

## Text to God | What Should I Do?

Attending the Dominican Family Leaders Conference in Vietnam has been a wonderful opportunity to take a peek into Dominican laity around the Asia Pacific region. I returned to Aotearoa New Zealand feeling very blessed to have the lifestyle I do and very grateful for the opportunity to see and experience Dominican life in another country.

Vietnam is a country where religion isn't easy. Just to offer a catechesis programme for children the Dominican Sisters must get written permission from the Government. The Dominican family here is strong, with 340 Friars, over 1000 Dominican Sisters in six congregations, over 100,000 professed laity and many more laity who have not taken vows of profession.

We were gathered in Saigon, delegates from Asia/Pacific countries and people who work at the Dominican International Office in Rome coming together to discuss and exchange our views as Dominicans and specifically looking at the theme "Challenges of Mission in Asia Pacific Today".

The keynote address by Fr Edgar Javier, SVD encouraged us to respond to the challenges without forcing change on others. So often in the past Missionaries have forced people to let go of their own ways. Missionaries today must embrace the culture of others and minister within this.

Megatrends today include migration, urbanisation and mediatisation. Whilst globalisation has destroyed many boundaries it has also built new boundaries and these are the challenges we must respond to today. There are now boundaries between locals and migrants, between those who are educated and those who aren't, those who make decisions and those who live with decisions, those who are rich and those who are poor. We were asked to think about when we last met a hungry Bishop!

Fr Edgar defined being a missionary today as crossing the border and entering into the world of another. To be Christ-like we must think, feel and act like Christ. As missionaries we must be lovers of other people, other cultures and other religions and spiritualities.

Fr Edgar gifted us five images to take away of the missionary of today. They are to be a:

Listener: take time to listen to the voice of others - learn from those who are different to you.

Bridge-builders: reach out the hand of friendship to other cultures and religions.

Healer/Reconciler: past actions mean we have much to seek forgiveness for. Let us be humble.

Household of God Builder: Earth is God's household. We must each be the one who cares for earth and our environment.

Person of Silence: we are called to be mystics and prophets. Make time for contemplation.

□ In a regional discussion of delegates from Australia, Solomon Islands and New Zealand key issues included:

- Migration: particularly boat people arriving in Australia.
- New Evangelisation in a secular society.
- Global warming and our mission to care for the Earth.

One sentence that keeps going through my mind is "you don't need lots of stamps in your passport to be a missionary today". What challenges are there for you as a missionary in your community today? If you were to text God saying "What should I do?" what would be the response?

One of the benefits of attending a conference like this is that you meet others from the global Dominican family. One of the many people who inspired me was Fr David Kammler OP, Promoter of Dominican Laity. He used the image of the Tree of Dominic to illustrate the value of laity in the Dominican Family. From a big branch small twigs emerge and slowly they grow into a strong branch. There are many leaves (members) in the Dominican laity worldwide. Their gifts flower and give fruit in many unique ways. Concurrently dry leaves are falling from the tree, creating compost which nourishes new life.