My dear brothers and sisters in St Dominic and St Catherine,

Greetings from a wintery Oxford. I wish that I was with you to enjoy your company, learn from your reflections on the four pillars of the Order and also to enjoy your spring! After some rocky months, I am fine. I was told that I would not be able to talk in public until December, but I have recovered much more quickly than anticipated. It is hard to shut up a Dominican! Thank you for your prayers. Please keep them up.

Our beloved brother Kevin invited me to share a brief word with you. Forgive its inevitable superficiality. We live in strange times: the election of Donald Trump, the British vote for Brexit, the rise of populism all over Europe, and immense suffering of people throughout the Middle East, especially in Syria and Iraq. There is also a feeling that much of the momentum in world affairs is passing to Asia, another sort of spring, which you are well placed to enjoy!

In this uncertain time, we need a vigorous preaching of the gospel of hope, especially to and with young people. How may we give them hope? How may they give us hope? We may be entering a difficult period of humanity’s history, but somehow, in all this mess (one of Pope Francis’ favourite words), God’s providence is at work. To sustain this hope, we need prayer in which we are quietly open to whatever word the Lord will give us. Every good word surely springs from a deep interior silence and tranquillity. At this time when, at least in the West, there is a rise of angry intolerance, we need to use every ounce of our intelligence to understand what is happening. Why are people so angry? From what despair does their intolerance arise? How can we open hearts and minds to the surge of migrants fleeing from war and hunger?

Finally, we need a common life in which we dare to share our hope but also our doubts, our questions and uncertainties. This takes time and patience, and it is easy to find oneself gobbled up with busyness and skimp on time with one’s brothers and sisters. But I believe that such time is never wasted, and without it we will not be strong enough to be the bearers of gospel hope. As Kevin would say*, Basta cosi*

Your brother Timothy

12 November, 2016