirit. While faith looks toward the unseen goal of life, hope perceives these goals as attainable. Love is not just any kind of love, it is the love of God and neighbor.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, the human person can attain union with God by performing profound acts of faith, hope and love. The youth can practice the theological virtues in their lives when they are taught to understand their nature and importance. When they can bring the positive and negative experience of the day to a period of prayer and contemplation, they are growing in their union with God and understanding of the role He plays in their lives.

Following the three step process of spiritual growth, the youth may not experience the visions which the Dominican saints did, but at least it will help them to practice penance and virtues so that they can begin to experience a relationship with God. The minister can show the youth how the three step processes of spiritual growth is evident in each Mass. In deed, the process of purification is the act of contrition at the beginning of mass: repentance and conversion from sin; the process of illumination takes place while listening to the Scripture readings and the sermon and in the recitation of the Creed; and the process of union with Christ culminates in the Eucharistic prayer and the reception of holy communion. The three processes are joined and culminate in a bridal union. In this way, the person experiences the bridal union with Christ which is an expression of Christ's union with his Church. That is why Dominican tradition always emphasizes the Eucharist as the center of Dominican life.

---

<sup>40</sup> Benedict M Ashley, *Spiritual Direction in the Dominican Tradition*, 134-135.

***Experience in uniting with God through others and in creation:*** As has been said, Dominican contemplation is twofold: the time spent in monastic contemplation and the time spent applying the fruits of this contemplation to apostolic work. Dominican spirituality encourages people to enjoy the world where people live. In this sense, Dominicans can have one experience in uniting with God in liturgical prayer, then have another experience in uniting with God through others and creation. According to Pope Benedict XVI, “He [Dominic] lived these moments of his relationship with God so intensely that his reactions of joy or tears were outwardly perceptible.” Dominic always prayed while traveling on foot and would “contemplate the beauty of creation.”<sup>41</sup> These examples of prayer can help the youth understand that they can become closer to God in their prayer life and also in the relationships with other people and in their enjoyment of the beauty and goodness of creation.

Through the revelation in Scripture, the youth may discover the beauty of God through the beauty of human beings and understand how human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). How can we help the youth understand that God created mankind in his image? According to the Church Fathers, human beings are likened to God in reason and will,<sup>42</sup> which makes them different from other creatures. In addition, the Bible asserts that all creatures are given to human beings to cooperate (Gen 1: 28). Indeed, human beings are called the image of God because they are given the responsibility of stewardshiping the universe and sharing in God’s creative role. Furthermore, of all the creatures, human beings are the only ones capable of dialogue

---

<sup>41</sup> “Pope Explains st. Dominic's Nine Ways of Prayer”, <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-explains-st-dominics-nine-ways-of-prayer/>, *Catholic News Agency* (accessed April 1, 2017).

<sup>42</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1704.

with God. God appears and talks with mankind; human beings have the capacity to hear and respond to God (Gen 3:8). After original sin, human beings still retained the image of God, even though their nature was tarnished. Christ, who is the true image of God, renewed the connection between humanity and God, enabling humankind to become like God. Therefore, human beings are called to communion with God and to resemble God. The human person is the image of God when he loves others.

God, who is the beginning and the end of all species, can be perceived with certainty by the natural light of human reason when human beings contemplate the universe that He has created (Rm 1:20). This should encourage the youth to contemplate God in creation. God's beauty, power, wisdom, presence, creativity, and his loving care is revealed in nature. In Psalm 19 we see God who created the blue sky as well as the sun; the light of the sun represents happiness, liberation, justice (Ps 19:1-6). "God's beauty cannot be conceived of without the beauty of creation and the beauty of creation in turn is derived from the beauty of God."<sup>43</sup> By observing nature, the youth can realize that God communicates to human beings in the skies ocean waves, in the breeze rustling through the trees, and in the fields and flowers and birds that sing cheerfully (Mt 6:26). In his letter to Colossians, Paul presents Christ in relation to the Father, in relation to creative works and in relation to renewal, that is, redeeming. Christ is supreme over the universe (Col 1:15-20). The youth may ask why is creation so beautiful? God creates beauty so that human beings can know what is God like. God is and always has been glorious and beautiful. Therefore, when contemplating the beauty of nature, human

---

<sup>43</sup> "What do the heaven declare? On the Old Testament motif of God's beauty in creation," *Theological Studies*, Vol. 67, no.3, (2011), 2.

beings can associate this beauty to God, and thus human beings can unite with God through creation.

### **3.2.2. Encouraging the youth to search for the Truth and to live in the Truth**

*Encouraging the youth to search for the Truth:* The Dominican model can help the youth in their search for truth. St. Dominic sought the salvation of souls by preaching the truth to all who would listen. The truth which Dominicans preach is derived from their contemplation and study. Pope Honorius III, who approved the Order of preachers, told St. Dominic that he was convinced that the brothers of his Order would be champions of the Faith and true lights of the world.<sup>44</sup> *Veritas* (Truth), one of mottos of the Order of Preacher describes its mission and identity. Can an awareness of the motto “Veritas” prompt the youth to ask, “What is truth?.”

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, truth is the conformity of reality with the mind’s judgment on reality.<sup>45</sup> Truth resides in the mind which rightly judges a thing to be what it really is, and in things, this is called ontological truth. Truth necessarily consists in the conformity of things with the divine mind. God, who knows all things perfectly, is Truth. More correctly, “God as ultimate, absolute, transcendent being is intrinsically ultimate, absolute, transcendent goodness, and truth.”<sup>46</sup> God has been and continues to be revealed in history and fully revealed in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the truth is the presence of God in Jesus Christ (Jn 14:6). St. Thomas also says that all truths are in the divine mind, and many truths can be in minds of creature.<sup>47</sup> In this sense, the

---

<sup>44</sup> Simon Tugwell, ed., *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, 55.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.16. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Downey, *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 984.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.16. 5.

Truth, which is in God, can be found in everything: in Scripture, theology, science, and in daily life.

The youth may ask where they can find the truth about the moral life and the life of faith. The minister could invite them to participate in a class in theology for laypeople or a biblical class, where they can search for truth which is based on Scriptures, Catholic Tradition and the Magisterium. The youth will learn that they can find the Truth in Scripture, because Scripture is the Word of God speaking to humanity. The Scripture can teach the truth because God is the author of the Bible. The Scriptures are divinely inspired and teach the truths that are necessary for our salvation.<sup>48</sup> Also the youth will learn that they can find the Truth in Tradition, which was given by Jesus to the Apostles and by the Apostles to others (1Cor 15:3-4). Tradition refers to the living faith experience of the Christian community.<sup>49</sup> Tradition, which contains unwritten truths about faith and morals, protects and transmits the Truth of God. Through Tradition, “the Church, in her doctrine, life, and worship perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is and all that she believes”<sup>50</sup>. Finally, the youth will learn that the function of the Magisterium is to authentically interpret the Word of God in either written form or in the form of Tradition. This function of the Magisterium is to define and preserve the true teachings of Christ and to do so with the assurance of infallibility. The Church is likewise “the pillar and foundation of all truth” (1 Tim 3:15). Through this study, the youth will understand the relationship between revealed Tradition, Scripture and Magisterium. While Tradition and Scripture together contain the Sacred Deposit of

---

<sup>48</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 109.

<sup>49</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 83.

<sup>50</sup> Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, 8a.

Faith, the Magisterium teaches the truths of Tradition and Scripture. Thus, in order to understand the fullness of truth relating to the moral life and the life of faith, the youth will have access to consult both Tradition and Scripture under the guidance of the Church.

When they understand the source of Truth and a way to seek the truth, the youth will be encouraged to study the Word of God which contains the Truth. St. Dominic always carried with him the Gospel of Matthew and the letters of St. Paul.<sup>51</sup> In today's technological era, the youth can read God's Word on many devices, such as in books, and on iPhones, and iPads. The goal for studying the Word of God is to find the Truth. The Truth is not only a concept in the human mind, but also the truth of things reflects the divine mind that creates them and calls them to the perfection.<sup>52</sup> The Truth, which is pursued by Dominican spirituality, is revealed in the person of Jesus, the Son of God, who is also God Himself.

***Realizing the value of the Truth:*** Also through these Bible and theological classes for the lay people, the youth can come to understand the value of Truth. The Truth is God Himself and His doctrine (Jn 1:17; 17:17). Jesus, who is the Truth (Jn 14:6), speaks the truth about God and Scripture. Furthermore, Jesus teaches the value of the truth: “the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32). Here, Jesus does not talk about political freedom, but provides the best commentary for His own statement: “Amen, amen, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.” (Jn 8:34). Being a slave to sin is the ultimate bondage. Those who want to become disciples of Christ must know the truth of their condition and the truth about Christ, and Jesus will set them free from their

---

<sup>51</sup> Erik Borgman, *Dominican Spirituality*, 25.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

bondage and bring them into the family of God. Those who believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will be liberated from the slavery of sin, and the condemnation of death (Rm 6:22; 8:1-2). Death is the result of sin, and eternal life is the result of holiness; this holiness comes from the grace that becomes righteousness (Rm 6:19). Death is the wage of sin, eternal life is the gift of God.

All Truths are in the divine mind, and many truths can be in creature's minds.<sup>53</sup> Those who believe in God are willing to love the Truth and live in the Truth. Those who do not know about God, but desire to seek the truth and to live in the truth, sooner or later, will recognize God, Who is the Truth. Dr. Nathanson, as a Director of the Center for Reproductive and Sexual Health, presided over more than 60, 000 abortions and performed 5,000 abortions himself. He also became a leader of the National Abortion Rights Action League called NARAL Pro-Choice America, a movement which strove to overturn laws prohibiting abortion.

In order to persuade people to support the movement, its members argued that abortion is a medical issue, not a moral one, and they made many arguments in support for legal abortion. However, Nathanson was moved by the pro-life position and eventually realized that abortion is the deliberate killing of a unique human being. Nathanson, who had been a leader of the abortion movement, became opposed to abortion not because of religious reasons, but through scientific facts; as a result of scientific reasoning, he and accepted the principle of the rights and dignity of the human person. Through the moral witness of the believers who participated in the struggle for the unborn, Nathanson was gradually drawn to faith in God, and because of the

---

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Q.16, 5.



Church's teaching, he became Catholic and then embraced the pro-life view.<sup>54</sup>

Nathanson is a good example of the statement made earlier: those who do not know God, but desire to seek the Truth can come to believe in God when the Truth is found. Knowing this process of discovering the truth, the youth will understand that they can find the Truth in science and in other the areas of expertise which are studying or with which they are working.

The Truth can help people recognize the dignity of the human person, fight against wrong, and more importantly, help people to recognize God. Such examples can motivate the youth to seek the truth, to realize the value of the truth and to protect the truth. In the light of Truth, the youth will come to understand the thinking behind the movements that affects the lives of many non-believing young people, such as relativism and pluralism. Relativism says that "The truth is rooted in the individual hearer, receiver, and observer rather than the source fact, ... truth is determined by whatever you want to it to be, that all truths are the same, and all truths are equally valid."<sup>55</sup> By studying the Truth, the youth will realize the danger behind any relativism which denies the existence of absolute Truth, and claims that all ideas or beliefs are equal to and lead to the same results.<sup>56</sup> Once the youth come to understand the nature of relativism and pluralism and their dangers, then they will understand why the Church does not accept abortion or same-sex marriage.

### **3.2.3. Encouraging the youth to obtain transcendence**

---

<sup>54</sup> Robert P. George, "Bernard Nathanson: A Life Transformed by Truth," *Human Life Review*, Winter/Spring 2011, Vol. 37 Issue 1/2, p151-155, 151-154.

<sup>55</sup> "Dangers Behind Relativism," *Worldview*, <http://exploreworldviews.com/dangers-behind-relativism/>, accessed December 2, 2017,

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

*Accepting themselves as they are:* Dominican friars desire to discover the real Truth that is God Himself. This mental prayer encourages the youth to contemplate God, and, at the same time, search for Truth. Contemplating the Truth, the youth can learn the value of the human person which is found not in what a person has, but in what a person is. Human beings are created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Along with being given immortal souls, human beings have received the gifts of intelligence and reason so that they can understand the order of things as established by God in creation. They are also given the freedom to seek God's will and to love what is true, good, and beautiful.<sup>57</sup> Once the youth are aware of the value of human dignity, which is not something that is added to the person but is endowed by God, the youth will not be so easily misled by what they see, hear, and learn from the media relating to the value of human beings.

Understanding that all persons are endowed with the same dignity because they share the same nature and origin,<sup>58</sup> the youth do not need to compare themselves (Vietnamese Americans) with others who are different from them in skin color or appearance. In the context of the American culture, which is a "salad bowl" of many cultures and races, the youth will come to value the differences which people bring to the society while at the same time being regarded with equal dignity.<sup>59</sup> This should prompt the youth to look into themselves and come to accept themselves as equal partners in a diverse society. Accepting themselves means that they are content with their own identity which is rooted in Vietnamese culture and will try their best to live

---

<sup>57</sup> "Morality," *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/morality/index.cfm>, accessed February 23, 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 29.

<sup>59</sup> Gary Weaver, "American Cultural Values", *Ibid*.

and grow up in American culture while maintaining the Vietnamese culture. This means they can live in a “melting pot” but still keep themselves as part of a “salad bowl.” As a result, their skin color and physical features need not be obstacles but rather attributes to be proud of.

Furthermore, in contemplating the truth, the youth can also come to accept themselves in the religious dimension. Being Catholics, they were baptized and belong to Christ, totally united with Him and transformed in his image. Getting “into” Christ is important in one’s personal life as well as in community life (Gal 2:20). Baptism makes the faithful united and equal, irrespective of race, culture, social class and gender: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). Therefore, in searching for Truth, the youth will hopefully realize the truth in themselves. In other words, the youth can become aware of their basic human values, which belong to them, so that they come to accept themselves as they are and, as a result, overcome their identity crises.

***Taking advantage of what they have:*** In order not to violate the prohibition which the Lateran Council IV made against the establishment a new religious Order, St. Dominic adopted the Rule of St. Augustine, an approved Rule, when establishing the Order of Preachers. In this sense, Dominic took advantage of what the Church had to offer and applied it to his Order. Contemplating the Truth, the Word of God, and learning from the spirit of St. Dominic, the youth can be motivated to respect and take the advantage of what they already have.

On the occasion of Lunar New Year, Vietnamese people often gather together at a church or at a Vietnamese cultural center to venerate their ancestors and say happy birth day to each other. The minister can take advantage of this occasion and encourage

the youth to appreciate the gifts which they already have and see them as opportunities and advantages which come from the two languages and cultures to which they belong. Living in the context of both cultures, the youth have opportunities to inherit the values of the Vietnamese culture, such as the allegiance to the family, the respect for each other, the yearning to have good name, and the love of learning.<sup>60</sup> They can also enjoy the values of the American culture, such as the independence, equality, informality, and directness.<sup>61</sup> It is said that “Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough.”<sup>62</sup> This advice should encourage the youth to integrate the values of their two cultures together and use them successfully in their lives. Namely, they can obtain independence but maintain good relationships and cooperation with others; they can keep equality but still express respect to the hierarchy in their family and society; they can express their casual attitude to others but still maintain their good name; and they can tell the truth but save the other person's face (directness but harmony). When they have integrated the values of both cultures, the youth may become people who have a balance between reason and sentiment and who confident in their social and religious lives. They may be motivated to maintain Vietnamese culture and to learn the Vietnamese language, a native language which their parents should always desire to pass on to them.

***Realizing the meaning of life and the value of the moral life:*** As stated before, because of the pressure of work and study in American society, the youth (1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> “The Vietnamese Value System,” *Vietnamese Culture*, Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> “American Culture: Traditions and Customs of the United States,” Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> “Quotes by Oprah Winfrey,” [https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/3518.Oprah\\_Winfrey](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/3518.Oprah_Winfrey), accessed March 12, 2018.

generations) do not have time for themselves or for their practice of spirituality. As a result they may fall into a crisis wherein they question the meaning of life. Faced with many different situations and challenges, whether they be joyful or filled with anxiety the young person may ask the age old question, why am I here? Dominican spirituality will provide an answer by emphasizing God's grace. Contemplation is "customarily associated with the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are understanding, knowledge, and wisdom."<sup>63</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, in a vision, wanted nothing but God Himself.<sup>64</sup> Contemplating the truth, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, the youth may come to realize that God calls human beings to seek God, to know and to love God so that they can attain their own beatitude.<sup>65</sup> Once the youth realize that seeking God is the Goal of their lives, they will know how to arrange the appropriate time for their work and the appropriate time for their spiritual life. However, for the youth, this is a process which takes time. As ministers, we must make ourselves as available to support the individual young person as he or she faces difficult times.

On the way of seeking God, the youth may be effected by the negative media or effected by people who disregard ethical issues, they may be drawn to an immoral life. As we know, the moral life is the place where one can meet God.<sup>66</sup> In order to meet God, one need to have a right conscience. The youth may ask, "What can help them to have a correct conscience?" "Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in

---

<sup>63</sup> Weber, *History of the Dominican Laity*, 25.

<sup>64</sup> Raissa Maritain, "Saint Thomas Aquinas", *University of Notre Dame*, <https://www3.nd.edu/~maritain/jmc/etext/sta21.htm>, accessed November 1, 2016.

<sup>65</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1701.1719.

<sup>66</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson, J. I. Packer, and David F. Wright, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 677.

the process of performing, or has already completed.”<sup>67</sup> Since the conscientious can be subjective and thus wrong, conscience needs to be enlightened and guided. Therefore, there must be objective norms which are provided by the truth. Truth belongs to God Who reveals the truth in Christ as His Word. The Word of God is the principal tool used in the formation of conscience. The authoritative teaching of the Church is the essential element in the formation of conscience. The gifts of the Holy Spirit helps believers develop a morally sensitive conscience.<sup>68</sup> Understanding this, young people can be motivated to pray and learn the Word of God and the teaching of the Church so that they can develop an informed conscience. This will not only help them to live a moral life and bear witness to the dignity of the person but also to meet God, and, as a result, to attain their beatitude.

***Expressing filial piety:*** Dominican contemplation focuses on the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, Who is the model of filial piety to His Father by obedience to the Father’s will (Jn 4:34; 5:30). In Vietnamese culture, the second day of the Lunar New Year is set aside for the veneration of ancestors. While explaining the history of this veneration, the Catholic minister can point out the filial piety which Jesus had for His Father. Since the ancient time, Vietnamese people have had the custom of honoring ancestors in a special way. It is called *dao ong ba* (cult ancestors). Vietnamese people also adopted the Chinese practices of Confucian ethics (filial piety), which also emphasizes the cult of ancestors.<sup>69</sup> Living in a national tradition and with the influence

---

<sup>67</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1778.

<sup>68</sup> “Morality,” *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/morality/index.cfm>, accessed February 23, 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Anh Q. Tran, *Gods, Heroes, and Ancestors: An Interreligious Encounter in Eighteenth-Century Vietnam: Errors of the Three Religions* (Virginia: Oxford University Press, 2018), 109-110.

of the Chinese culture, Vietnamese people show their devotion to ancestors. Every Vietnamese person from the past to the present has known this folk song by heart:

The father's merits are comparable to the Thai mountain.  
Those of my mother, to a perennial Spring.  
Respect and venerate father and mother  
In order to fulfill the obligations of filial piety as a pious son.<sup>70</sup>

This folk song emphasizes the merits of parents, and it reminds the children that they have the responsibility to perform their filial piety to their parents, grandparents, and great grand parents, etc. when they are alive and when they are dead as well. The Catholics youth must be taught that ancestor veneration has a twofold focus; one focus is on the living and the other is on the dead. Dead parents are honored by praying for them, and living parents are honored by serving them. Contemplating the filial piety of Jesus in the context of Vietnamese culture, the youth can understand their duty of filial piety towards their parents and express their filial piety to their parents and ancestors in a way which honors their ancient traditions and their Christian faith. In doing so, the youth can also be on the road to achieve the Heavenly Kingdom (Sir 3:3-7).

### **3.3. Communal prayer- A way to reflect on family community and the relationship with others**

Dominican spirituality emphasizes common prayer, namely the liturgical prayer of the Mass and the Divine Office. Common prayer can only take place when life is shared. The spirit of Dominican life in communal prayer prompts young Vietnamese Americans to experience God's presence in their own family community; then, they can transform themselves and others.

---

<sup>70</sup> Vietnamese text, translated into English by Tuyen Nguyen, "A Theological and Cultural Foundation for Veneration of Ancestors Among Vietnamese Catholics and Its Liturgical Implication", 2007, 83.

### 3.3.1. Experiencing God's presence in community

*Experiencing God's presence in the celebration of the Liturgy:* In common life, Dominicans take part in liturgical celebrations. The liturgical celebration of the Eucharist is the ultimate community prayer. The Church invites the faithful to be “conscious, active and fruitful”<sup>71</sup> in the liturgy. Although young Vietnamese Americans are not required to attend daily Mass and take part in the Divine Office as Dominican friars do, the Dominican liturgy encourages them to realize the value the Eucharist, especially the Sunday Mass. The question is how can one get them to attend the Sunday the Eucharist ? In order to encourage the youth to be involved in the life of the parish, each parish needs to have activities that attract the young people. When the parish pastor shows concern about the life and activities of the youth makes the Eucharistic celebration become more lively and holy for them, then they will want to attend.

In addition, through the homily, the pastor should make the Gospel relevant to the life of the youth and help them realize the value of common prayer. The first value of praying in community is to help the faithful realize the presence of God in common prayer. Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). Jesus dwells in every community of His followers when they pray together. Through Baptism, “each believer can find him or herself in *koinonia* (unity), as every person comes to live through interpersonal relationships; he or she also finds Christ there.”<sup>72</sup> In this sense, community is considered as a place of encounter with Christ. Together in the name of Christ, depending on the ability of each

---

<sup>71</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14.

<sup>72</sup> Ernest E. Larkin, O.Carm, “The Place of Prayer in Community Life,” *The Published Articles*, 250, <http://carmelnet.org/larkin/larkin057.pdf>, accessed March 14, 2018.



person, the youth can realize that Christ is present in the assembled people of God, in the person of the minister (the celebrant of the liturgical assembly), in the Word of God proclaimed in Scripture and in the “Eucharist species” which is the preeminent presence of Christ.<sup>73</sup> When receiving holy communion, the youth can encounter Christ in unity with others so that they can experience God’s presence in their community.

The second benefit of common prayer is to help the youth to receive God’s grace. Dominican spirituality emphasizes God’s grace, which, as a result of prayer, perfects human nature and motivates a human person’s love towards God above all. Christ is the source of grace, and the sacraments are the instruments which Christ uses. Through participating in the sacraments, Christians can receive God’s grace. For the sacraments are “efficacious signs of grace,”<sup>74</sup> all seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, in its own particular way, “demonstrate the comprehensive grace- filled presence of God in the life of the Church.”<sup>75</sup> Therefore, participating in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist, the faithful are “touched by God’s grace,” and they are “urged to encounter and experience sacramentality.”<sup>76</sup> In doing so, the youth not only receive the presence of God in common prayer but also in their lives.

The third benefit of common prayer is the unity among believers. When praying together, the faithful can cultivate unity with others within the community. Acts 1:14 reveals to us the unity of Jesus’ disciples when it states that they were united; “with one

---

<sup>73</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7.

<sup>74</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1131.

<sup>75</sup> Wilfred Tyrrell, “Catholic Moral Teachings and Spiritual Practices for Human Relations,” *Journal of Dialogue and Culture* 4, no. 2 (October 2015): 57-65, 64.

<sup>76</sup> Barbara Brochu and Penny Baragar-Brcic, “Engaging the Young to Experience God,” *Religious Education* 102, no. 4 (December): 352-56, 535.

accord to prayer”; the first Christians were devoting themselves to prayer. This unity is affected by the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:3). By devoting sacred time to prayer to the liturgical cycles and Lectio Divina, to the mysteries of faith (the Incarnation and the Paschal mysteries), the consciousness of the faithful is transformed.<sup>77</sup> Praying together not only effects unity among the believers in a local community but also extends this unity to all believers in the universal Church, the Body of Christ.

***Experiencing God’s presence in the communion of persons in the family:*** As stated before, Dominic understood that God is the Father of mercy, God the Son is the source of redemption and God the Holy Spirit is the source of wisdom. Dominican liturgy expresses a special reverence toward the Trinity when profound bow down during the final verse of the hymns: “Glory to be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.” Worshiping the Trinity in Dominican liturgy through this bodily gesture will help the youth reflect on God’s presence in the Trinitarian life. The Persons of Trinity do not live individual but lives a common life together as three Persons: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The three Persons, Who are consubstantial and equal to each other, are the eternal unity of three distinct divine Persons. The Father eternally generates the Son, and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son.<sup>78</sup> Reflecting on this life of the Holy Trinity helps the youth to realize the following values of family life:

First, the Trinity is a model of marital and familial love and unity. The three Persons in the Holy Trinity are an eternal unity. This profound bond of unity among the

---

<sup>77</sup> J. Buckley, F. Christian Bauerschmidt, and Trent Pomplun (ed), *The Blackwell Companion to Catholicism*, (Oxford, UK: WileyBlackwell, 2011), 392.

<sup>78</sup> *The Catechisms of the Catholic Church*, 254.

three divine Persons makes them “inseparable in what they are” and “in what they do,”<sup>79</sup> From this foundation we can say that the spouses in the family give themselves to each other physically and spiritually and this makes unity; this unity makes them “one flesh” (Gen 2:4). Second, new life is generated with the Trinity: “It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds. The divine Unity is Triune.”<sup>80</sup> The infinite love of Father and Son is at such an intensity that the Third Person of the Holy Trinity flows forth.<sup>81</sup> From this foundation, we can say that in family life, husband and wife, in an act of complete self-giving, produce a new life; a child is the result of their own love for one another. In this sense, the husband and wife are privileged to cooperate with God in the procreation and education of their children. Therefore, when family members live in love, they are reflecting the love of the Persons in the Trinity.

The love and the relationship between the Persons in the Trinity create a communion of Persons. Since human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, they are both rational and have the ability to live together as a communion of persons.<sup>82</sup> This image of God is expressed in a specific way in family life. The minister must help the youth reflect on their own family community and understand how it too is an image of the life of the Holy Trinity. By being made aware of God’s presence in their family, they can come to understand what they should do to live up to that image and how to behave properly with each other in the family. For children who are living in a

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 267.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 254.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 29, a. 3, a. 4.

<sup>82</sup> Tara L. Seyfer and John M. Travaline, “The Theology of the Body and Modern Medicine: Informing the Practice of Healing,” *The Linacre Quarterly* 75, no. 1, 28.

broken family, the minister needs to help in the healing process and be an instrument of God's mercy.

***Experience God's presence through the joy in the community family:*** St.

Dominic took time to pray with his brothers and express his joy when he was with them. That spirit is brought into community life. Dominican common life is a life of joy when the members together pray the Liturgy, have meals, and share entertainment and other activities. If the youth are given the opportunity to experience this model in their youth ministry, it might inspire them to apply the model in their family lives and to experience the joys of real sharing and communication with their parents and siblings.

The youth may ask the question, "What is true joy?" Reading the Word of God, the youth will realize that true joy and happiness comes from God. The meeting between Mary and Elizabeth shows us that joy comes from God. "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth...cried out...the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy." (Lk 1:41). This joy is not from an exterior cause, but comes from within. The two mothers did not feel joyful at once. The new children in the womb are the first people to feel joy. John the Baptist, who was in his mother's womb, recognized that God was visiting, because the power from Jesus in the womb of Mary was emitted. John was in his mother's womb and leaped for joy. That joy spread to both mothers, and together they praised God.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, God is the source of joy. God loves what He creates, and He calls His creations and human beings into deep union with Him and rejoices in the life He shares with His creation (Gen 2:18-22). Therefore, those who realize God's call or

---

<sup>83</sup> "Leaping for joy; In God's Bosom," *America*, December 14, 2009, 30.

God's presence will be joyful. David the king expressed his joy in front of God: "In your presence there is fullness of joy, at your right-hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps 16:11). In this sense, when the youth experience God's presence in their families, they can experience true joy in their lives.

The youth may ask how can they rejoice when they have so much to worry about. St. Dominic felt joy being with his brothers because he realized the presence of God in them. The experience of St. Dominic is similar to the invitation of St. Paul: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near." (Phil 4:4-5). The Lord being near is the reason for the faithful to live joyfully and in harmony even with the disturbances of the world. When they become aware of this, the youth can experience the presence of God by realizing God's presence in their family members and by expressing their love to others in their families. Members in family can love more deeply by taking time for each other, and love more generously by being able to welcome a child through birth or adoption. They can rejoice together, laugh together, and create a taste of heaven on earth. By participating in these activities, the youth can recognize the presence of God in their rejoicing.

### **3.3.2. Encouraging the youth to transform themselves**

*Recover from rifts in their family:* It has been presented that the communication between parents and children may break down and lead to tensions because of the language barrier, of cultural adaptation (the older people emphasize order and tradition, the young emphasize freedom and modernization), and of the shortage of openness in the relationships between parents and children. The spirit of Dominican common life can help the parents and their children to overcome these difficulties.

Dominican spirituality considers the community as a place of reconciliation, healing, and recovery. An understanding of this spirituality may encourage family members to consider the common life of their family as a place of reconciliation, healing, and recovery. In the context of American culture, on the occasion of Mother's Day and Father's Day, the minister could invite the youth to reflect on the value of their family communities. By humility and through contemplation, the youth may grow to understand and sympathize with all the members of their family. They may also share and accept differences in interests and characteristics. Through dialogue, parents can listen to their children, understand them and spend quality time with them. The love of God and the love of neighbor will bring more lasting solutions to temporal conflicts within the family.

How can parents and children (2<sup>nd</sup> generation) dialogue when they have difficulty with language? We find in the Vietnamese immigrant family that parents often do not have enough English while their children do not have enough Vietnamese. We know that there are verbal and non-verbal languages. When the verbal language is limited, communication by non-verbal language can be expressed through gestures and actions. In this way, according to St. Thomas says, "Your love for that person will burn all the more intensely."<sup>84</sup> Through patience and humility, the youth can actively treat their parents and each other with sympathy and respect.

Furthermore, the Dominican community emphasizes the need "to live together in peace and harmony." Living a common life, Dominicans aim to have "the sharing of the spiritual riches of soul and mind: the sharing of obedience and chastity, of virtues

---

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q.180.a.7.

and talents”<sup>85</sup> with others in the community. Following this spirit, the family members will be ready to keep the teachings of the Church about the duties of children to their parents, and the duties of parents to their children.<sup>86</sup> “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.”<sup>87</sup> This can help the youth grow with a deeper awareness of duty to their parents.

If the Dominican common life is a place to protect the chastity of the religious, the family’s common life can also be a place to protect faith and culture for the children. Dominican prayer emphasizes the salvific value of prayer: “God has saved the individual through the community,”<sup>88</sup> and the purpose of prayer is to ask for grace and the strength to carry out the Order’s task. Vietnamese people also emphasize as a similar kind of family bond: “Family is the basis of all society.” Therefore, the family members can apply the spirit of Dominican prayer in their family lives by praying together at a certain time of day. Parents can proactively encourage their children to pray with them, for example reciting the rosary, and hearing the daily Gospel together. It should be noted that the time for praying should not be so long but should be maintained daily. Depending on the children’s level of fluency in Vietnamese, family prayer can be done in Vietnamese or in English or bilingually. If family prayer is done in Vietnamese, parents not only help their children protect their faith, but they also help maintain the Vietnamese language for their children. If during the day, the parents and children have

---

<sup>85</sup> Hinnebusch, *Dominican Spirituality*, 32.

<sup>86</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2214-2220; , 2221-2230.

<sup>87</sup> Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16

<sup>88</sup> Hurley, “The Four Pillars of Dominican Life,” Ibid.

something tense between them, then through prayer together, and thanks to the grace of God, their conflict can be reconciled.

***Open up in relationships with others:*** Young Vietnamese Americans, who live in the context of Vietnamese culture but, nevertheless, feel uncomfortable with the Vietnamese language and culture, tend to withdraw from their families and withdraw from society. However, they can be transformed by learning to engage in dialogue. St. Dominic spend a night dialoging with an innkeeper who believed in the Albigensian teachings. In this dialogue, both Dominic and the innkeeper opened up to share their faith, their points of connection and their differences. Both the innkeeper and Dominic were changed. The innkeeper returned to the fullness of faith in Jesus. Dominic did not resume his life as a Cannon Regular and subprior in the Osma diocese, but a seed was planted which later inspired him to establish the Order of Preachers.<sup>89</sup> This event can serve as model for young Vietnamese Americans and their minister to engage in dialogue and keep an open attitude in their relationships with others. According to psychologists, an open dialogue with others can improve the lives of everyone engaged in the dialogue and provide a deeper understanding which contributes to the building of a better future.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, it is very important for the minister to have skills which will enable him to engage the youth with an open dialogue and attitude. In doing so the youth will have a model for open and truthful relationships with others. This will help in all their communications and in the ability to serve the community. An open attitude

---

<sup>89</sup> “Passion for the Dominican Life”, *ACG Bogota*, 2007, n 156-159.

<sup>90</sup> Ejop, ed, “Being human: Relationships and you: A Social Psychological Analysis,” *Europs’e Journal of Psychology 2/2009, 135-138*, 138.



also help the youth to change their negative and closed thoughts, to find solutions to problems which they are facing, and to have a greater ability to love and be loved.

In the context of the American culture, the youth also face challenges of how to define themselves racially and culturally. They know their origins are from the Vietnamese culture, but they do not know much about the Vietnamese culture. What might motivate them to learn the culture and the language of Vietnam? St. Dominic's spirit of freedom may help them. In the process of establishing the Order, Innocent III recommended that Dominic choose an existing rule in order not to violate the orders of the Council of Latvian IV (1215) which prohibited the establishment of a new Order. He agreed with his brothers to choose the Rule of St. Augustine because there are elements in this law that coincided with the ideals of the Order. These ideals were subsequently written into the Constitution of the Order. It is emphasized that the Rule of the Order should be kept out of the spirit of freedom, not out of fear. St. Dominic made it clear that a violation of the Rule did not result in sin.<sup>91</sup> If Dominican friars are invited to keep the law not out of fear but because of love, following this attitude, the ministers should encourage young Vietnamese Americans to acquire and maintain their Vietnamese culture out of love. This can be done by teaching and encouraging in a positive way. It can be said that this is a psychological motivation (an emotional dimension).

If someone is longing for the truth, his journey will become soothing and attractive if love is the motivation. Catherine of Siena said that love follows the intellect, and the more it knows the more can it love.<sup>92</sup> When we are in love, we do not see

---

<sup>91</sup> *The Book of Constitution and Ordinations of the Brothers of the Order of Preachers* Section One, Chapter I, Art II, 17.

<sup>92</sup> Catherine, *The Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke *The Classics of Western Spirituality*, 116.

anything as burden. Similarly, the youth will engage in the study of the Vietnamese culture once they love the culture and the people of Vietnam. Love is the motive for action. With the love of the homeland and the Vietnamese people, the youth will proactively and actively learn the Vietnamese language and culture so that they can define and identify themselves racially and culturally in the American culture.

### **3.3.3. Encouraging the youth to transform community**

The question which the youth have about their identity: “Who am I?” also involves the question “What should I do?” When one determines one’s identity, then one can define one’s duties. Living in the American society, young Vietnamese Americans need to express their identities through their actions. In other words, together with transforming themselves individually, the youth need to transform their communities by participating in the teaching of the truth and doing charity.

*Participating in teaching the Truth:* The Order of Preachers has been delegated to preach and teach sacred Truth.<sup>93</sup> In Dominic’s time, when he learned that there were many heretics who misunderstood the doctrine of the Church, he wanted to establish a group of brothers who would help these heretics understand the pure doctrines of the Church. By teaching the truth, Dominic contributed to the education of heretics and their return to the Catholic Church. St. Catherine advised “Proclaim the truth and do not be silent through fear.”<sup>94</sup> The model of Dominic and Catherine should encourage the youth to connect the realities of the Gospel with the realities of life by participating in teaching the truth so that they may transform the community in which they are living.

---

<sup>93</sup> In the bull *Gratiarum Omnium*, Pope Honorius III instructed Dominic and his friars to proclaim the Word of God.

<sup>94</sup> “Catherine of Siena”, *Goodreads*,  
[https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5794057.Catherine\\_of\\_Siena](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5794057.Catherine_of_Siena), accessed March 4, 2018.

The youth may ask, “What part of the truth shall I talk about?” They should have learned that God is the absolute Truth and that the Truth of God is present in Jesus Christ (Jn 14:6). The truth of the Christian faith is passed on to the faithful in the Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church. The youth can be taught how to share with others the truth about God about whom they learn and contemplate in their hearts. According to St. Thomas, all truths are in the divine mind, and many truths can be in the minds of creatures.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, the minister can help the youth to ask themselves better questions and help them to preach the Truth and love of God to others by the way they live. For example, when the youth witness injustice happening, human dignity being trampled on, and human rights being violated, they can preach against these injustices, protect the value of human dignity, and promote the right of human life. They can preach the truth to those who are affected by relativism or pluralism by explaining how relativism and pluralism which lead to dangerous misunderstandings of moral values, such as abortion or same sex marriage. Preaching the truth is also expressed in the language spoken every day. Jesus Himself teaches, “Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’ Anything more is from the evil one.” (Mt 5: 37). The honesty which is witnessed in the spoken words, in study, in work and in the daily life of the youth is also a way of preaching the truth.

Dominicans Preaching is not only by word but also by example. St. Vincent Ferrer, a great Dominican preacher, said, “Let people find in you a father full of compassion for his children.”<sup>96</sup> This saying suggests to the youth that when they are

---

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.16. 5.

<sup>96</sup> “Dominican Preaching,” *Order of Preachers*, <http://www.op.org/en/content/dominican-preaching>, accessed March 14, 2018.

living in the truth it means they are teaching the truth. For this reason, they should commit to the Truth. When people live in a time of false promises, the youth can live the truth by doing what they have promised when people see that there is a lack of truth and belief in objective truth. The youth can live the truth by witnessing to the absolute Truth, God Himself. When people are thirsting for a word of hope, the youth can live hopefully in God. As Baptismed Christians, the youth are called to bear witness to the Truth in the world. They also are invited to eliminate cheating and to build justice and truth in a world which has too much injustice and deception.

***Participating by doing charity:*** St. Dominic, although devoting himself to contemplation and prayer, was also very interested in doing works of charity. He himself sold his books to have money to help the poor. St. Martin de Porres, a Dominican, expressed love of God through love of others: “He loved men because he honestly looked on them as God’s children and as his own brothers and sisters.” Furthermore, “he would provide food, clothing and medicine to the poor and the sick.”<sup>97</sup> This example of the Dominican saints can encourage the youth to do charity according to their abilities and circumstances. Local churches need to sponsor charitable activities for the sick and the poor so that Catholic youth and non-Catholic youth can work together in these ministries. By participating in doing charity, the youth will find the following significances in their lives.

First, through doing charity, they can learn to experience the mercy of God through serving others. Through Baptism, believers are initiated into a special relationship with Jesus Christ and can participate in the mystery of Christ, and actuate

---

<sup>97</sup> Thomas McGonigle, *Dominican Tradition*, 73.

their faith through charity and virtues.<sup>98</sup> St. Catherine, after her vision, realized that to unite with God, one should “serve God in neighbor.”<sup>99</sup> Serving God in neighbor is a way that helps people realize God’s presence in the one whom they are serving. Jesus became one with those who suffer: “I am sick, you have visited Me” (Mt 25:36). St. Dominic preached about God’s mercy and prayed for sinners. In doing charity, the youth can experience the bodily pain of those they serve and help them heal the pain in their souls. When they experience the gratitude of those they serve, they can express their gratitude to God who has mercy on them in their own sinfulness.

Second, by doing charity, the youth can define themselves and more easily integrate into American culture. It is said that Americans give more to charity than the citizens of other nations. According to the 2016 US Census, Annual U.S. spend annually about 4.5 percent of GDP for charitable activity, and more than 45 percent of the U.S. population volunteer some time to a charitable activity. Volunteering is also closely associated with donating cash as well.<sup>100</sup> As was presented before, the American culture emphasizes independence, and people affirm themselves in whatever they do. Doing charity is a way that they can affirm themselves. If the youth feel that they are marginalized between the Vietnamese and American cultures,<sup>101</sup> by doing charity, they can integrate themselves better into the society and take ownership of their lives and their community. Depending on his or her abilities and circumstances, each young person can

---

<sup>98</sup> Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 17-18.

<sup>99</sup> Catherine, *The Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 162.

<sup>100</sup> “Statistics,” *Philanthropy Roundtable*, <http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/site/print/statistics>, accessed April 2, 2018.

<sup>101</sup> Peter Phan, *Vietnamese-American Catholics*, 11.

find a creative way to participate in doing charity in society or in the mission of the Church.

Third, doing charity helps the youth to understand the meaning of life. By doing charity, the youth have many opportunities to meet many kinds of people, to go to many places, and to understand different situations and lifestyles. They can learn new knowledge that is not in the books. As a result, they can gain the confidence to express themselves openly. Furthermore, doing charity brings joy to others as well as to themselves. When they do useful things, their lives become more meaningful to them. The happy person is the person who takes on the most significant activities: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). However, the most important and happy people are those that can realize the presence of God in those to whom they serve: “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40). In this sense, through doing charity, the youth can enter into an intimate relationship with God and gain more confidence in themselves as children of God. As a result, the youth, who can tend to lock themselves in their own narrow reality, can open themselves to a bigger reality by doing charitable works.

## CONCLUSION

Because of the historical and political circumstances in Vietnam, after the events of 1975, many people had to flee their homeland and go overseas as refugees. The United States has become a second homeland for numerous Vietnamese people who have immigrated. Living in the United States, young Vietnamese Americans can enjoy many advantages; however, they are facing some difficulties. From a sociological perspective, the youth have been protected in their human development and dignity. However, they are facing difficulties, such as rifts in the relationship with their parent, and challenges in their spiritual lives. From a cultural perspective, the youth have the opportunity to enjoy and enrich themselves with both Vietnamese and American cultures and languages; however, being betwixt and between cultures, they are faced with an identity crisis because they feel that they dwell at the margin of two cultures and are not completely Asian or completely American. From the aspect of religion, the youth have been free to practice their lives as Catholics in public; however, since they have to work long hours, they do not have time for their spiritual lives and may fall into a crisis regarding the meaning of life. Furthermore, the negative things in American culture challenge them in their moral lives.

If the youth take advantage of the opportunities which they have in society, culture and religion, they may become confident people in society, multicultural people within the Vietnamese and American cultures, and spiritual people in a society that respects religious freedom. However, the challenges they face may make the youth fall into crisis and become isolated from themselves (individual), others (community) and

God (Divine). Dominican spirituality, which combines inner life and external activities, can help the youth overcome their challenges through practice and prayer.

Dominican spirituality, which “is a way of following Jesus Christ that is inspired by the life and the spirit of St. Dominic,”<sup>102</sup> expresses itself in prayer, community, study, and ministry, all of which help people have the experience of transformation. The Dominican community emphasizes brotherly love which is considered to be at the heart of Dominican life. Common life helps Dominicans pray earnestly in the liturgy, in contemplation and in private prayer (the Nine Ways of Prayer). Mental prayer and study help Dominicans seek and find the Truth (“Veritas”). These kinds of prayer support the work of preaching for the salvation of souls. Preaching, which is the principal charism of Dominican Order, is the fruit of life, prayer, and study shared by its members. Prayer, study, community and preaching are complements to each other and are called the “four pillars” of the Dominican life.

These four pillars show that Dominican spirituality involves the experience of a personal relationship with God combined with other aspects of life. Community, study and preaching help people experience God through their interactions with others while Dominican prayer helps people communicate directly with God. In the liturgy (communal prayer), Dominicans encounter God through the use of text, a combination of chants and postures, and the singing of the psalms. When Dominicans practice *St. Dominic’s Nine Ways of Prayer*, they use bodily gestures (private prayer) as exterior manifestation of interior intentions. In contemplation (mental prayer), Dominicans contemplate the Word of God, the Truth, God Himself; this contemplation includes two

---

<sup>102</sup> Hurley, “The Four Pillars of Dominican Life.” Ibid.



dimensions, the time spent in “monastic” contemplation and the time spent applying the fruits of this contemplation to apostolic work.

Through the kinds of prayer, St. Dominic shows us that he understood human beings as persons who are sinful but who have the dignity of being created in the image of God. Men and women need to grow together in community and thirst for perfection. Dominican prayer emphasizes that God is a Trinity of Persons: God as the Father of mercy, the Son as the source of redemption, and the Holy Spirit as the source of grace. The dynamics of Dominican prayer not only help Dominicans understand about God and human beings and enter into an intimate relationship with God but also help anyone who wants to have a closer communication with Him. Young Vietnamese Americans are facing challenges which can be summed up in three aspects: relationship to oneself (individual), relationship to others (community) and relationship to God (Divine). These challenges can be overcome if the young learn and exercise the three ways of Dominican prayer: the Liturgy (communal prayer), contemplation (mental prayer), and the Nine ways (private prayer).

In the private, St. Dominic devoted himself to prayer through the Nine Ways of Prayer by engaging the body with the soul and spirit and by praising God in various physical postures. The fact that St. Dominic prayed everywhere and at all times suggests to the youth that they can be more aware of the presence of God, ask for His grace and cooperate with God’s grace throughout the day. The flexible Dominican prayer, including bodily gestures, voice, hands, and mind, make it easier for the youth to devote themselves to praying in all circumstances and thereby nourish spiritual lives.

Dominicans seek the contemplation of mental prayer for their own sake because contemplation can unite them with God. This mental prayer is also the result of Dominican study which concentrates on the Word of God. Dominican friars desire to discover the real Truth that is God Himself (Jn 14:6). Using this Dominican mental prayer can help the youth to contemplate God so that they can experience uniting themselves with God Himself and uniting with God through others and creation. As the youth contemplate God, at the same time, they are searching for Truth. In searching for the Truth, they will realize the truth in themselves and accept themselves as they are, thereby overcoming their identity crises. In searching for the Truth, they can also understand the nature of relativism and pluralism, and can overcome its effects on the life of the youth.

In the communal prayer, Dominicans emphasize the liturgical prayers of the Mass and the Divine Office. Common prayer can only take place when life is shared; Dominican communities have a gathering place for people to pray. Understanding the importance common prayer, the youth will begin to think about the spirit of their family community. Communal prayer at home can help the youth to experience the presence of God not only in the liturgy but also in the communion of persons in their family. In reflecting on the importance of the community of their families, the youth will be motivated to heal the rifts between family members and open up their relationships, especially with their parents. Furthermore, communal prayer encourages the youth to transform their communities by participating in teaching the truth and doing charity.

Through personal private prayer (The Nine Ways), the youth can have personal experiences in encountering God. Through mental prayer (contemplation), the youth can

enter into an intimate relationship with God, search for Truth, and watch out for trends that affect their moral life. Thanks to communal prayer, the youth can improve their relationships with their parents and others. Using Dominican spirituality, the youth can learn to accept themselves (as individuals) recover from rifts with their and other family member, and open up relationships with others (community), By devoting themselves to praying in all circumstances, they may achieve an intimate relationship with God (Divine).

Dominican spirituality is essential for friars, nuns and sisters of the Order as well as professed laity (Third Order). However, Dominican spirituality can be helpful to anyone. Immigrant communities in the United States face many challenges, and the youth of these communities are especially challenged. The personal and spiritual challenges of the Vietnamese American youth would benefit from being introduced to Dominican spirituality and the various ways of Dominican prayer. Understanding their relationship with God would first of all help them to accept themselves as they are, growing up in two cultures. They would learn how to accept the good in each culture, feeling a part of American life and still being proud of their Vietnamese heritage. They would learn not only to accept themselves but also cherish their place within the community of their families and the society as a whole. Learning how to come into a close relationship with God through prayer will not only help them solve their identity crises but also help them experience the joy of life in right relationship with others and especially God Himself.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aumann, Jordan. *Spiritual Theology*. New York: Continuum, 2006.
- Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, Part I, qq.1.13; Pars II-II, qq.180.188. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. (New York: Christian Classics, 1948).
- Ashley, Benedict M. *Spiritual direction in the Dominican tradition*. New York: Paulist Press, 1995.
- Billy, Dennis Joseph, and James Keating. *The Way of Mystery: The Eucharist and Moral Living*. New York: Paulist Press, 2006.
- Borgman, Erik. *Dominican Spirituality: An Exploration*. London: Continuum, 2001.
- Brochu, Barbara, and Penny Baragar-Brcic. "Engaging the Young to Experience God." *Religious Education* 102, no. 4 (December): 352-56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00344080701657600>. Accessed April 9, 2018.
- Campbell, Nancy, and Marti Steussy. "Process Theology and Contemplative Prayer: Seeking the Presence of God." *Encounter* 63, no. 1 (wint-spr 2002): 77-87.
- Carl L. Bankston III, "Vietnamese Americans". *Countries and Their Cultures*. <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Sr-Z/Vietnamese-Americans.html>. Accessed January 15, 2018.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000.

Catherine. *The Dialogue*. Translated by Suzanne Noffke. The Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1980.

Cessario, Romanus. "The Grace St. Dominic Bring to the World: A Fresh Look at Dominican Spirituality." *A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 15, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 84-100.

Chinh, Dao Quang Anthony. *Dominican Laity and the Year 2000*. Houston, TX: Magnificat Institute Press, 1997.

*Constitution Of The United States Of America—1787*.

<http://uscode.house.gov/static/constitution.pdf>. Accessed January 15, 2018.

Cunningham, Lawrence. *Catholic Prayer: Pray-Er, Words, Gestures, Reading, Jesus, Eucharist, Models, Politics, Stages*. New York: Crossroad, 1989.

"Christian Spirituality 1: What is Christian Spirituality? Types of Christian Spirituality", *St. John in the Wilderness*,

[http://www.stjohnadulterd.org/spir\\_1.htm#Defining Spirituality](http://www.stjohnadulterd.org/spir_1.htm#Defining%20Spirituality). Accessed February 3, 2018.

Do, Hien Duc. *The Vietnamese American*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999.

Downey, Michael. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*. Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993.

George, Robert P. "Bernard Nathanson: A Life Transformed by Truth." *Human Life Revie*. Winter/Spring2011, Vol. 37 Issue 1/2, p151-155.

- Hoenes del Pinal, Eric. "Toward an Ideology of Gesture: Gesture, Body Movement, and Language Ideology Among Q'eqchi'-Maya Catholics." *Anthropological Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 595-630.
- Hurley, "The Four Pillars of Dominican Life." <http://www.dominicanwitness.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/4pillars.pdf>. Accessed April 2, 2018.
- Hinnebusch, William A. *Dominican Spirituality: Principles and Practice*. Washington, DC: Thomist Press, 1965.
- Hinnebusch, William A. *Renewal in the spirit of St. Dominic*. Washington, D.C.: Dominicana, 1968.
- Komonchak, Joseph A., et. *The New Dictionary of Theology*. Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1987.
- McGonigle, Thomas. *Dominican Tradition*. Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2006.
- Murray, Paul. *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality: A Drink Called Happiness*. New York: Burns & Oates, 2006.
- Murray, Paul. "Aquinas at Prayer: The Interior Life of a 'Mystic on Campus'." *A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 14, no. 1 (2011).
- Min, Zhou and Carl, Bankston L. *Growing Up American: How Vietnamese Children Adapt to Life in the United States* New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998.
- Olson, Carl E. "The Role of the Laity." *The Catholic Faith*, no. 5, September/October 2000: 26-31.

Phan, Peter C. *Vietnamese-American Catholics*. Pastoral Spirituality Series. New York: Paulist Press, 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_. “Vietnamese Catholics in the United States: Christian Identity Between the Old and the New”. *US. Catholic Historian*, 18, no.1 (Winter, 2000).

Phan, Phat Huon. *History of the Catholic Church in Vietnam*. Long Beach, California: Cứu Thế Tùng Thư, 2000.

Phan Tấn Thành, “Chín Cách Cầu Nguyện của Thánh Đa Minh”,  
[http://www.tinmung.net/CACTHANH/\\_CacThanh/\\_Thang08/Thanh-Da-minh/TimHieu/Chin-cach-cau-nguyen-cua-Thanh-Da-Minh.htm](http://www.tinmung.net/CACTHANH/_CacThanh/_Thang08/Thanh-Da-minh/TimHieu/Chin-cach-cau-nguyen-cua-Thanh-Da-Minh.htm). Accessed May 6, 2017.

Perrin, David Brian. *Studying Christian Spirituality*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

“Pope Explains st. Dominic's Nine Ways of Prayer”,  
<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-explains-st-dominics-nine-ways-of-prayer/>, *Catholic News Agency*. Accessed April 1, 2017.

Rolnick, Philip A. *Person, Grace, and God*. Sacra Doctrina. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2007.

Sheldrake, Philip. *Spirituality: a Brief History*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

Seyfer, Tara L., and John M. Travaline. “The Theology of the Body and Modern Medicine: Informing the Practice of Healing.” *The Linacre Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (February): 16-30. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/002436308803889701>. Accessed March 15, 2018.

- Smith, Innocent. "Dominican chant and Dominican identity." *Riligions* 5 (September 29, 2014): 961-71.
- Sunquist, Scott W. *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001.
- Tyrrell, Wilfred. "Catholic Moral Teachings and Spiritual Practices for Human Relations." *Journal of Dialogue and Culture* 4, no. 2 (October 2015): 57-65.
- The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*. Translated by Simon Tugwell and Sheelagh Wilsden. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1978.
- The Book of Constitution and Ordinations of the Brothers of the Order of Preachers*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2012.
- Tugwell, Simon. *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*. New York: Paulist Press, 1982.
- Tugwell, Simon, and Sheelagh Wilsden. *The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic*. Ireland: Dominican Publications, 1978.
- Vatican II. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. November 18, 1965, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651118\\_apostolicam-actuositatem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html). Accessed October 8, 2016.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Lumen Gentium*. November 21, 1964. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html). Accessed October 8, 2017.



- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. December 4, 1963,  
[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html). Accessed October 8, 2017.
- Vidmar, John. *Praying with the Dominicans: to praise, to bless, to preach*. New York: Paulist Press, 2008.
- “Vietnamese Amerasians in America”. *Asian Nation*. <http://www.asian-nation.org/vietnamese-community.shtml#sthash.i2KjrTZ0.dpbs>. Accessed November 2017.
- W.A. Hinnebusch. “Dominican Spirituality.” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 4, no. 2 (2003): 845-48.
- Wagner, Walter Cornelius. *Dominican Life: A Commentary On the Rule of Saint Augustine*. Summit, N.J.: The Dominican Nuns, 2012.
- “What is Spirituality ?”, *U.S. Catholic: Faith in Real Life*,  
<http://www.uscatholic.org/print/30626>. Accessed February 3, 2018.
- Woods, Richard. *Mysticism and Prophecy: The Dominican Tradition*. Traditions of Christian Spirituality. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998.
- Wicks, Robert J. *Prayer in the Catholic Tradition: A Handbook of Practical Approaches*. Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media, 2016.
- Zong, Jie and Batalova, Jeanne. “Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States.” *Migration Policy Institute*. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/vietnamese-immigrants-united-states>. Accessed November 28, 2017.