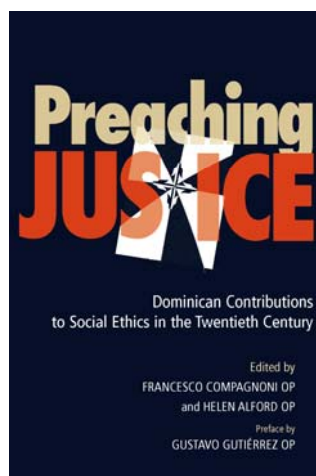




PRESENTATION OF THE BOOK

*Preaching Justice: Dominican Contributions to Social Ethics
In the Twentieth Century*



Fr Joseph Agius OP,
Rector of the Pontifical University of St. Thomas,
Angelicum
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As Rector of the Pontifical University of St Thomas, I have great pleasure in opening the launch of the book *Preaching Justice: Dominican Contributions to Social Ethics in the Twentieth Century*. On behalf of the entire academic community of this University I would like to extend a warm welcome to one and all.

First of all, I would like to offer a special welcome to those who have agreed to speak at this launch, including Fr David Kammler OP, promoter for the Dominican Laity who is representing the Master of the Order, Fr Wojciech Giertych OP, Theologian of the Papal Household, who will give the main address this afternoon, and to the distinguished members of the roundtable: the Honorable Francis Campbell, British Ambassador to the Holy See; Fr Fernando Franco SJ, Head of the Social Justice Secretariat at the Jesuit Curia here in Rome; Sr Ruth Caspar OP, one of the contributors to the book and a sister of the congregation of Our Lady of the Springs, Columbus, Ohio, USA; Mr Robert Mickens, Rome correspondent for *The Tablet*; and also [when he gets here] to Prof Luigino Bruni, lecturer in Economics at the University of Milano-Bicocca and a leading theorist of the “Economy of Communion”, an approach to business management being developed within the Focolare movement.

A warm word of welcome also to our distinguished invited guests, including the Canadian Ambassador to the Holy See, Mr Donald

Smith, and his wife, as well as to the representatives of the Brazilian Embassy to the Holy See, and to all the diplomatic representatives present. We are also glad to welcome a number of Vatican officials, not least among them our former student Mons Fortunatus Nwachukwu, Head of Protocol in the Secretariat of State. Particularly important to us as a Dominican Pontifical University is that we are honoured with the presence of the Co-ordinating Council of Dominican Sisters International, who are holding their planning meeting in Rome at this time and who have decided to include the launch of this book as an official part of their agenda. We are very grateful to them that they could make time out of their busy schedule to be with us, and for the strong signal it gives us of the reality of the Dominican family - Sr Maria Fabiola Velásquez Maya, Sr Michael Mdluli, Sr Cecille Espenilla, Sr Sara Böhmer, Sr Irene Diaz and Sr Patricia Simpson.

I am also glad to welcome people who were directly involved in the research project behind the book or in its production. Apart from Sr Ruth who has already been mentioned, the first person to be welcomed under this heading should be one of the people she wrote about in her contribution, the friar from the Central province of the US, Fr Kevin O'Rourke. Now in his 80th year, he is here today not only because we wish to honour his contribution to bioethics in the US throughout much of the 20th century, but also because it is 50 years ago this academic year that he received his doctorate in Canon Law from the Angelicum. Congratulations!

Others here today who have been directly involved with the production of the book include:

- Prof Luis Mendez Francisco, Professor of Ethics and Sociology at the Complutense University in Madrid, who wrote the contribution on the Spanish Dominican, José Todolí Duque;
- Fr Bertrand Juliaan De Clercq OP, who wrote the contributions on the Belgian Dominicans, Georges Ceslas Rutten and Jules Constant Van Gestel;
- Sr Collette Keane OP, who helped with proof-reading and produced the index of names, and,
- Fr Bernard Treacy OP, the long-suffering Director of Dominican Publications who patiently collaborated with [the demanding] Sr Helen Alford in putting the book together.

Last, but not least, I am happy to welcome all of you here today, professors and students of the Angelicum and of many other pontifical universities, Dominican sisters and brothers living in and around Rome, English-speaking religious sisters and brothers living in this area, including members of the SEDOS organization for missionary religious and religious involved in Justice and Peace activities, and all of you who may be here because you saw a poster or were invited by word of mouth. You are all most welcome.

The presentation of the book “Preaching Justice” is an important event for the Faculty of Social Sciences and for the Angelicum as a whole. The research project behind the publication began nearly seven years ago, with a proposal for funding to an important foundation and a call for contributors sent out throughout the Dominican Order, through meetings, web sites, publications and personal contacts. Along the way, problems delayed the completion of the project, including the loss of

some contributions that were originally promised. Translations were difficult to produce to a high enough standard, and took a considerable amount of time to complete. At about the same time that the project began in earnest, the editors of the volume, Fr Francesco Compagnoni and Sr Helen Alford, were elected to the positions of Rector of the University and Dean of Social Sciences respectively, so the time they could dedicate to the project was more limited. However, they always considered this project to be important, not only for the future of the Faculty of Social Sciences at this University, but also for the Order and ultimately for the Church as a whole. This sense of the importance of the project provided them with the motivation to see it through to the end.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about why the project and the book are important. Firstly, early on in the project, it became clear that all those participating in it had a very partial knowledge of the heritage of the Order with regard to its social apostolate. In general, each member knew about their own national tradition, or the traditions of their linguistic group, but they often knew next to nothing about what was going on elsewhere. For instance, many of those involved in the project were amazed to find out what Pedro Gerard and José Gafo had been doing in the Spanish workers' movements in the early 20th century. Almost no one knew anything specific about the Croatian Dominicans before Fr Anto Gavrić circulated his paper among the research team, even though they knew that Dominicans had been resisting Soviet communism. Similarly, the key role of Georges Ceslas Rutten in influencing many other groups within the Order [the Spanish friars just mentioned, for instance, and the Canadian Georges-Henri Lévesque

were strongly influenced by him] only emerged within the context of this project, where it was possible to see his influence in a more complete way. So part of the importance of the research project and the book itself is the way they have brought together the witness of the Dominican Order across language groups and different time periods so that they can be seen together, as a whole.

Secondly, the project is important because it is an example of the kind of role that the Angelicum can play in the ongoing development of the intellectual life of the Order. Those familiar with the Angelicum know its organizational and human difficulties, but we can also recognise the unique role that the Angelicum can play in the life of the Order, simply because of its location and its history [this does not mean, of course, that it is a “better” institution than any of the others, but only that it has a unique role or “vocation” within the Dominican Order]. The research project and the book symbolise that role, that is, one of crossing the boundaries among the members of the Dominican family and bringing them together to study and work on shared issues and problems that need an educated and intelligent response. This role then expands outwards, to embrace other religious, secular priests and lay people, among its teachers, researchers and students alike. This combination of a specific role within the Order and an openness to the wider Church and World gives the Angelicum its unique character and mission.

Lastly, the project and the book are important for their subject. Social problems are no less pressing today than they were in the early 20th century. In some ways, as Stan Muyebe’s article on Bernard

Connor identifies, they are more intractable because they often operate on a global scale. At the same time, in the latter part of the 20th century, the Church in her reflection on her mission became ever more aware of the integral role of work for social justice in the preaching of the Gospel [many times emphasised by John Paul II and re-iterated in parallel words by Benedict XIV in his encyclical *Deus caritas est*]. Both developments make the commitment to the social apostolate ever more necessary within the Church. A book, such as this one, helps to stimulate that commitment and provides models for those in formation to emulate. Although the problems of today require their own responses, and no easy answers to them can be gained by copying slavishly from the past, books such as *Preaching Justice* help us get a wider perspective on the problems we currently face and provide us with a fund of ideas that we can work with and remodel in working out effective solutions. It can also give us courage in facing up to problems that are just so enormous that we cannot possibly conquer them in the short term. The witness of Stratmann, faithful to the cause of peace and openly critical of the Nazi ideology as he watched its rise, or the courage of Dominik Barač, who still published his thesis “The Social Philosophy of Bolshevism” in 1944, the first work of its kind in Croatian, knowing that it would put him in mortal danger [and indeed, it did cost him his life] – these and many other examples in *Preaching Justice* remind us that sometimes the only way we can respond to a lethal social problem is to participate in the crucifixion and death of our Lord, and so, like him, participate in its ultimate redemption. There is something in this book to give inspiration and help to those facing all kinds of social difficulties today, and for this, as much as anything, I, as

Rector of this university, am proud that it is the Angelicum that is presenting a book like this today.

Thank you.