



ST. DOMINIC'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

eNEWSLETTER ISSUE 7, LENT 2014



PROFILE: FR. ISAIAH MARY MOLANO, OP

Listen carefully to his homilies, and you will hear the rhythm. *Tat-tat-tat*. Pore over his written scripts, and you'll see why. Pithy phrases. Pithy sentences. Repetition, repetition. On the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time (15 September 2013 for those keeping time on the Gregorian calendar), Fr. Isaiah Mary Molano climbed up into the pulpit at St. Dominic's. He delivered the first homily of his tenure at the parish. When he had finished preaching, he climbed down. At no point did he introduce himself.

But he had left an impression. This was no flat, impactless homily.

“The sower throws the seed out there, but he has no control of what happens to it. That’s up to the Holy Spirit. But the sower has to give the best seed that he can give.”

Fr. Isaiah Mary Molano, OP

Perhaps it is this introversion that inclines him to prayer. “To pray is to be in God’s presence. The Liturgy of the Hours touches me in mysterious ways. There is something about going to the altar over and over again throughout the day (morning, afternoon, evening, and night) to praise and pray to God, to check in with Him.”

“Who is that priest?” Several parishioners at the 5:30 pm Sunday Contemporary Mass wanted to know.

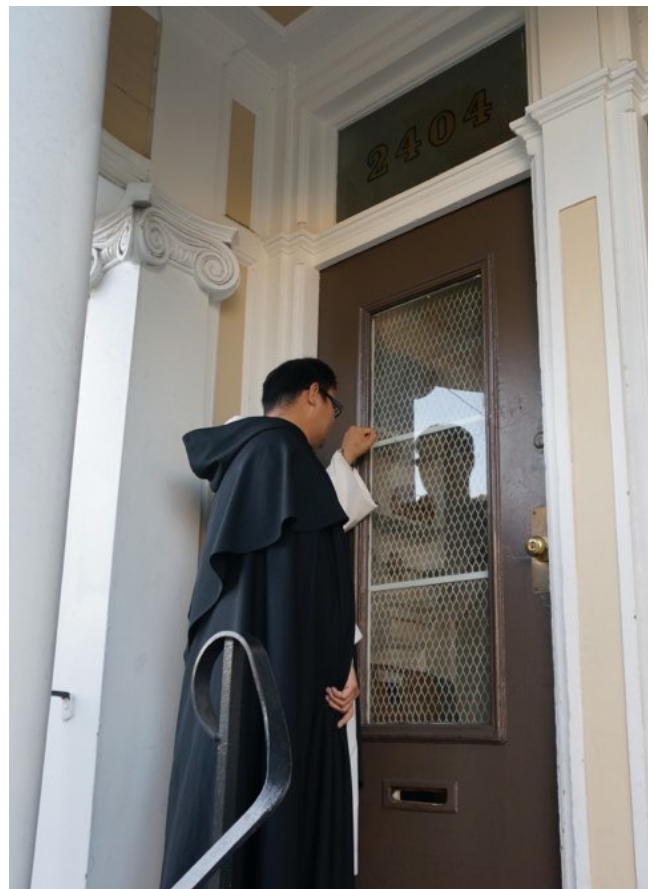
Fr. Isaiah Mary is the third priest to join the St. Dominic’s pastoral staff this past year. “Introvert,” was his rationale as to why he had omitted to speak about himself during his homily.

Fr. Isaiah Mary considered the Dominican Order because the Liturgy of Hours is part of Dominican life. Being the Order of Preachers (O.P.) was another draw (Fr. Isaiah Mary's favorite Harry Potter book is therefore logically Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix [O.P.]). "The Dominicans preach with urgency, they preach as if something is at stake." For Fr. Isaiah Mary, to preach is akin to being the seed sower in the Gospels. "The sower throws the seed out there, but he has no control of what happens to it. That's up to the Holy Spirit. But the sower has to give the best seed that he can give." "I was a Creative Writing major and I knew that I would be financially poor as a screenwriter. But in my poverty, I decided that I would rather be a writer of homilies to help people change their lives."

Beyond preaching, relational ministry is what brings Fr. Isaiah Mary joy. "Relational ministry is establishing a personal relationship with an individual. Then it is to connect these individuals with one another. It is helping to build community, getting people to know others they pray with. Having a closer relationship with one another in Church will translate into having a deeper relationship with Jesus as God works through the community. Seventy percent of Catholics who leave the Church say they do so because they don't feel connected. I want people to feel connected. I want to propel them into grace."

Fr. Isaiah Mary honed his relational ministry skills with a 3-year stint at Stanford University immediately after ordination. One approach was through his shoes (black-based Nikes with streaks of color) and fedora. "Many of the students on campus have never interacted with a priest before. They think the priest is up there, aloof, having church talk that has no relevance to their lives whatsoever. I don't have a choice in wardrobe, but with the few choices I have, I can say the Gospel is still relevant because I dress the same way as they do. I am relatable to them; therefore, priests are relatable to them; therefore, Jesus is relatable to them."

Another approach was through coffee. "Apart from those in leadership positions, I would observe who came regularly to Mass but who were not that involved. I would reach out to them outside of Mass. A regular day would look like this: 9:30 am, arrival on campus. Up to 10 am, email checks. 10 am to noon, coffee. Thereafter, Mass or lunch. 1 to 3:30 pm, coffee. My code name down at Stanford was Father Coffee Bean."



Relational ministry, person to person (with Ashley Strobel) and door-to-door (at Priory West)

These days at St. Dominic's, Fr. Isaiah Mary's relational ministry is effected through social media. He has set up the official St. Dominic's Facebook page and the official St. Dominic's blog, Praedicare, which is from the Latin word for "to preach or to teach." The impetus for a technology-focused relational ministry was the results of the ME25 Gallup poll that the parish participated in: "Seeing that so many at St. Dominic's are under a certain age and internet based, the Facebook page and blog are instruments to connect them to the parish outside of Sunday from the comfort of their own smartphones." The 1:1 relational ministry also continues, albeit principally with the leadership of the Young Adults Group of which he is chaplain (he is also chaplain of the newly formed St. Dominic's Married Couples Group). "The idea is that these leaders would in turn reach out to the rest of the young adult community."

A Dominican picks a religious (versus baptismal) name with intentionality. For Fr. Isaiah Mary, the first 38 chapters of the Book of Isaiah depicts a God who "always calls us out of ourselves, out of our comfortable confines to something greater; God has something greater in store for us than we can even imagine." Looking back, Fr. Isaiah Mary had wanted something greater than the life Fresno, California provided him, something bigger than "watching reruns of ER on TNT all day." He was intrigued by things religious but he didn't have an outlet to investigate.

He found the start of his new life at the Newman Center when he left Fresno for college at UC Riverside. Looking at the now, Fr. Isaiah Mary's focus is on preaching and relational ministry, on providing access to experiencing God. This *is* propelling everyone into grace, into something hopefully greater. Isaiah as a religious name is therefore befitting indeed for it encompasses Father's past, his present, and his future.



Evangelizing through social media

St. Dominic's Online

Official Facebook page

www.facebook.com/Saintdominicansfrancisco

Official blog Praedicare

<http://blog.stdominics.org/>

Fr. Michael's weekly Pastor's Corner

http://www.stdominics.org/documents/pastors_corner

Brother Daniel's blog on the Dominicans in East Africa

<http://eafricadominicans.org/>

MINISTRY: RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA)



Scott Moyer on Tuesday evenings at RCIA

On any given Tuesday, St. Dominic's is abuzz with Contemporary choir members giving their all at the weekly practice session or with parishioners opting for

one of the myriad classes on offer. But each year, from the 2nd week of September through Easter, the parking grounds swell up a little more with those who have chosen to embark on RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). Some come to be baptized, yet others to be confirmed, and yet others to rediscover their faith as adults.

Scott Moyer, Director of Adult Faith Formation at St. Dominic's, has run RCIA since 2005. Scott always co-teaches with a priest (Fr. Michael Hurley taking over from Fr. Xavier Lavagetto starting with the 2013-2014 session) so that both the lay and clerical faith perspectives are proffered. Topics that leave a participants run the gamut from the philosophical (moral reasoning) to the seemingly familiar ("Learning

about the rhythm of Mass helped make each Sunday meaningful; Mass has become something I look forward to each week and even crave!”). For Scott, the most important message he hopes RCIA members take away with them is that God loves them and wants a relationship with them. “If RCIA is a crossword puzzle, then ‘love’ would be the answer to every question.” Sherry Price who attended RCIA from 2011-2012 summed up her experience, “If we had just been asked to join the Catholic faith, I would have bowed out of RCIA. But Fr. Xavier never did that. I respect that. He taught me faith, which is a difficult thing to grasp.”

RCIA culminates each year with the Easter Vigil. This year, 44 individuals will be officially welcomed into the Catholic community at St. Dominic’s. This welcome, however, began at the start of RCIA. Cadres of committed volunteers have functioned as spruce-up elves of the Parish Hall every Tuesday evening or as facilitators in group discussions or as sponsors at every important RCIA stage. The volunteers are as Sarah Koss, current facilitator and sponsor, describes, “the open arms and guidance.”

Excitement and anticipation mixed in with a little fear abound in this year’s class as the night of the vigil (Saturday, 19 April 2014) draws near. Said Teresa, “I still don’t know if I understand everything, but I think that will come with time. I already feel so much closer to God and am enjoying a closer relationship with Him daily.”

Four years ago on Palm Sunday, Sherry Price and her husband, whose home parish was in Palo Alto, made a last minute decision to drive up from Half Moon Bay to attend the 5:30 pm Sunday mass at St. Dominic’s.

Sherry’s mass attendance at that juncture in her life was a spousesly means to share in her Catholic husband’s experience. She felt a sense of freedom at not being tied to any one particular religion and considered herself spiritually complete. Upon entering St. Dominic’s that Palm Sunday, Sherry was overcome with such an emotion of belonging, an emotion that was as much unexpected as right, an emotion that was hard to articulate and that had no scientific or rational basis.



Sherry Price, her husband Gary as sponsor, and Fr. Xavier Lavagetto, Easter Vigil 2012

An usher came by and requested that she and her husband offer up the Bread and Wine and left before she could decline on grounds of being a non-Catholic. “That Sunday, it was as if God was constantly patting me on the shoulder, letting me know that I had arrived. I also realized I had this deep spirituality already within me; it just needed that awakening moment.” This episode

led to RCIA at St. Dominic’s two years later, although she still could not shake the resistance to becoming Catholic in the initial few months. By the time Sherry had to make a decision in December that year as to whether to move forward with joining the Church, she no longer had doubts. Easter Vigil 2012 felt like a wedding or a birth, a new beginning. Her sense of connection to the Church no longer felt limited to herself, limited to only her heart and soul. She now felt a belonging, in body, in heart, in soul. She was truly now part of a larger whole. “Fr. Xavier had always said that there would be more freedom when you are committed, when you know who you are. In the end, I experienced freedom in the belonging. There was so much joy that night. I cried out, “I AM IN!””

The Administration Commission would like to thank Fr. Isaiah Mary, Scott Moyer, Sherry Price, Bernadette Mendoza, Ray Garcia, Sarah Koss, and all participating RCIA members for their time, as well as Maria Ibazeta for photography and layout. Additional photography provided by Sherry Price. Feedback on the newsletter can be directed to st.d.comm.committee@gmail.com.