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Fr. Benedict Ashley, OP History Interview

Transcript

Interviewer: Fr. Cornelius Hahn, OP

Approximate running time: 48 minutes

Fr. Cornelius Hahn, OP (Interviewer)

[00:00:01] What do you remember about the House of studies in the early days? Who were some of the people you remember?

Fr. Benedict Ashley, OP

[00:00:06] Well, I was in the second class of the province, the second novitiate class of the province. The class before me had people in it, like in Iran. And, our class was the oldest person in it was, Joe Angers. So the, and we did our entire novitiate, entire study in river forest. So we were there for a good, eight years, on the, what is now the second floor over the old classrooms. My impression of the novitiate and of the years in the Studium is, perhaps somewhat different than some people who look back to the good old days, coming into the order. I was early, somewhat disillusioned by what seemed to me to be a marked contrast between the ideals of the order and the history of the order, as we learned it in the novitiate and the actual style of life which we led. The style of life certainly was not an easy one.

[00:01:24] It was very. We had a great many prayers to say at that time. We were still saying not only the whole of the divine office in Latin, but also the little office of the Blessed Virgin every day, and the office of the dead once a week. And we had innumerable other prayers, frequent benediction, daily recitation of the rosary. And in the novitiate was the entire fifteen decades of the rosary. We had, two periods of meditation in the novitiate, and a period of spiritual reading and common in the. In the days in the Studium, or part of the time I was in the studio. So in some respects it was a very rigorous life and people did not find it very easy. There were a lot of students who had problems with ulcers. I had an ulcer in the novitiate. A great deal of sign of tension. A number of nervous breakdowns in the house. So I wouldn't say that it was an easy life.

[00:02:32] On the other hand, as somebody coming in with a rather certainly a very idealistic outlook and no, no doubt a certain lack of experience with human beings. It struck me from the beginning that there was a great gap between the constitutions as we studied them, and the actual life that we were living. It was particularly noticeable in the liturgical life. When I came into novitiate, we used to say Compline immediately after lunch, and when asked about why that was done, it was said, well, you can take a siesta after Compline. The rest of the office had very little relation to its original meaning, and that was obvious to anybody who studied the history of the liturgy. And it tended to be the same way with other matters of religious practice. As I saw it and as

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we were taught, in fact, the Dominican life was supposed to be ordered to a rather strict asceticism and a contemplative life of study.

[00:03:43] And on the other hand, it was to end in a highly apostolic attitude. And I was disturbed all the time. I was a studium by the fact that Although we had so many prayers to say and we were certainly kept at our studies, the apostolic note was not very strong. We tended to seem to be very ingrown, with not a great deal of interest in the world that needed to be converted. We thought people tended to think only of a ministry to Catholics, not to non-Catholics. Since I was only a few years before had been a non-Catholic, this struck me as very strange, this kind of inbred attitude of people kind of ghetto attitude.

Fr. Cornelius Hahn, OP (Interviewer)

[00:04:35] What were some of the apostolates then?

Fr. Benedict Ashley, OP

[00:04:37] Well, they when I first came in the apostolates in the province were largely, two. One was, the parishes and I think.

Fr. Cornelius Hahn, OP (Interviewer)

[00:04:50] Well, the third of course. Fenwick.

Fr. Benedict Ashley, OP

[00:04:53] There was Fenwick. The parishes and the mission band.

Fr. Cornelius Hahn, OP (Interviewer)

[00:04:58] How large was the mission band?

Fr. Benedict Ashley, OP

[00:05:00] The mission band was. I think there were two groups at that time, a northern and a Southern Mission band, and they must have had about ten people or so in each. And the missionaries used to occasionally visit our, the House of studies. And they were always unusual people with tremendous big voices, so that they interfered with the choir whenever they came and, with a very different outlook. Of course, we lived in very tight categories in those days, so we didn't ordinarily get much chance to talk to them. And it was a little unclear to most of us about that. However, I would say at that time, the real ideal in the province was to be on the mission band. And I must say that I still feel that this is the truly correct and Dominican orientation of our life. However, the House of studies did very little to prepare you for the mission band.

[00:05:57] Our preparation and preaching was quite inadequate. Our knowledge of Scripture was quite inadequate, and what we were really being prepared in very thoroughly was in, scholastic theology. But how that was to be related to preaching in the mission band was not clear, or how it was to be related to teaching in a high school was not clear or to parish work for that matter. So I

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would say that to me, there was I felt at that time that there was a marked dislocation between the actual way that we kept observances and the historic purpose of those observances. They weren't connected with each other. Furthermore, I found out as soon as I got out as a young priest, because, of course, in those days, we really did not get to go around and see very much of what was going on in our apostolate. But when I did, I was struck immediately with the fact that what the kind of life we lived in the House of studies was only rather nominally lived out in the apostolate.

[00:07:07] And if one asked why this was so, the answer was given. Well, it's just not practical. And it appeared to be the case. When I say it wasn't lived, I don't mean that many of the houses lacked having office, but the office was set in a very rushed manner, and the rest of the contemplative elements of the life were practically absent. Furthermore, study was certainly not continued very much after the Studium itself, except by people who were in the actual were actually Teachers. So I felt then, long before Vatican two, that what we needed in the province was, revamping of our style of life so that it would be more in would not be merely formally, in accordance with the constitutions with a great many dispensations, because I might mention in those days, it was common enough for the lectors to use their lector dispensation to stay away from most of the office, on the grounds that they were studying, which, was not always the case, I'm afraid.

[00:08:28] We had a very formalistic manner of observing the constitutions. I don't say this as a criticism of the fathers of that time. I think it was a it was a factual lack of congruence between the constitutions which were obsolete and the type of life we actually lived. The only real remedy for that would have been to have studied the original purposes of these observances, to rethought them, and to re-adapt them in an intelligent way and realistic way to the actual life we were living. That's when when Vatican II came along, I was very enthusiastic about it, because it seemed to me that at last we were getting around to doing just that we were going to rethink the style of our life and adapt it and make it a very realistic thing. I was a member of the definitive team in the chapter of nineteen sixty four, and that in that definitive we decided, and I certainly was a pusher for the idea that we would have a self-study of the province, the purpose of which would be to find out just where we were in a realistic way.

[00:09:57] And in view of the changes that were coming along with Vatican II, and which then were beginning to be obvious enough what we were going to do about it. I've had one person at least tell me since that it was the self-study that ruined the province. I think it did have, in some respects, a very disturbing effect on the province, because it raised just those questions which had been always in my mind, and which I think people didn't talk about, namely, this lack of congruence between the ideal and the actual pattern of life that was lived. When you begin asking people, for example, about the office and found out that fifty percent of the people said that they didn't get anything out of the office. That raised a real issue. I don't think the answer to that was to abandon the office, but that it was to do something about reforming the office.

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[00:11:00] However, I must say that the actual changes that took place in the province as Vatican two went along and as we went along, were not always to my liking. I think the self-study was a necessity, and I think that it the fact that we discussed these things did prepare a lot of the province to begin to change, which it had to do as every religious order had to do. However, I think that the discussions that went on in that period were not too successful in the sense that they didn't really resolve the problems. They tended simply to end up in a kind of polarization between people who wanted change and people who didn't want change, rather than a hard headed discussion of what changes we wanted to make. The result of that, of course, was that changes happened very rapidly, without very much control and only with minimal thought throughout the province.

[00:12:09] The clear example of that is the office itself. That clearly something had to be done throughout the whole church about the way that the divine office and the liturgy in general was celebrated. And we in particular had to make some kind of adaptations. We couldn't go on with the old system of having this carried out in a very formalistic way in the House studies and then elsewhere, very little in the way of liturgical life. But we should have made the changes after. Not just piecemeal, but after careful study and a definite plan. However, human beings aren't that way. The fact that a great many people had felt, I think, or experienced the formalism of the previous style of life without being able to articulate it, meant that as soon as it became apparent that the formalism would not be enforced, they simply began dropping everything. And we had a whole series of things dropped without anything to replace them.

[00:13:23] Other people then tended to go back to an attempt at the formalistic observance, but I don't think that has succeeded too well either. I think we are still struggling not with the problem, not of conservatism and liberalism in the province, or doing the observing and not observing, but rather we're still faced with the question of how can the original purposes of our form of life be realized in a realistic, practical way? I think we have made some progress on that, but I think we have not completely solved it.

Fr. Cornelius Hahn, OP (Interviewer)

[00:14:05] What did the self study do for the apostolates of the province?

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Fr. Benedict Ashley, OP

[00:14:11] Well, there had, I must say, some remarkable changes had been made in the apostle of the province between the time when I entered and the time of the self study. There had been a considerable shift in the terms of. Of Father Hughes and Father Maher toward a teaching apostolate. So that at one time a good third of the province, I think at the time of the self-study, as a matter of fact, a good third of the of the province were in the teaching apostolate, and a great part of those in the teaching of college theology. That's perhaps one of the most remarkable things that happened in the history of our province that kind of shift, the mission band, in the meantime, had considerably declined because the older men, many of whom were really from Saint Joseph's Province, had sort of gone out of the picture. And not too many younger men went into, into the mission band.

[00:15:15] Most of the people were going into the younger people were going into teaching. And of course, I saw a good deal of that both, because, I was involved at Saint Xavier College where we had college teaching and later when I became regent, I. For some time I was the supervisor of the college teachers and went around and visited all the. The colleges. I later worked to get that responsibility off of the back of the Regent. But in any case, I had a pretty good picture of what was going on. And again, I have to say that the results were somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, I think we had the Dominicans had a remarkable influence in the United States during that period, both in our province and in Saint Joseph's Province, that had undergone a similar change. We, in fact, were teaching in a great many Catholic colleges, and we were giving very elaborate, very complete programs of theology to the laity.

[00:16:26] There is nothing like that being offered now. That's all tended to go out of the colleges again, but at that time we had anywhere from twelve to eighteen hours of theology required in Catholic colleges and taught by Dominicans. I think that if you look at the Catholic lay leaders in the United States during the period of Vatican two, you will see that most of those people are. A great many of them had, Dominican theological education. That was one of the reasons that they were so critical of the church was because they no longer felt that they were simply under the tutelage of the clergy, but they thought that they had a pretty good view of what Catholic theology was, and they had a right to criticize things that were going on in the church. So I think we had a powerful influence. However, I think we were also not very well prepared for this opportunity.

[00:17:33] The type of education that we had in the Studium, for which I was certainly very grateful, in which I found perfectly enjoyable. I had no objection to it at all. I thought there was nothing more fun than to sit and study Saint Thomas for hours on end. But I even then, as a student, realized that American Thomism was behind that of Europe and particularly of France, because we had not made the move, which was led in France by father and Father Chanyu toward a historical understanding of Thomism. My friend Father Weischedel and I used to talk about that a great deal, that we were presenting Thomism as a timeless doctrine without any real understanding

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of its historical basis or its context in the history of the church and I. When I began teaching myself, I. I put a great emphasis in teaching history of philosophy with the idea that it would give to students a more historical orientation that was also Jim Weissenfels, effort was to try to teach students that you can understand the summa adequately without placing it in some kind of historical setting.

[00:19:05] So that I think if we had continued in that direction, we would have been able to provide students with a more adequate type of education. As it was, they were men of one book. They knew, the bright students knew the summa very well, and they were very well prepared philosophically. In all frankness, as a teacher, I think the majority for the majority of students. This was a rather intellectually killing operation because they dutifully study these things in Latin. But they did not understand what they were studying. It became a kind of verbalism. They only knew how to repeat what they had learned. And it was not a real part of their thinking. And it could hardly be because there was so little effort made to connect what they were learning out of the thirteenth century with the experiences that they had as twenty twentieth century Americans.

[00:20:13] So I think that there was a great elitism in the Studium. The tendency was to think that the bright boys who were going to become lectors were the people for whom the program was really had it. The other people were simply neglected in all this. It was thought, well, they'll get through something will rub off on them, and it will be of some use in their and their apostolate. At least they will be Orthodox Catholics. But not very much attention was given to the needs of those students. And I would say, if there's any. I've been both praised and accused for things that I did as regent. But I think one thing that people didn't understand that I was attempting to do was to try to remove the elite, the elitism of our education, and to provide something for students of different of different backgrounds and different talents, instead of trying to fit everybody in a single, pattern.

[00:21:20] I don't mean by this either to classify people as intellectual and non-intellectual. Rather, it's a question of different types of intellect. I think we've always had a good supply of people with good enough heads, but only a certain kind of intelligence was developed in those days. The intelligence of those people who were good at very abstract metaphysical thinking, people who thought in other manners simply didn't get any attention. So I would say that one of the difficulties with our college teaching was that our teachers were not prepared to adapt what they had learned about theology to the needs of the college students so that they were doing to them somewhat the same thing that had been done to them. And I think that's one of the reasons of the reaction among the Catholic laity in this country that they have the kind of thing you see in the National Catholic Reporter, this kind of bitterness against the church.

[00:22:34] I certainly don't want to think we Dominicans should take the whole blame for it because the Jesuits have been more influential. But I think both Jesuit and Dominican education that dominated the United States gave a picture of. The church in. Of a sort that against which the laity eventually rebelled and are bitter about it. A very abstract, very dogmatic and rigid

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presentation of what Christianity is all about. And so we now suffer from a reaction to the other extreme. Our postulates have moved out of college, teaching substantially. I think this is sad. You know, I really believe that we ought to have a considerable number of our people in teaching, because the church needs very much a present, a sound presentation of theology. It's not being given at the present time in the schools. I think what we gave before was a was a sound presentation of pre of pre-vatican two theology.

[00:23:46] But I don't think it was pedagogically very adapted, and I don't think it prepared those laypeople very well to meet the kind of changes that they were going to have to meet. I would like to see us, and I'm encouraged to see that recently we have had some students in the Studium who now talk about going into the teaching apostolate. I think that it's a part of Dominican life because preaching in our tradition has a broad sense of communicating a deep understanding of the faith and that has an academic mode as well as a as a kerygmatic mode.

Fr. Cornelius Hahn, OP (Interviewer)

[00:24:30] Do you think the self study was successful? Do you think it accomplished what it was meant to do?

Fr. Benedict Ashley, OP

[00:24:35] Well, I think the self study was a success in this that it began the discussion in the province that it was a rather drawn out thing, if you can recall it. It took almost two years to complete it, and there were many meetings held as a result of this, meetings at the local level and in houses. And that's the first time in our province that we really did have meetings that discussed the problems of our life and apostolate. The only thing equivalent to it, and I see this as a an old anticipation of a forum, was the efforts of Father Edward Hughes. He did start what he called annual educational meetings, in which he for a day got to a wide number of people from the province to come here, some papers and have some discussion. I think those were valuable. They created a good deal of unity within the province. But, of course, they tended to stay off of the more difficult topics.

[00:25:45] They were more patriotic than they were, issue probing. And I think so that the first time that we really began to probe issues was during the time of, the self-study. So if we had not had the self-study, I think then as the changes, the inevitable changes of Vatican II came along, we would have been less prepared than we were to adjust to them.

Fr. Cornelius Hahn, OP (Interviewer)

[00:26:15] Were you at the Fenwick meeting in sixty eight?

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Fr. Benedict Ashley, OP

[00:26:17] Yes. And that, of course, was called as a an unofficial meeting, which was really not approved by provincial authorities. They only tolerated it. And I think they struggled with whether they should even tolerate it. It seemed like a revolutionary thing at the time to do. But finally it was decided to let it go. And I don't think it was a very enlightening meeting. It was largely a display of anxiety, hostility, and a blowing off of steam. However, it did show the fact that it took place and the people got together and talked about these things openly. I think had an important effect in really democratizing the province, because it became apparent at that it would no longer be possible to decide things simply by the provincial and his council, that there had to be a wider consultation in the province. I might say about that, while we're on it, that people do not realize what a tremendous change forward toward a more democratic, collegial way of operating has, in fact, taken place in the province.

[00:27:40] In the old days, let's say, up until nineteen sixty four, when things began to change, things in the province were largely done by the provincial and the council. All the important decisions were made either at the chapter or by the provincial and the council. But at the chapter you must recall the chapter met to elect the new provincial and a definitive. And as soon as that was done within one day the chapter then dispersed, everything was left with the provincial and the definitive. The definitive, of course, was quite important, but nevertheless it had to operate with the provincial who was coming in and it couldn't do anything that he disapproved of. Once he was in office, he ordinarily operated with a council who most of whose members had been in for a long time, because at that time we still had the ex officio members of the council, including the Masters of Sacred Theology, who stayed on for life.

[00:28:50] We had several partners, provincial who were founders of the province and who were on for life, so that a new provincial was faced with a. With a council made up of people who had been there for a long time. The result was the tendency in the in the. In the provincial Council, and I was honoured ex officio as Regent. Was that the provincial tended simply to present to the Council what he thought was the wise and prudent thing to do, and the Council tended to go along with this in most cases. Really the only force that the Council could have was sort of a brake, a conservative brake on the provincial, so that if you wanted to do something that was very different than had been done before, they perhaps would refuse to go along with it. But they didn't play much of a role in the way of input, of bringing ideas or suggestions or, or real help to the provincials work.

[00:29:58] I think the result was the provincial was enormously overburdened in the old days. He had to decide everything. Particularly in the way of appointments to settle every problem on his own. And I think this was. We asked much more the provincial than was really a possibility for any man to carry out. I think it's remarkable. Of course, I remember an awful lot of people, and I. And of course, I would say that the person who influenced my time in the Studium the most among the

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older people was Father William Humbert Kane. The reason he did was because Kane represented somebody very, very dedicated to the life of study. And the thing that I was interested in, and I must say this, that people don't realize about Humbert Kane, that in one sense, while he was very conservative as a Thomist and in his own life style, he was also very progressive minded in other respects.

[00:31:09] One thing that he always greatly believed in was that one of the defects of our life, as it was then lived was a lack of real community life. He always stressed the notion that if we could only work together in a more cooperative way, and instead of tending to each one becoming isolated, that we would be we much happier and much more effective. He had wanted to be a medical missionary and had actually done all of his pre-med, and in fact advanced fairly far into his medical studies, I believe, at Georgetown in Washington. And he had a dear friend in the orator who he thought the two of them might be able to, go together as medical missionaries. And he used to say that those were the happiest days of his life when he had a friend in the order. And when. When he had somebody who understood and had the same goals and ideals as he did. He was then assigned to teach philosophy, which was really not what he wanted to do, but he devoted himself very thoroughly to that.

[00:32:22] And in that field, the thing that he was most interested in was trying to bring Thomism up to date by bringing it into direct connection with the advances of modern science, the things that he had learned in his medical studies. He impressed that idea very much on a couple of us in the Studium, particularly on Jude Nougat and myself. And I would say that we were his and also on Jim Weiss. Those three people, I think, were very much influenced by Ham's interest in trying to bring Thomism into connection with science. He didn't have the historical interest that I earlier mentioned, and I think that was a defect of his own thinking, but that was somewhat supplied by the fact that this was the direction that Jim Weishaupt tended to take, so that the founding of a thing called the Albertus Magnus Lyceum, which became a somewhat of a joke in the province because nobody else understood it.

[00:33:32] The superiors didn't understand what it was all about. The people in the house didn't understand what it was all about, and it never seemed to get off the ground. It was nevertheless an effort by really three basically, the four three students and Father Kane, to whom we could also add Bill Wallace from the Eastern Province, who became a. Came as a student to River forest and who also took a hold of this idea. Dennis, Susie and Albert Moraczewski. A little later came in on the thing and those people formed a core. All of whom were interested in the relation of Thomism to modern science. We tried with that very hard and as I said, it never quite got off the ground. I think this is partly just because it's an immensely difficult task to do to bridge that gap. And I think also part of it was a lack of real support from within the province.

Fr. Cornelius Hahn, OP (Interviewer)

[00:34:44] Mm-hmm.

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Fr. Benedict Ashley, OP

[00:34:46] Cain could never get over to the superiors what he was trying to do. They again and again said to him, what are you trying to do? We don't understand what you're trying to do. And they didn't give that kind of financial support and that time that was necessary to develop anything like that. And he lacked that. The dynamism of leadership that would have carried it off. I've seen this happen repeatedly in things in the province. We have people with great ideas, but those ideas to be implemented require somebody else also who has other gifts, and we never get the two combination together. You can't expect a scholar to be a good organizer or fundraiser, but there are other people who have those gifts. And if you could only get the combination, you would have something powerful instead. There. There's often a good ideas are frustrated as a result of this.

[00:35:49] I do feel, though, that the positive outcome of that effort was that those things, those people in the province who have done intellectual work, and who have, have written and who have taught with a kind of, with a forward looking view, not merely repeating the past have almost invariably been people who were influenced by that particular endeavour in one way or another. So I do think that the intellectual accomplishments of the province in its history to date can be largely attributed to, the work of Humbert Cahn. Now, two other people I would want to relate to that. One is Walter Farrell and the other is, Tim Sparks. Walter Farrell remains an ideal for a number of people in the province. He. And he never saw eye to eye. They had different types of mentality. Cain was a philosopher. Pharaoh was a theologian, and I think not a very good philosopher.

[00:37:07] He didn't have much taste for philosophy. His whole thrust was in the theological direction. And he did very well understand that in order to make theology a real apostolate, it had to be put into a different kind of language than the scholastic language. His, companion to the summa, his little book, This is My Life. I think that's the title. Those things were very effective at the time because they put into a rather poetic and rhetorical type language, the content of the summa and made it intelligible to laypeople. The difficulty, of course, was that Farrell did not advance theological thinking very much. I don't think he was acquainted very well with the trends of theology in Europe at that time. And he tended rather to be a person who had a deep understanding of Thomistic theology and who presented it in attractive language.

[00:38:25] But he had little understanding for the kind of thing that Ham Kane was attempting a real, approach with modern thought. I think Father Sparks ought to be brought in here, too, because at the time that our province was founded, there was very little stress on the intellectual apostolate from the Eastern Province, if I may put it that way. They're. Their intellectual tradition had not been very strong. And the people who came here who were members of our province did not have a very strong intellectual tradition, but they wanted to have one. A part of the notion of the new province was that it would stress studies. But how to do it? Well, I think that it was Father Sparks along with Father Kane, because Father Farrell at that time was. Region in the Eastern Province and didn't have a great deal to do with setting up the studies in our province.

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[00:39:29] But Father Sparks and Father Kane together were the people who pushed to have the Studium to be a very solid institution. Father Kane once told me that when he was a student, that studies were at a low ebb, that frequently the professors did not show up for class. Studies were often taken a little bit as a joke. And he was very scandalized comparing what was done in the House of studies with what he was getting in the university in his other courses. But he and Father Sparkes did the hard work of pulling the Studium together. And one of their instrumentalities in doing this was to try to get it accredited as a Pontifical School of Philosophy. By doing this they insisted on getting some order to it. Standards and so on, and I think they succeeded in doing that. So during the time I was a student, the Studium was well run. The professors usually showed up, but not always.

[00:40:40] And, but we did have a considerable degree of discipline. When I became regent, I tried to continue that same thing. And that was the reason that with Father Ma, that we went ahead, with the idea of, accreditation of river forest and then of Dubuque was in order to continue in that same line of trying to hold on to a strong program of studies. I think a lot of people in the province don't realize that the tendency of study is to slip down to, again, to a very mediocre level of performance, that it takes a constant effort to keep Dominican education at a high level. It isn't something that comes automatically and ordinarily it's only achieved because you have a few people who are heavily devoted to study and who keep working at it. People out in the apostolate gradually lose real concern about studies. And though they may criticize the Studium, they don't do a great deal to uphold standards within the Studium.

[00:41:59] It's been my experience.

Fr. Cornelius Hahn, OP (Interviewer)

[00:42:03] Where do you see the apostles of the province going?

Fr. Benedict Ashley, OP

[00:42:07] Well, you say, where do I see it? As if I are talking about prophecy. I know where I would like them to go. I think that we should try to stick very strongly to the charism of the order which is preaching. Preaching is not a narrow concept, but it is a specific concept. It doesn't mean doing everything, carrying on every kind of apostolate. It means carrying on only those apostolates which are useful in bringing a deep Understanding of the of Christian faith, of Christian doctrine. I will say what has actually been taught and revealed to us by God. A deep understanding of that to all classes of the Christian people. Our problem is always that we're not selective enough. We tend to take up apostolates because they're offered to us, because they appeal to particular people, because they're convenient in one way or another. And we don't we're we're afraid to have a clear goal in which we decide this is not the thing for Dominicans to be doing.

[00:43:29] And this is the thing for Dominicans to be doing in line with our preaching apostolate. Now, what, in fact, are the things that would be helpful at the present time? Well, I think we should

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have a considerable number of people in the province actually engaged in preaching apostolate in the clear, obvious sense of giving retreats, missions, preaching on the radio, preaching in television, speaking the word personally, in the ways that will reach people. I think that we should have at least a third of the province engaged in that, however difficult it may be. I think it's also very appropriate that we have some people in teaching. Some people think that I've been opposed as a personally to a high school teaching. That's never been my point of view at all. I think that teaching religion to high school students is a very important thing.

[00:44:37] It's a time of their life when they learn a great deal of what they're ever going to know about their faith. But I do think then if we have high schools, they have to have a real emphasis in. The teaching of religion, and that we ought to leave the other tasks in the school to people who have not had, who are not, do not have a Dominican vocation. I think even, running grade schools, as the sisters do is a perfectly appropriate Dominican thing, provided that religious education is always the central thing, and that we are giving a model to the rest of the church with regard to that, and not merely conforming to ordinary standards. I think also, of course, that teaching in universities and colleges, campus ministry again provided that the campus ministry run by Dominicans. Focuses on real communication of Christian doctrine and not merely on running another parish.

[00:45:50] I have no objection to parishes, provided that they don't occupy the major energy of the province and that our Dominican parishes would be centers of preaching. But I think every single apostle that we pick up, we have to ask ourselves, is this in line with the need in the church for a hearing of the Word of God? It's the most neglected need in the church.

[00:46:18] ... about the social apostolate.

[00:46:21] Again, I think the general is very correctly said about the social apostolate that Dominicans should be very active in this. The preaching of the gospel is a preaching of social justice, but in the social justice field, The selection of tasks should be that Dominicans should be occupied in developing the. The. The theory of social justice and a. Of preaching it as a part of the gospel. It should not be our job to be deeply involved in the more practical aspects of the social apostolate, not because they're not tremendously important, but because there are things for other people to do and not us.

Fr. Cornelius Hahn, OP (Interviewer)

[00:47:12] Have you had one minute to say something to the province? What would you like to say?

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Fr. Benedict Ashley, OP

[00:47:16] I would just repeat what I just said, namely, that we ought to go back to the fundamental purpose that the order was founded, and that is to preach the Word of God. If we do that, we will have vocations and we will survive. If we don't do it, then it becomes questionable whether we ought to survive.