

The Apostolic Ideal and St. Dominic

Chapter I, *The Apostolic Ideal of the Early Dominicans*

1. “Ideal.” a conception of something in its perfection. 2. a standard of perfection or excellence. 3. a person or thing conceived as embodying such a conception or conforming to such a standard, and taken as a model for imitation.

2. External causes and its development of the ideal of the Saint.
 - a. His education and virtues
 - b. His experience with the apostolic missionaries.
 - c. And, his dedication to preaching

3. The Apostolic Ideal in the Times of St. Dominic
 - a. Jesus Christ is the founder and Foundation of the apostolic ideal. Not only His doctrine but he “sketched for them [the Apostles] the life, they were to lead.” Go about two by two, on foot and without gold and silver. And to gain bread and sustenance to those they preached and to be content with what was provided.
 - b. One of the evangelical counsels: poverty.**
 - i. Two elements of this ideal: Preaching inclusive of the authority to preach; and, a saintly life, in poverty.**
 - ii. The apostolic ideal is to be distinguished from the “apostolic life.” Due to their small number, they were a large Christian family, that shared all their belongings that they possessed in common. This has become known as the apostolic life due to fact they practiced it at the time of the Apostles.
 - A. Apostolic life of the primitive church attracted to all ages, simplicity. St. Augustine introduced the apostolic life to the priests. During the time of St. Dominic, the apostolic ideal attracted people, due to “all sorts of upheavals faced the Church and even heresies following in the wake of this movement.”
 - iii. Mission of Apostles belongs to the bishops as descendants. The right to preach belongs to the office of bishop. Yet, ordinary preaching often failed to grasp the apostolic ideal due to negligence or with the difficulties of life.
 - A. Faithful yearned for this ideal.
 - B. Heretics. “When the heretics burst into the gap by claiming to be the real exponents of this [apostolic] ideal, they attracted a great

number of followers.” Even though their origin and doctrine were differing yet their method of preaching and living were the same:

- a. Albigenses
- b. Waldenses
- C. Sainly priests of the Faith returned to the primitive zeal of the Apostles, becoming itinerant preachers. These saintly priests were very active but were restricted to the own life time, for none were connected to a community or order.
- D. The Church and Papal response was to incorporate the Apostolic ideal into the Church’s organism by instituting bands of apostolic missionaries and by reconciling and granting special privileges to converted heretics.
 - a. Innocent III tried to win over the apostolic movements by permitting to carry on activities within the Church. He won over the Humiliati in 1201 and some of the Waldenses in 1208.
- E. APOSTOLIC IDEAL was finally, firmly and permanently established in the Catholic Church by the early Friars Preachers through the genius of St. Dominic.

4. Education and Virtues of St. Dominic.

- a. The Apostolic ideal was closely connected in St. Dominic to a high standard of (1) knowledge and (2) sound virtues in deed.
- b. Knowledge and virtues. Knowledge is infused or acquired from study. This is essential to preaching.
 - i. Yet, a life of virtue affords authoritative confirmation in a preacher.
 - ii. St. Dominic was gifted with these qualities so necessary to the apostolic ideal.
 - iii. At the end of his early manhood, St. Dominic could be said he possessed intellectually all the essential qualities of the mission. He was “a brilliant scholar, possessing the orthodox faith of the Church, and he was enkindled with a love of the liturgy and of the priesthood.”
 - iv. St. Dominic was also “paramountly endowed with the all the moral qualities of an apostle.”
 - v. St. Dominic’s life reflects the fact that “Divine Providence was thus slowly, secretly but steadily preparing St. Dominic for the

great undertaking and mission of definitely establishing the apostolic ideal within the Catholic Church...”

5. Experience with the Apostolic Missioners.

a. Bishop Diego and Dominic arrived in Rome in 1205 and asked the Pope if they could work among the Cumans [Pagans that inhabited the Black Sea area and inhabited parts of Europe]; but Innocent III denied the request. They headed back to Spain but stopped at Castelnau a small town near Montpellier, not far from Fanjeaux, sud France.

i. A turning point. St. Dominic met the papal legates, working to counter the heretics of the region of southern France. The legates encountered stiff resistance from the sneering heretics that pointed a finger at the clergy and their scandalous way of life, and “at the lack of evangelical poverty in the legates themselves.”

A. Poverty and public disputes. Bishop Diego, due to his sanctity and learning, offered them advice, suggesting a new way to deal with the heretics. The advice **was bold and a daring novelty**. Diego wanted to appeal to the people “by preaching to them not only by words but also by example; while at the same time he wanted to attack their [heretical] leaders themselves in public disputes.”

B. The “daring novelty” was three fold:

1. “Evangelical poverty” of the preachers.

2. Disputations with the leaders.

3. Exhortation to the people to conversion and reconciliation with the Catholic Church.

C. St. Dominic was conformed to this way of life, made it his own, and instituted into the Order of Preachers.

D. From Montpellier, the legates, Bishop Diego, St. Dominic and others went out among the heretics in the province of Langueduc. Their only possession was their divine office. By their lives and the disputations, tried to persuade the people. Their adversaries were proverbially well-armed with knowledge of the Scriptures, prejudice against the Catholics, and bias of the judges.

Bishop Diego returned to Spain, but died on the way. In the course of things, war against the heretics commenced and St. Dominic continued to preach around Fanjeaux, which is near the monastery at Prouille.

E. High standard of learning. St. Dominic learned that learning was critical but also the good deeds that corroborated the preacher's doctrine. "Such deeds could only mean a life of poverty and mortification."

6. Expansion of the Order of Preachers.

- a. In 1215, joined with other holy preachers, the Bishop of Toulouse appointed Dominic as his official preacher, giving the small group were to "extirpate heresy, combat vice, teach the faith and instruct men in good morals." Their task was to "choose evangelical poverty on behalf of Christ and labor by words in preaching and by example. . ."
- b. St. Dominic schooled the preachers in Holy Doctrine.
- c. St. Dominick and the bishop of Toulouse went to Rome to obtain the Pope's approval. Upon selection of the older Augustinian rule. The friars renounced their estates and properties, which developed the early apostolic ideal of the early Friars Preachers.
- d. St. Dominic adopted the Augustinian Rule because it belonged to a society of clerics, as it was to clerics that bishops gave the permission and authority for the office to preach. It also adapted well to the matter of study.

7. THE PAPAL APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS.

- a. Honorius III approved the Order on December 22, 1216, the preachers having selected evangelical preaching as their charism and the renouncement of their estates to form an apostolic idea. A year later, the Order of Preachers was given a universal mission. The Order's first general chapter was held at Bologna in 1220.