



IDAHO LAY DOMINICANS THE PILLARS OF DOMINICAN LIFE

DOMINICAN SPIRITUALITY FOR THE LAITY

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Introduction

The following chapters are adaptations of conferences I gave to the members of our San Francisco Chapter of Lay Dominicans. They were further adapted to serve as our formation programs for those who have asked to be received into the Order. They are a distillation of reflections, study and conclusions I have drawn over my fifty-four years as a Dominican. As Master of Students for the formation of our young Dominicans to the priesthood I had to reflect on these concepts more intensely than I would have ordinarily. They have been further modified for a wider audience with the hope that it will find them helpful in clarifying what it means to be a Dominican. It is a glorious vocation, a rich blessing and grace from God. Let us be grateful to Him for it.

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THE PILLARS OF DOMINICAN LIFE

DOMINICAN SPIRITUALITY FOR THE LAITY

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who is at all familiar with spiritual literature knows that there are various schools of spirituality. We speak freely and easily of Benedictine Spirituality, Franciscan Spirituality, Carmelite Spirituality, and Ignatian Spirituality. We know also there a number of other subdivisions, such as Rhenish, French and so forth. We Dominicans may feel somewhat chagrined that Dominican

Spirituality is not mentioned in the same context. We may wonder if there is such a thing as a peculiarly Dominican Spirituality, and if there is, why does it not get more publicity. Perhaps the reason is that we have not defined it clearly enough and talked about it enough. We purpose here to at least define it as precisely as possible and show that our Order does have its own spirituality worthy of inclusion along with the other schools.

We must keep in mind that all of us, no matter to what school we may belong; seek to follow Christ who is the Way. Since the riches of Christ, however, are inexhaustible, there will be different paths available for us to follow him. They necessarily will have the same purpose --- that is, to lead us to a deeper participation in the Christian life --- and they all will use the same basic means, such as prayer, sacraments, liturgy and so forth, but they will vary according to their spirit, emphasis and practices. The best known and most popular of these schools are associated with the major religious orders. People will be drawn under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to one or another of these orders and may go so far as to join one of its branches --- as male religious, nuns, sisters or laity.

Any definition of Dominican spirituality must encompass all branches of the Order, the friars, nuns, sisters and laity. This ideal must be common to all although each branch will have its own means for fulfilling this ideal. As the Acts of the General Chapter of Mexico in 1992 put it:

Thus, as if arising from a tree planted beside living fountains, the branches of the Dominican Family are numerous. Each one has its own character, its special status, its autonomy. However, since all participate in the charism of St. Dominic, they share the very same vocation to be preachers in the Church, discovering their mutual responsibility based on equality --- in complementarity and mutual cooperation --- and accepting the joy of giving but also of receiving and of learning from each other. The Dominican Family finds its source and sign of unity in the Master of the Order, successor of Saint Dominic. He guarantees incorporation into the family and promotes fidelity to the spirit of Saint Dominic. (No. 1)

The main characteristic of Dominican spirituality is the preaching or proclamation of Divine Truth to the world. This true for all branches of the Order, laity as well as religious. This sounds so basic that we may overlook its unique quality that sets it apart from every other type of spirituality. Yet the need to proclaim Divine Truth to the world is perhaps the greatest of our time. Only Dominican spirituality can and will fulfill that need. We should not, then, hesitate to talk about it and give it its rightful place in the various schools of spirituality.

In this presentation, we will endeavor to show how Lay Dominicans share in the vocation of the Order to proclaim the truths of salvation and how they can grow spiritually by sharing in it according to the circumstances of their lives. Their contribution to the Order's mission is a most important one for without it the work of the Order cannot be fully effective.

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I: VERITAS - TRUTH

Every major religious order can sum up its mission and spirit in a word or two. For the Benedictines it is the *Opus Dei*, the celebration of the Divine Office, or Christian Prayer, as they are calling it these days. For the Franciscans, it is Poverty. The Jesuits have as their motto "Ad majorem gloriam Dei,"

"To the greater glory of God," which expresses their ideal of service to the Church. For the Dominicans, it is "Veritas" or "Truth," which sums up in one word our thirst for the divine truth of the faith as revealed through Christ.

If you look in the dictionary you will find that truth is defined as the quality of being in accordance with experience, facts or reality. There is in it always the element of objectivity; it is never completely subjective. This twofold character of truth is brought out by St. Thomas Aquinas' definition: "truth is a correspondence of mind and thing." In other words, we have truth when what is in our minds is in accord with the objective reality.

The Greeks began this search for truth around 600 B.C. and Western culture has been looking for it ever since, all too often with indifferent success. This is what we might call human truth, or that which we can know only with the human intellect. When Dominicans use the word, however, we mean divine Truth. The ultimate objective reality is God himself. Thus, we can have truth only when what is in our minds corresponds to what is in God's.

This ultimate Truth is totally and perfectly expressed in the eternal generation from the Father of the Word, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. As St. John tells us, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." (John 1: 1) He goes on to say:

The Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us
and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

As he himself testified before Pontius Pilate, "For this was I born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice. (John 18:37:b)

At the Last Supper Jesus told Thomas and all of us, "I am the way, the truth and the life." (John 14: 16) Christ, then, is Truth Incarnate. Then he added, "No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14: 6b) And the reason is, as St. John once again tells us, "The Word was the true light that enlightens all people" (John 1: 9), or as he himself said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8: 12)

This light that shines forth from Truth Incarnate, the Word made flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the revelation he made to us for as he told us, "The one who sent me is true, and what I heard from him I tell the world." (John 8: 26b) Then he went on to say, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples and you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8: 31b-32) This light of truth is not harsh, glaring, or cold but a warm, luminous, loving one for, after all, the God who is truth is also love. (See I John 4:8a.) As St. Paul said in his great hymn on love, "Love does not rejoice over wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth." (I Cor. 13:6) In another place he said:

Living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love. (Eph. 4: 15 & 16)

Here it is obvious he is speaking about the building up of the Body of Christ, the Church. In his first letter to Timothy he is more explicit, "You should know how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth." (I Tim. 3: 15) The Church, as we know, is the guardian of the truth revealed to us by Christ, preserving it intact from error and yet adapting that truth to meet new problems, questions and situations as they arise.

Going through a long list of Bible verses can be tedious, but, in this case, it will serve to bring out the multi-faceted riches and beauty of the Truth to which the Dominican Order devotes itself. First of all, Truth as the Divine Being, the Word of God, is the object of our worship and contemplation. Secondly, as the revelation of Christ, it is the subject of our study and object of our apostolic work. Thirdly, we, as Dominicans, will be completely loyal to the Magisterium of the Church, the pillar and foundation of truth. From these elements we can conclude that the quest for truth should color, shape and mold every aspect of our lives. It has been well said that the love of divine truth is the soul of Dominican spirituality.

An important element to keep in mind is that it is impossible to separate love and truth because we must love what we see as good and divine truth is the highest good, for it is God himself. Our study should be done out of love so that we can come to a greater knowledge of the loving revelation of God to us. Our sharing of the truths we have learned and contemplated should be done out of love for those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death. Here, of course, we have the shining example of St. Dominic who dedicated himself and his Order to the proclamation of the truth.

From the very beginning of his work with the Albigensian heresy in Southern France, he recognized that knowing and preaching the truth was essential if heresy and false doctrines were to be overcome. There are certainly plenty of those in our day. While every age has thought of itself as being the worse of times, it is safe to say that our own can stack up with the most abysmal. To be sure there is an abundance of knowledge about all sorts of things but there is little understanding of what it is all about, of who we are, of where we are going, of the purpose of life. What is needed most of all today, as it was in St. Dominic's time, is a greater knowledge of the truth, particularly divine truth, the revelation of God through Jesus Christ.

This holds true for every branch of the Order, friars, nuns, sisters and laity. The friars have as their mission preaching and teaching, writing learned articles and books, and using the media to spread the truth. It is the vocation of the cloistered nuns to pray not only for the work of the fathers and brothers, but for the spread of the truth. The Dominican sisters have as their work teaching in our schools and carrying on the many ministries they fulfill so capably. But, perhaps more effective and certainly more far-reaching, is the call of the laity to bring the truth into the workplace, the market place, our schools, neighborhoods, into every nook and cranny of society. This is something that only the laity can do.

This does not require great learning. One does not need a Doctorate in Sacred Theology, or even a Master of Divinity degree to fulfill this calling. We must never forget that one of the most eloquent and effective proclaimers of divine truth was a lay woman who could not read or write --- St. Catherine of Siena. It was the Father speaking through her who said about our holy father, Dominic:

But for his more proper object [Dominic] took the light of learning in order to stamp out the errors that were rising up at that time. He took up the task of the Word, my only begotten Son. Clearly he appeared as an apostle in the world, with such truth and light did he sow my word, dispelling the darkness and giving light. He was a light that I offered the world through Mary and sent into the mystic body of holy Church as an uprooter of heresies. Why did I say "through Mary"? Because Mary gave him the habit --- a task my goodness entrusted to her. (Dialogue, no. 158).

One final note, the Dominican Order did not officially chose Truth as its motto until the last century, but it was a term commonly used long before that. Louis of Bavaria, who was the Holy Roman Emperor from 1314 to 1347, said, "The Order of Preachers is the Order of Truth which it defends with equal fearlessness and freedom." And, of course, Pope Honorius III, in his second bull of confirmation of the Order issued in 1216, called us the "Champions of the Faith and true lights of the world," which recalls Christ's words, "You are the light of the world." It is the light that shines forth from Truth.

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II. CONTEMPLATION FOR THE LAITY

You may think it would be crazy or at least pathetically unrealistic to even suggest that you, as lay people, could be contemplatives. Your reaction may be: "What me a contemplative? I have a job, family responsibilities, civic duties and goodness knows what else to do. I don't have the time or opportunity to spend hours in a church praying and meditating, or even in a quiet spot in my living quarters to do that kind of thing. All I can hope for is the active life. I can be a Martha, but not a Mary."

You would react this way because you think a contemplative is someone like a monk or cloistered nun, or the rare lay person who has enough income to live on, little to do and enjoys sitting in a quiet corner praying and reading pious books. But this image ignores the fact that some of our greatest contemplatives have been busy people leading a most active life. St. Dominic and St. Catherine of Siena come to mind, so being a contemplative does not exclude being a busy person living an active life style. It also ignores the fact that even in monasteries and convents, floors have to be mopped, clothes washed, meals cooked, and work that has to be done to support its members.

So we are then brought back to the cold, hard fact that even busy, active lay people can be contemplatives. But you may wonder how. The problem is that we use the words "contemplation" and "contemplative" in two ways. One way is contemplation as a life style, so let us consider that first. Father Walter Farrell, O.P., who interprets the mind and teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas so well and clearly, is of great help here. He points out in his *Companion To The Summa*, (Vol. III, pp. 496-497) that the person whose efforts are principally directed to getting things done is leading an active life while the one whose efforts are directed principally to the knowledge of truth is leading a contemplative life. This means that the very fact you are a Dominican makes you a contemplative because you are dedicated to the truth. You want to know that truth that will set you free and to share it with the world, even if your world is confined to the office, your neighborhood, classroom or home. While you may be very active, your main goal is directed principally to the acquiring and spreading the knowledge of truth. That is contemplation as a life style.

But this does not mean that you are contemplating. So now let us consider contemplation in the second sense in which we use it, which is a form of prayer. When you choose a contemplative life

style it merely means that contemplation as a form of prayer is your goal. Perhaps we should first find out exactly what contemplation in this sense is before we go any further. So many writers on the subject will talk about it, but never say exactly what they mean. We do not intend to make the same mistake. Father Farrell defines it as "a swift intuitive knowledge, an instantaneous plunge to the heart of truth." (*Companion To The Summa*, Vol. III, p.498) Father Jordan Aumann, O.P., describes it in his article in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* as "a loving knowledge of God that proceeds from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." (Vol. IV, p. 261) As such, it is founded upon faith, strengthened by hope and flows out of love. In other words, it is an experience of God's presence in which it seems as though the soul and God touch, and the soul is held totally absorbed. There are no words or even concepts. There is no sense of time. It is just that the soul is focused in on God, and God is focused in on it.

If you have not experienced it, no one can describe it to you, but if you have, no one has to describe it to you. You know exactly what we mean. It is quite likely that some of you have had this wonderful experience but did not realize it was contemplation. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who certainly was a great contemplative, somewhere warns that such experiences are infrequent and fleeting.

We are not talking about such phenomena as ecstasies, raptures, stigmata and all the rest that we associate with some of the great contemplatives. Apparently, St. Dominic never experienced any of those, although St. Catherine of Siena had a superabundance of them, including the stigmata. St. Thomas may have experienced one or two. They have nothing at all to do with the contemplative life. They are part of what is known as the charismatic gifts which have to do with the sanctification of others while contemplation is concerned with the sanctification of the individual.

There are those, including Thomas Merton, in his little book, *What Is Contemplation*, who talk about an "active contemplation," but I feel that is a waste of time and energy. What we are talking about is what is known as "infused contemplation," which is a gift of God and comes to us whenever He wants it.

You may say, "It sounds wonderful. How can I get it?" God, of course, always wants to give it to us, but we have to go through some preparatory steps before we are capable of receiving it. There are two basic pre-conditions that must be present if those steps are to be effective. The first pre-condition is love, a deep love of God. As Father Farrell says, "Contemplation must always begin with love, endure by love and result in love. (*Companion*, vol. III, p. 497) This love of God means, among other things, that we do not focus primarily on the things of this world. Our Lord put it this way:

So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. (Matt. 6: 31-33)

Another way of putting it is this: we may use material things but we cannot let them use us, as when they become the major interest and focus of our lives. It seems to me that anyone who has made the decision to become a Dominican has already made the decision to put God first and grow in love of him.

The other pre-condition is that if we are to be contemplatives we must possess the moral virtues, not in their ultimate state, but at least enough to quell the vehemence of the passions that keeps the soul in an uproar. When we are in the state of grace we do have the advantage of having the infused moral virtues that make it so much easier for us to develop the acquired virtues. Once again, I suspect that a person who has made the decision to become a Dominican has also made considerable progress in growing in these virtues.

Once these pre-conditions have been met, then we are ready to begin the gradual approach to the heights of contemplation. We must first get the principles of divine truth from others, either by listening or reading, which is another way of saying "study," one of the major pillars of the Dominican life, and by appealing to God by prayer, another major pillar. Secondly, we must meditate on, or prayerfully reflect upon the meaning of these truths. Then, and only then, are we ready to receive that marvelous gift of infused contemplation, that loving experience of God's presence in our souls. This is an imperfect and incomplete experience at best in this world, but it is a foretaste of that vision of God in heaven where we shall see him face to face.

This beautiful gift of God is perfected by the gifts of the Holy Spirit of knowledge, understanding and wisdom, and the more active and the more influential they are in our lives, the more apt we are to receive the gift of contemplation.

At this point, it should be clear to you that all this does not come easily or naturally without effort and difficulty. We move up the spiritual ladder one step at a time, and when we move up another step we become disoriented and fearful until we get used to it and are comfortable with it. As Thomas Merton, and all the spiritual writers, make clear, there will be times of darkness and aridity when we are tempted to give up, to think we are failing, that we have gone backward. This is where the virtue of hope comes in. It gives us the strength to climb up over those dunes of sand that stand in our way and keep on going until we realize that God is leading us closer to Him through these trials. That is one of the crosses Christ asked us to carry with Him.

This brings us back to the question we asked at the beginning: can you as ordinary lay people hope to become contemplatives? The answer is a resounding, "Yes." First of all, you are on the right path. You have chosen to become Dominicans, and we are by the grace of our vocation contemplatives in our life style. As those who have God's life within you, you have the equipment of grace which provides all the help you need to grow to the point where contemplation as a form of prayer can and will be given to you. All you need is patience, perseverance and hope.

In subsequent chapters we will consider study and the role it plays in our upward path toward contemplation. Then we will look at meditation and the various forms of prayer that help Dominicans, not only to be contemplatives, but actually to contemplate.

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III. STUDY

In our last chapter we promised to consider study, which may have caused some apprehension for those of you who have not been in a classroom for years and have no desire to go back into one. But we are not thinking of study in that sense. Actually, we are talking about something you do all the

time. For example, a person who is interested in cooking will pore over cook books looking for recipes that will be interesting and delicious as well as within the range of his or her time available and culinary skills. A person using a computer will carefully go through the manual of the program he or she is using to find out what can be done with it. You may have to consult it many times when you run into new and unexpected problems. You may even be reduced to calling the program's technical support to ask for help. Those who are planning a vacation will look through travel brochures to decide on a destination that will be both enjoyable and within their means. The list could go on and on but the point is that even for the ordinary actions of life we will do a certain amount of study and preparation so that we can get the best out of what is available to us.

We say that people who do not do that sort of thing are rowing with one oar, or that the elevator has not gone all the way to the top floor, or some such expression that indicates they do not have good sense. How much truer this is for those of us who say we want to be contemplatives, or to bring truth to others. How can you be a contemplative when you have nothing to contemplate, or give truth to others when you do not know it yourself? If we are willing to do some study and preparation to achieve mundane goals, how much more eager should we be to learn what will lead us to such sublime ones?

This does not mean that you have to enroll in some theological institution to get a degree in theology, or to sign up for summer or night courses at some Catholic institution. It does mean, though, that you should be thoroughly familiar with the basic truths of your faith. If you had the advantage of twelve years of a good, solid Catholic education you may think you know it all. But you would be surprised at how much you have forgotten of what you learned or were supposed to have learned. It would not hurt at all to brush up on your knowledge of the faith by reading the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or some basic work of Catholic theology.

You should also try to deepen your understanding of the Scriptures, for, after all, they are the Word of God. And this is not too hard to do. You can choose a brief passage --- particularly from the Gospels and the letters of St. Paul --- and reflect prayerfully on its meaning. If you have difficulty finding one, your *Liturgy of the Hours* is full of them. In addition, you should also learn something about the background, purpose and message of the various books of the Bible. One of the easiest places to get this information is by reading the introductions and notes you will find in a Catholic Bible. They are brief and have been written by top-notch Catholic scholars. [A note of caution from Fr. Bart: though the notes at the bottom of the pages in the *New American Bible* are good, the introductions at the beginning of the books must be read with caution because often their explanations are incompatible with Divine inspiration.]

A solid knowledge of the Word of God will not only be a well-spring of your own spiritual growth, but will help you respond intelligently to the fundamentalists we run into so often these days. Let me give you a warning about them. They will quote Bible verses at you one after another until you are dizzy. Your reaction may be, "These people know so much about the Bible." Do not be overawed or impressed with them. It does not mean that they know the Bible at all. It merely means that they have memorized a lot of Bible verses. But they do not know the context of those verses at all. They pick and choose the ones that will prove their own point --- which is usually anti-Catholic. This is a misuse of Scripture. [In fact, the word *heresy* is Greek for "picking and choosing", as opposed to *Catholic*, which is Greek for "the whole thing", namely all of the inspired truths and not just the one

we pick and choose according to our own judgment, which, as St. Thomas teaches, means we do not believe in God but in ourselves.]

The best way to handle those people is to smile sweetly and say, "How beautiful! Now, what is the verse before that?" Ninety times out of a hundred, they will not know it. Pin them down and try to make them put the verse they have quoted into its context. Of course, it helps if you know what that context is.

But reading is not the only way we study and learn. St. Thomas includes listening as well. You have your chapter talks by the chaplain or others, sermons at the Masses you attend, and talks that are given on various subjects in your parish or other places. There are also Catholic radio talks plus all sorts of resources on Internet, and on and on the list could go. We are living in an age of recordings. There are some marvelous audio and video tapes available that can be very helpful in our learning and study.

This reading and listening is not just a one-shot affair. You just do not read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and let it go at that. No, you should be eager to learn more and more. It is a life-long process. For example, every Dominican priest has had seven years of intense study but most have never stopped studying and never stopped learning during all the years since their ordination. We do not deserve any particular credit for this because this is what a Dominican is supposed to do. It is only logical to conclude that anyone who is interested in fulfilling his or her vocation as a Dominican will do this sort of thing almost naturally.

I include the Dominican Laity in this assessment. It is just human nature that the more you know, the more you want to know. These insights you gain into your faith will be so wonderful that you will be eager to gain more. Oh, there will be times when it seems as though you have run into a stone wall and you are getting nowhere. In such cases, keep in mind that you have the gift of understanding, the second Gift of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to penetrate into the deeper meanings of the truths of our faith. Remember, all you have to do is to pray for an increase of it, and the Holy Spirit will give you insight and enlightenment.

You will also want to learn more about the Dominican Order. Here, of course, you will want to go beyond reading the lives of St. Dominic that are available. You will also want to read William A. Hinebusch's *A Brief History of the Dominican Order* and Benedict Ashley's *The Dominicans*. but you will become acquainted with your brothers and sisters who are the saints, blessed and holy members of the Order. In addition, there are a number of other excellent books that will be coming out in the future, so you have a lot to look forward to in the years ahead.

What I have been talking about is not beyond the range of the average, ordinary, intelligent person, which would include all of you. Those of you whose education, background and IQ level are above normal have a tremendous wealth of material available to you as well. But even those who are in neither of those categories can be accommodated and satisfied. Remember St. Thomas' words:

Some who have sanctifying grace may suffer dullness of mind with regard to things that are not necessary for salvation; but with regard to those that are necessary for salvation, they are sufficiently instructed by the Holy Spirit, according to 1 Jn. 2:27, "His anointing teaches you about everything." (II, II, q. 8, art. 4, ans. to obj. 1)

But let us face it, even the brightest of us have a certain amount of dullness in regard to revealed truth. All of us desperately need the instruction of the Holy Spirit. So, no one is left out in this life-long process of learning that is an essential part of Dominican life. It is, indeed, one of its pillars. As I said at the beginning, if you are serious about being contemplatives and the bearers of the torch of truth to the world you live in, then you will want to study and learn more and more. You will find that your Dominican vocation will give you the recipe for happiness, both now and forever. It will provide the manual for fulfilling your call from God which you can consult over and over again and it will be better than any travel brochure ever published to guide you to your destination, where, in union with all your brothers and sisters in St. Dominic, under the mantle of Mary, you will enjoy the eternal vision of God in heaven.

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IV. LITURGICAL PRAYER

Until the 1970's we used what was known as the Dominican Rite. We Dominicans celebrated Mass and Divine Office differently than the rest of the Western Church. The feature that most people noticed was that we took water and wine into the chalice at the beginning of Mass rather than at the Offertory. There were many other differences too but that was the most obvious.

The reason we have our own rite is that at the beginning of the Order in the 13th. century, there was no one officially approved way of celebrating Mass. Every city or area in Europe had its own variation of the liturgy. The Order was the first to move its men around all over. If a Dominican was moved from Cologne to Paris to Naples, let us say --- as St. Thomas Aquinas was --- he had to learn a new way of celebrating Mass and the Office every time he moved. It got so that our men were spending about as much time re-learning how to celebrate the liturgy as they were in preaching or teaching. Rather early on they got the idea of having just one rite for Dominicans no matter where they went. In 1256 Blessed Humbert de Romans, the fifth Master of the Order, issued a new unified liturgy. In 1267, Pope Clement VII approved it and Dominicans held to it for 700 years.

The reason we were able to do that was that when St. Pope Pius V in 1570 imposed on the whole Church what is correctly known as the Roman Rite --- not Tridentine as some call it --- he exempted those rites which had been approved for over two hundred years. Remember now, the Dominican Rite was approved in 1267 --- 203 years before. Also remember that St. Pius V was a Dominican, which goes to show that it pays to have one of your men in the right place at the right time. After the current rite of the liturgy was approved in the 60's, we adopted it because there were no longer strong reasons for holding on to our old Dominican Rite, especially since many of the features of the Dominican Rite were incorporated into and improved by the new rite, e.g. shorter prayers, lay lectors and congregational singing. The Dominicans have always been devoted to the liturgy, going back to St. Dominic himself who had been a Canon Regular at the Cathedral in Osma, Spain. He loved the Divine Office and celebrated Mass everyday that he could. Sometimes, of course, in his peregrinations around Europe he would be caught out in the middle of nowhere with no church around. But otherwise, he did not miss singing Mass and the Divine Office.

This love of the liturgy became central to Dominican life, a rich source of prayer and a powerful means of uniting ourselves to Christ. But before we go any further let us make sure that we clearly understand what the liturgy is. It is the official worship of the Church, the Body of Christ, the People

of God, offering praise and worship to God, to the Holy Trinity. It is centered in the Mass and expanded in the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours. When one joins in celebrating Mass, or when he or she prays the Liturgy of the Hours in community or even alone, that person is joined to the whole Church in prayer, worship and praise.

Through the Liturgical Year, which begins with the First Sunday of Advent, we enter into the mysteries of Christ. We go through the life of Christ from the divine preparations for His coming to His birth at Christmas, to His Epiphany and Baptism. We then have the beginnings of our consideration of His public life, but shortly thereafter, on Ash Wednesday, we plunge into Lent and the events leading up to His Passion and Death. Then comes Easter, the celebration of His Resurrection, Ascension into Heaven and the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the new Church. When that is over we will go back to the public life of our Lord in order to reflect on those three years He spent walking the dusty roads and hills of Galilee and Judea, preaching, teaching and healing.

Through the Liturgical Year, then, we come into intimate contact with Christ our Lord and re-live the mysteries that wrought our salvation, and through it we are enabled to become more like unto Him. As Pere Festugiere, a great French Dominican scholar, said, the Liturgy is "the method authentically instituted by the Church to make souls like unto Jesus." (Quoted in Pere Bernadot, O.P., in *Dominican Spirituality*, translated by Anselm Townsend, O.P., p. 87), or as Pere Bernadot himself says, "it is the most simple and certain way to become like unto Jesus Christ." (*Op. cit.*, p. 91). Back in 1919, Bl. Abbot Columba Marmion published one of the great classics of our time, *Christ In His Mysteries*, in which he shows how wonderfully the revelation of the Gospels concerning our Lord is taken up and elaborated by the liturgy during the year and how the whole effect of the Church's worship is to furnish motives and means for the imitation of Christ. The liturgy, then, is another one of those marvelous resources God has made available to us to grow in holiness. What a treasure we have!

Not only did St. Dominic see and appreciate this, but Dominicans down through the centuries have also done so. They have --- and still do --- see the Liturgy as the most effective counterbalance to the activity of learned preaching. It addresses the preacher's heart, keeps him from getting too caught up in the hustle and bustle of traveling from place to place, and prevents him from becoming proud if he is successful and popular. The Liturgy is a constant reminder of his mission --- to preach Christ and him crucified.

For those Dominicans engaged in teaching, the liturgy prevents their study and preparation for classes and lectures from becoming cold and abstract speculation. In fact, it complements what they are studying. For the liturgy celebrates the mysteries of Christ which they are endeavoring to understand. As Pere Bernadot says, "This is living dogma speaking to the heart as well as the intelligence." (*Op. cit.*, p.92) It should be noted that the liturgy contains the fullness of Catholic teaching in its prayers, psalms, hymns, readings from Scripture and the Fathers of the Church. And we must remember as well that every word has been approved by the highest authority in the Church. It not only inflames the heart but also nourishes the mind because, as we have said, it brings us into intimate contact with Christ and his mysteries.

This was all well and good for the Friars who were, of course, fluent in Latin, because, for hundreds of years, that was, throughout the Western Church, the only language the liturgy was in, but how about the lay people who were not able to understand Latin? Those who could not read any language at all

could recite a certain number of Our Fathers and Hail Marys during the day. Later on, those who could read some language could say the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. But it was the same Office everyday and after awhile it became boring or, at least, monotonous. There was no variety to speak of, but our Dominican Laity would loyally and devoutly keep to it.

In 1970, everything changed. The Holy Father approved the revision of the Liturgy of the Hours, mandated by the Second Vatican Council, and shortly after, in 1975, an English translation was published and the laity could recite the Liturgy of the Hours right along with the clergy and religious. As Pope Paul VI said in the Apostolic Constitution approving the new Office, "The Office has been drawn up and arranged in such a way that not only clergy but also religious and indeed laity may participate in it, since it is the prayer of the whole people of God." (par. 13)

For this reason, the general Rule of the Dominican Laity, promulgated in 1987, recommends the "Celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours along with the universal Dominican Family...." (no. 10. d.) Most Provincial Directories have a similar recommendation.

We use the word "recommends" rather "than obliges" because nothing in the Dominican Rule for any of its branches binds under the pain of sin. St. Dominic was most insistent on this. At the same time, you are fortunate to be able to join with the whole Order in reciting the Liturgy of the Hours. Look upon it as a privilege rather than as an obligation, something you want to do because you get so much from it. If you have that attitude, then it will not be difficult to work in Morning and/or Evening prayer nearly every day. Some days you cannot, so do not worry about it.

The Rule also recommends that the laity attend "Daily, insofar as this is possible, participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice." (no. 10. b.) Another advantage the revised liturgy has brought is evening Mass, which makes it so much easier for people to get to the Eucharist on a daily basis. But as the Rule recognizes, this is not always possible, and for some it will always be impossible because of the hours of work, a long commute, family and home responsibilities and a number of other factors over which they have no control. It is, however, an ideal and a goal we should keep in mind so that someday we will be able to do it. I am always amazed at the number of people who do make the sacrifice to get to daily Mass. They do it because they know from their own experience that participating in the renewal of the life-giving sacrifice of Christ on the Cross gives them spiritual strength to meet the trials, difficulties and hardships of life. The Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours are the most powerful means available to us to grow spiritually, to become more like Christ, and to enter more fully into his saving mysteries. Lay Dominicans of today are far more fortunate than those of earlier times. You are able to use the same rich resources of the Liturgy the Friars have used for nearly eight centuries to grow in the Dominican life and spirit, resources St. Dominic saw were essential for us to fulfill our mission of bringing truth to the world.

THE PILLARS OF DOMINICAN LIFE

V. PERSONAL PRAYER

As we saw in our previous chapter, St. Dominic was devoted to the liturgy, that is to say, the Mass and Divine Office, or as we call it nowadays, The Liturgy of the Hours. But the liturgy did not exhaust his longing to be in communication with his Lord and God in prayer. We are told that after Compline, or Night Prayer, instead of going to bed, he would stay in the church praying intensely with great

physical involvement. Often he would stay in the church all night long, grabbing a little sleep on the hard stone floor.

Recently, much has been made of a little work entitled "The Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic." It was written by an early Dominican who seemingly knew our holy father and had observed him at private prayer. But when you examine these ways closely, you realize that they are not methods of prayers, but rather ways he used bodily postures, gestures and movements to help him express what was in his heart.

In considering them, we must remember, first of all, that St. Dominic was a Spaniard of an ardent nature and these "ways" were personal physical expressions of his interior prayer. Secondly, we must note that he made no attempt to impose these ways on his followers, even his earliest companions. He left the physical expression of their prayer put to them --- and to us. Hence, we should feel under no obligation to adopt them. As St. Dominic well realized, each one of us has a different personality, a different psycho- logical make-up and different emotions. We are, then, free to choose whatever physical expression --- or none at all --- that helps us to pray better. It is hard to imagine someone like St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, using any of the nine ways of prayer that were so congenial to St. Dominic. And yet, no one would say that St. Thomas was any less a Dominican for it.

One matter in which we have no choice is that, like St. Dominic, we must add personal, private prayer to our liturgical prayer. Surely, all of you are convinced of this already so it is not necessary to sell you on its necessity and power. Since it is impossible to cover all the aspects of private prayer in the limited space we have, the best we can do is to recall some of the aspects of prayer with which you are familiar and offer some observations that may be helpful to you.

Someone has defined prayer as conversation with God, but not in the sense that it is a kind of chat with Him in which He speaks for awhile and then we put in our two bits worth and on it goes with the two of us alternating back and forth, as we do in talking with our friends and acquaintances. Rather, the term must be understood in the sense that it is our side of the conversation. God has been speaking to us for a long time. As the author of the Letter to the Hebrews said:

In times past, God spoke in fragmentary and varied ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, He has spoken to us through His Son, whom He made heir of all things and through whom He created the universe. (Heb.1:1, 2, combining NAB and NABRNT)

Now God is waiting for us to answer. We should think of prayer as our response of love to God's loving words to us.

This does not exclude the possibility of God communicating with us, whether it be by inspirations through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, or by the overwhelming experience of His presence in contemplation, or even by words whether or not a voice or sound be heard.

All too often we are so busy talking to Him by saying our prayers that we never give Him a chance to get a word in edgewise. There is an old story about the old lady who had a goose that unexpectedly laid a golden egg. In her excitement she ran next door to her neighbor to share this wonderful bit of information. The neighbor lady was very loquacious and began talking a blue streak the moment the

old lady walked in. Every time the neighbor paused for breath, the old lady would begin off, "my old goose she" but she could get no further before the stream of talk started again. After a number of efforts to relay her good news, she went back home in disgust. All too often we put God in the position of being able to get in only the equivalent of "my old goose she" before we interrupt with our prayers. Give Him a chance to communicate with us. He will have something wonderful to tell us.

This brings us to what could be called "the prayer of shut-up." By this I mean that after praying for awhile, whether in your own words and thoughts, or using those of others, we should shut up, stop talking and give God a chance to communicate with us in whatever way he chooses. During this time we should try to quiet the soul. Another word for it could be --- "serening" the soul. By this is meant not just being silent, but bringing serenity and peace within our minds and hearts so that the gifts of the Holy Spirit can function without interference: "remain calm so that you will be able to pray." (1 Pet. 4:7 NAB) Even if God does not choose to communicate with us, the benefits of "serening" our souls are tremendous. In other words, it is not time wasted.

You may be wondering how you will be able to find time to engage in this sort of prayer. Actually, it does not take as long as you might think. You know, just because one prayer is good it does not follow that two prayers are better. Our Lord warned us against that kind of thinking when he said:

In your prayer do not rattle on like the pagans. They think they will win a hearing by the sheer multiplication of words. Do not imitate them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. (Mat. 6:7, 8 NAB)

What he is saying is that we do not pray to inform God of our needs, or of what we think we need. Prayer is for our benefit, not his.

Another definition of prayer is the raising of our minds and hearts to God. We can do that briefly in a few words, even while working. Many opportunities will present themselves during the day when we can say such phrases as "Dear Lord, I love you," or "Here am I Lord, I come to do your will," or whatever phrase you like. Often we meet with frustrations, failures, aches and pains, hurts and so forth. They may be small but they can all be turned to our benefit by saying something like "Dear Lord, I accept this in union with your sufferings on the Cross." The media speak of "sound bites" referring to brief phrases said usually by a candidate that can be used to his advantage or disadvantage in campaigns. Similarly, we can speak of "prayer bites," referring to those brief raisings of our minds and hearts to God. They will always be to our advantage. Perhaps the greatest problem we all face in prayer is distractions --- involuntary ones, of course. We do not want them, but, all of sudden, there they are. Our minds are off a thousand miles away, usually on trivial and inconsequential matters that could easily wait for another time for our consideration. When we become aware of them we try to bring our minds back to our prayer and before we know it we are off again on another tangent. It can be frustrating and discouraging. Some of the most encouraging words on this subject are those of Father Walter Farrell, O.P. He said:

How much damage is done to prayer by involuntary distractions? Certainly they do not affect the merit of the prayer; that is taken care of by the first intention with which we started the prayer. Nor do they detract from the effectiveness, the powers of entreaty, of the prayer. The one effect of prayer they do lessen or even destroy is the spiritual refreshment and consolation which normally come from prayer. In other words, we cheat ourselves when we do nothing about these distractions, cheat ourselves of a consolation and refreshment that might easily be ours. On the other hand, we cheat ourselves yet more if we give up prayer in disgust because of these distractions. (Companion to the Summa, Vol. III, p. 266)

Of course, we can also fall back on these reassuring words of St. Paul:

In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will. (Rom. 8:26, 27 NABRNT)

There you have it. All we have to do is our best and God will take care of the rest. Often the prayer we are most dissatisfied with, that we feel has been done poorly and inadequately is the most pleasing to God, because it has been done out of love of Him and not for any good feelings we may have gotten from it. On the other hand, that prayer from which we received a great deal of consolation and satisfaction may not be as pleasing to Him because it made us feel good.

In any case, we as Dominicans must be persevering in our personal prayer. We must be responding to the love of God so eloquently and intensely manifested to us through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is forever the light of the world. Only in this way, can we hope to become the light of the world ourselves. Only in this way, can we fulfill our Dominican vocation. [This is an allusion to the ancient, traditional, beloved and apt description of Dominicans as "champions of the faith and true lights of the world". Bd]

THE PILLARS OF DOMINICAN LIFE

VI. MEDITATION OR MENTAL PRAYER

The early Dominicans would have been appalled if anyone had suggested that one had to set aside so many minutes a day for meditation. For them, meditation, and its fruit, contemplation, was an essential occupation of a Dominican to which one continuously returned. Nevertheless the other demands of modern life now make it advisable to aim at spending a certain amount of time a day or a week in meditation:

All the Brethren are to leave aside at a time determined by the conventual chapter at least one half hour a day for mental prayer, in common if at all possible. (*Constitutions O.P.*, no. 66, par. II)

Though the Rosary is a meditative and contemplative prayer, Dominicans see it as time spent listening to a sermon from heaven in addition to the aforementioned half hour of meditation:

The Friars are to recite a third part of the rosary in common or in private, according to the determination of the Provincial Chapter and in a way that is ordered to the liturgy. This form of preaching leads us into the contemplation of the mystery of salvation, in which the Virgin Mary is intimately joined to the work of her Son. (*Constitutions O.P.*, no. 67, par. II)

Systematized methods of meditation other than the Rosary began to be developed in the 15th century and reached their peak in the 17th. The most influential was the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Unlike the Orders -- such as the Benedictines (529), Dominicans (1216), Franciscans (1223) Carmelites (1226) and Augustinians (1256) -- many of the newer religious Societies and Congregations -- such as the Jesuits (1540), Vincentians (1625), Sulpicians (1642), Redemptorists (1732), Passionists (1737), and a great many others -- developed their own methods until finally there was a bewildering multiplicity of them. One was so long and detailed that it would take the better part of a half hour, the usual allotted time, just to read through it, leaving little time for actual meditation.

The reason for all this creativity was that these Societies and Congregations were founded to address the life style of their times, which was more individualized and busy than when the Orders were established. Consequently they eliminated the Divine Office in common and the monastic observances which St. Dominic had incorporated into the daily life of our Order. The priests in these new groups recited the Divine Office privately whenever they could fit it into their individual busy schedules, and there was no doubt that they would do this daily they were obliged to do so both by tradition from time immemorial and by Canon Law under pain of mortal sin. A plan had to be devised, however, to insure that the members would make time for some mental prayer, and so daily at a specified time they were brought together in common by their rule for a period of silent meditation. In these times when the day can be hectic in some settings even for Dominicans, it is more in keeping with the original spirit of the Order, if we have to choose, to prefer gathering in common for the Liturgy of the Hours and having our Rosary and meditation in private.

Although a specified time and length of meditation was not within our Dominican tradition, meditation or mental prayer most certainly was. At this point, we should carefully and clearly define exactly what meditation is. It is a form of prayer but it differs from personal or private prayer which is expressed in words, whether in one's own or those of others. It is usually done in silence but can be spoken. Meditation is in the mind, which is why it is also called mental prayer, and consists of thinking or reflecting on some truths of our faith. It begins with that but should end with affective or loving thoughts and resolutions of the mind and heart. It is a step on the road to contemplation, which is an experience of God's presence in which it seems as though the soul and God touch one another and the soul is totally absorbed without thoughts or reflections of the mind. We must point out that the two are not mutually exclusive. There is no such thing as being able to quit meditating because we have experienced contemplation. As we saw in that earlier chapter, those experiences are infrequent and fleeting even for those who have reached the heights of the spiritual life. In between them, we can and should continue to meditate.

As we said earlier, many methods of meditation have been developed in the last 450 years, but the one that seems to fit in best with the Dominican tradition is nearly as old as the Church. It is called *Lectio Divina*, or in English "divine" or "sacred reading," or as some say, "Godly reading". This goes back to the Fathers of the Desert in the 300's and it was a method used by our holy father, St. Dominic. In fact, it was the eighth of his nine ways of prayer. We are told that he would sit down to read. Sitting there he would open up some book before him, usually the Scriptures or Fathers of the Church. He would begin with the sign of the cross and then start reading. He would pause from time to time to reflect on the words before him, often expressing his response to what he was reading with a conversation with God, using physical gestures and reactions of his heart. Remember that we said St. Dominic was very physical in his prayers.

This continues to be, it seems to me, the simplest and the most effective way to meditate for modern Dominicans, both religious and lay. To do it properly, we should, first of all, get into a comfortable physical position; one in which aching knees or a sore back will not interfere with our prayer. Then, we should quiet ourselves both exteriorly and interiorly, or, in other words, we should serene our souls. Then we pick up the Scriptures, let us say, and turn to some passage that appeals to us and begin to read. When we are struck with some words we linger over them, reflect prayerfully on them letting our hearts be moved to acts of love, flowing into resolutions to live more fully the truths we have been reflecting upon. Then when we have exhausted the meaning of that particular passage we move on to the next and continue the process for as long as we can or want to.

I think you will agree that this is not hard to do and perhaps you have done it already. As a starter, the eighth chapter of St. Paul's letter to the Romans is recommended. If anyone is not moved to prayerful reflection by it, he or she is having a bad day indeed. Another great passage is the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, the hymn on love. The entire letter to the Ephesians is marvelous for it is filled with so many beautiful thoughts that we can reflect upon and be moved to love God more. Another book of the New Testament that we should appreciate more is the first letter of St. Peter. It is marvelous and provides so much material for prayerful reflection. Psalm 105 (104 in the older Catholic Bibles) is one of the richest of all the psalms for not only prayerful but joyful reflection.

There are other books besides the Bible that can be most helpful, such Thomas a Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. But at first it is best to stick to the Scriptures. There is enough material for meditation in them to last a life time. They also have the benefit of being the Word of God. Through them, God speaks to us. This does not mean however that every part of the Old Testament is suitable for meditation for everyone at every stage in life.

Let it be clear that you are not being urged to get in a specific period of time for meditation each day. That would be impractical for most of you. What you might try to do is to get in ten or fifteen minutes once a week. It just might grow on you and you will be moved to do more when the opportunity presents itself.

One thing is certain. You are going to have bad days when nothing seems to go right. You sit there and look at the passage and nothing comes. Your mind is blank, or you are off in a maze of distractions. You might even fall asleep. But do not worry about it. You want to love God and you are trying, apparently in vain. God loves you for the effort as poor as it may seem. This reminds us of a story about St. Teresa of Avila, who was such a down to earth person. She kept falling asleep in meditation and this worried her. She felt she was failing in a most important spiritual exercise. But she resolved it when the thought came to her, "God loves me just as much when I am asleep as when I am awake" and she never worried about it again. Despite the bad days you may have which may discourage you, do not give up the effort. Eventually, you will find that its rewards are well worth any effort you put out. Just be patient with yourself. God will be.

By now, all of this should be clear enough so that you can begin this wonderful method of meditation called *Lectio Divina* and profit from it. We have gone into this at some length because of the importance of meditation in our spiritual lives. There are some spiritual writers who will say it is absolutely essential. That may be going too far but certainly it is of great value and it is something that anyone who is serious about growing spirituality should make a real effort to practice, and in saying this the laity are included. You are urged to try to get in some meditation or *Lectio Divina* sometime during the week. This may involve taking a close look at your priorities and asking, for example, how much time are you spending in watching television, which is a great consumer of time for so many people. Or how much time do we spend in reading books or magazines that are basically fluff. We might ask ourselves: could some of that time be spent in an activity that will have everlasting benefits for our immortal souls, make us more pleasing to God, and which will bring us closer to Christ. Meditation will do exactly that.

VII. DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Once St. Dominic had a vision of heaven and there he saw members of all the religious orders except his own. He began to weep. Our Lord asked him why he was weeping. St. Dominic told Him that it was because he saw no member of his Order there in heaven. Our Lord motioned to his mother; she opened her beautiful blue mantle and Dominic could see under it a vast multitude of Dominicans. This is related chapter 7 of a dictation called *The Miracles of St. Dominic* taken around 1280 A.D. from Blessed Sister Cecilia Cesarini (1200-1290 A.D.; fd. June 8), who in 1220 received the habit from St. Dominic himself, and heard this story from his own lips. (*St. Dominic: Biographical Documents*, ed. by Francis C. Lehner, O.P., Washington, D.C., 1964: The Thomist Press, p. 175) For Dominicans it has always been one of the favorite incidents in the life of our founder. Consequently we like to think of ourselves as being in a special way under the mantle of Mary our Mother. This is fitting, since a deep devotion to her has always been a hallmark of our Order -- one of its pillars, you might say.

It began with St. Dominic himself, who was especially devoted to her and used to pray for long periods before her altar. We are told that one of the ways of his prayer was to say one Hail Mary after another and as he did so he would genuflect at each one. He also joyously accepted the change in religious garb that our Lady had given to Blessed Reginald of Orleans (1180-1220 A.D.; fd. Feb. 12). Before that time St. Dominic and his first companions had worn the clothing of the canons regular which he had been when he was in Osma. It consisted of a white robe or tunic and a surplice. After Blessed Reginald had decided to join the new Order he fell deathly ill. St. Dominic prayed fervently for his recovery. Shortly after, our Blessed Mother along with St. Cecilia (third c.) and St. Catherine of Alexandria (martyred around 310 A.D.) appeared to him and anointed him with a heavenly perfume. She then showed him a long white scapular and told him it was to be a part of the Dominican habit. He was completely cured and was clothed in the new habit by St. Dominic himself. Ever since then the scapular has been the essential part of our habit and is specially blessed. This is brought out beautifully in the ceremony of reception of novices of the Lay Dominicans. As the Chaplain put it on you he said:

Receive this scapular of our Order, the pledge of Our Blessed Mother's love for us. Wear it as a sign of your pledge to persevere in bearing witness to the Truth and to lead a virtuous life according to The Rule and the customs of our Order. (*Statutes for Lay Dominicans, Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus*, June 2001, Appendices, p. 9)

(N.B. Of the Order, Mary is the principal patroness <fd. Jan. 1>, St. Dominic <fds. May 24 and Aug. 8> the principal patron. Mary Magdalene <July 22> and Catherine of Alexandria <Nov. 25> are the secondary co-patrons, the former because she preached the Resurrection to the Apostles, the latter because she is the patroness of philosophers. St. Cecilia <Nov. 22> is the patroness of music and of musicians, and thus of the music St. Dominic loved in the liturgy.)

Another devotion to Mary that is precious to Dominicans is the singing of the *Salve Regina* after night prayer. The singing of this beautiful hymn was started by Blessed Jordan of Saxony (1185-1237 A.D.; fd. Feb. 13) when he was Provincial of the Province of Lombardy, and who would later succeed St. Dominic as Master of the Order. As he himself tells it in his little book *History of the Beginnings of the Order of Preachers*, chapter 120, one of the brothers in the house at Bologna, where St. Dominic died and is buried, was plagued by a most savage demon that almost drove him mad and created all kinds

of disturbance in the house. Blessed Jordan then decided that they should sing the Salve Regina after Compline or Night Prayer. The brother was freed from his tribulation, so the practice spread to the rest of the Province and from there to the entire Order and it is still our practice today. Then Blessed Jordan goes on to say:

A certain man, both religious and trustworthy, has told me that, in spirit, he often saw the Mother of our Lord prostrate before her Son praying for the security of the whole Order, as the friars were singing: "Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us." I mention this so that the brethren reading it may be inspired to even greater devotion in praising the Virgin. (*St. Dom.: Biogr. Documents*, p. 82)

Every Dominican saint and blessed has had a tender and loving devotion to our Blessed Mother. The Friars make their vows to Mary. You, as Dominican Laity, make your promises in honor of Mary. Those of you who have made your profession can surely remember saying:

To the honor of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of St. Dominic, I (name), before you (name), the Prior of this Chapter and Father (name), the religious assistant, representing the Master of the Order of Preachers, promise to live according to the Rule of the Dominican Laity for (one year, or, three years, or, my whole life). (*Statutes, Append., p. 12*)

It is understandable, then, that we Dominicans can and should feel that our Blessed Mother has a special affection for our Order. For devotion to her is a basic characteristic of it and has been so from the very beginning.

The crowning glory of Dominican devotion to our Blessed Mother is the Rosary, the greatest and most widely used popular devotion in the Church. Unfortunately, there is not a shred of evidence that Our Lady gave it to St. Dominic in its present form despite that painting which shows Mary doing just that.

It seems that the originator of the Rosary generally in the form in which we have it today was a Dominican named Alan de la Roche who lived from 1428 to 1475. I say "generally" because, first of all, the Hail Mary, as it was recited by St. Dominic and Alan de la Roche consisted only of the first part of the one we say. The second part of it, beginning with "Holy Mary, Mother of God" was not added officially until 1568. Secondly, only in 1600 did it take its present form of fifteen mysteries. Saint Pope Pius V, a Dominican of course, helped greatly to popularize it by attributing to the Rosary the victory of Battle of Lepanto, one of the most crucial naval engagements of all time, at which the sorely outnumbered Catholic fleet defeated the Turks as they sailed to invade Europe. This victory occurred on Oct. 7, which happened to be the first Sunday of the month, in 1571. As the fleet sailed to head off the Turks, St. Pius V asked the Rosary Confraternity of Rome to be constantly reciting the Rosary in our church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva (around the corner from the Parthenon), and directed the Romans at large to say it in processions, while he himself was praying it in his private chapel. Afterwards, he established the feast of Our Lady of Victory, which later on became the feast of the Holy Rosary (Oct. 7, but celebrated in Dominican churches on the first Sunday of October.)

Even though the Rosary as we have it today was developed over a long period of time, we can say in a very real sense that St. Dominic was responsible for it because it was he who established the principles from which it flowed. We have already noted his tender and fervent devotion to our Lady. We noted also Dominic's physical involvement in his prayer by repeating the Hail Mary as he genuflected each time he said it. In our chapter on meditation, we have also talked about his emphasis

on the importance and value of meditation in our spiritual life. In his efforts to bring back into the Church the Albigensians with their condemnation of all matter and their consequent denial that Jesus had a true body, he naturally focused his preaching on the mysteries of the Incarnation. The Rosary is a perfect combination of all these elements. The physical one is the holding of the beads in our hands, letting them slip through our fingers as we say the Our Father's, Hail Mary's and Glory Be's. Other religions use a string of beads as calming device. They do that for us, but they do more. They are also timers, meaning that in the time it takes us to say one Our Father, ten Hail Mary's and one Glory Be, we meditate on a major mystery of our Lord's life, death and resurrection. The Rosary is one of the greatest meditation methods ever devised. One decade of the Rosary does not take long but yet in that brief time we are brought into contact with our Lord's saving mysteries. The announcement of these mysteries is the brief homily on the Incarnation. It is traditional in the Order to speak of the Rosary not only as a way of contemplating but also as a method of preaching:

Since the Marian Rosary is a way to contemplate the mysteries of Christ and a school for developing evangelical life, it should be regarded as a form of preaching appropriate for the Order in which the teaching of the faith is conveyed in the light of the Blessed Virgin Mary's participation in the mystery of Christ and of the Church. (*Constitutions O.P.*, no. 126)

What a beautiful devotion the Rosary is, one that helps us to grow in our Catholic life. This is exactly what St. Dominic wanted for the faithful to whom he sent his children to preach the Truth. As Father Benedict Ashley, O.P. in his book, *The Dominicans*, says, "His devotion to the Blessed Virgin established in the Order the tradition that eventually took a popular form in the holy rosary." (p. 12) It is thus no surprise that the Rosary in its current form comes from Dominicans and that the Holy See has entrusted the Order of Preachers to promote it.

Indeed, everywhere they went, the Friars established the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary. It is richly blessed by many indulgences by the Holy See. There is one in the western United States with its head-quarters in Portland, OR. It issues a publication every two months called *Light and Life*. Each issue contains a section called "Theology For The Laity", which is excellent. To join the Rosary Confraternity all you have to do is to write to the Dominican Rosary Center, P.O. Box 3617, Portland, OR, 97208-3617. You can also contact them at rosary@teleport.com.

Michelangelo had a brother who was a Dominican Friar. He also carved, as a beginner in the art of sculpture, one of the angels on the tomb of St. Dominic in Bologna. Michelangelo's Dominican connections may explain why the magnificent mural, called the Last Judgement, which he painted on the wall of the Sistine chapel, carries a striking message. In the middle of the left half, a man leans over and pulls up into heaven by means of a Rosary two men who have taken hold of it as they were falling down into hell. This is, in one of the world's great masterpieces of art, the expression of the painter's belief that the Rosary has the power to save souls. We as Dominicans continue to be firmly convinced of this today. Let each one of us, then, use the Rosary as a means of drawing us and others closer to Christ by meditating on His sacred mysteries, the events which alone even today bring about salvation.



St. Dominic receives the rosary from the Blessed Virgin Mary
according to a vision of St. Catherine of Siena