

# FAUSTO APPETENTE DIE

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE BENEDICT XV  
ON ST. DOMINIC  
JUNE 29, 1921  
191

To the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

The seventh centenary approaches of the day when that light of holiness, Dominic, passed from these miseries to the seat of the Blessed. We for long have been most interested in his clients, especially since We assumed the government of the Church of Bologna, which with the greater devotion preserves his remains. We, therefore, are pleased to be able from this Apostolic See to exhort the Christian people to celebrate the memory of such a great man. In this We not only consult Our own piety but fulfil a duty of gratitude towards the father and lawgiver and towards the distinguished Order he founded.

2. This man of God and true *Dominicus* was fully given up to Holy Church, which had in him an invincible champion of the Faith. The Order of Preachers, too, founded by him, has ever been the stout defense of the Roman Church. And so not only did he strengthen the temple in his time, but he provided for the continuance of the defense. The words of Honorius III in approving the Order seem prophetic: ". . . looking to the

brethren of thy Order as the future champions of the Faith and the true lights of the world."

3. Indeed, as all know, for the spread of God's kingdom Jesus Christ used no other weapon than the preaching of the Gospel, that is, the living voice of His heralds, who diffused everywhere the celestial doctrine. "Teach," he said, "all nations." "Preach the Gospel to every creature." Accordingly, from the preaching of the Apostles, and especially of St. Paul, it came to pass, that preaching being followed up with the doctrine and discipline of the Fathers and afterwards of the Doctors, men's minds were enlightened with the light of truth and conceived a love for all the virtues. Following the same lines in his work for the salvation of souls. Dominic proposed to himself and to all his followers "to hand to others what they had contemplated." For this reason, in addition to the duty of cultivating poverty, innocence of life, and religious discipline, he commanded his Order in a strict and solemn manner to be zealous in the study of Christian doctrine and the preaching of the truth.

#### *The Dominican's Three Qualities*

4. In the Dominican preaching three qualities shine forth: great solidity of doctrine, the fulness of fidelity towards the Apostolic See, piety



## BENEDICT XV

towards the Virgin Mother. For although Dominic felt himself mature for preaching, yet he did not undertake that office until he had worked hard in the Palentine Athenaeum of philosophy and theology. Long familiar with the Fathers, under their guidance and teaching, he first, as it were, received into his blood and marrow the riches of Sacred Scripture, and especially of Paul.

5. The value of this knowledge of Divine things not long after was to be seen in his disputations against the heretics. They were armed with all arts and fallacies to attack the dogmas of Faith; yet with wonderful success he confounded and refuted them. This appeared especially at Toulouse, the head and center of the heresies, where the most learned of the adversaries had come together. It is recorded that he, with his first companions, powerful in word and work, invincibly withstood the insolence of the heretics. Indeed, not only did he withstand their strength, but he so softened their spirits by his eloquence and charity that he recalled an immense number to the bosom of the Church. God Himself was ever at hand to aid him in his battle for the Faith. Thus, having accepted the challenge of the heretics that each should consign his book to the flames, his book alone remained untouched by the fire. Thus by the valor of Dominic Europe was freed from the danger of the Albigensian heresy.

6. With this quality of solid doctrine he ordered his children to be adorned. For, soon after the approbation of his Order by the Apostolic See and the confirmation of the noble title of Preachers, he arranged for houses to be founded as near as possible to the celebrated universities that his brethren might the more easily exercise themselves in every branch of culture, and get followers from the ranks of university students. Accordingly, the Dominican institute from the beginning was famed for its learning. Its special mission was always to care for the various wounds of error and to diffuse the light of the Christian Faith, seeing that nothing is such a hindrance to eternal salvation as the ignorance of the truth and perversity of doctrine. It was not strange, then, that the eyes and hearts of all should be turned towards this new apostolate which was based upon the Gospel and the teachings of the Fathers and commended by the abundance of all branches of knowledge.

7. The very wisdom of God seemed to speak through the Dominicans when there rose up

among them such heralds and defenders of Christian wisdom as Hyacinth Polonus, Peter the Martyr, Vincent Ferrer, and such miracles of genius and erudition as Albert the Great, Raymond de Penafort, Thomas Aquinas, in whom especially, a follower of Dominic, God "deigned to enlighten his Church." This Order, therefore, always in honor as the teacher of truth, acquired new luster when the Church declared the teaching of Thomas to be her own and that Doctor, honored with the special praises of the Pontiffs, the master and patron of Catholic schools.

### *The Order and the Holy See*

8. Joined to this zeal in retaining and defending the Faith there was in Dominic a supreme reverence for the Apostolic See. It is recorded that, prostrate at the feet of Innocent III, he vowed himself to the defense of the Roman Pontificate, and that the same predecessor of ours the following night saw him in vision sustain on his courageous shoulder the tottering pile of the Lateran Basilica. History tells, too, how when he was training his first followers to Christian perfection, Dominic thought of gathering from pious and devout lay people a certain sacred militia which would defend the rights of the Church and resist heresy with vigor. Hence arose the Third Order of the Dominicans which, spreading among lay people the institute of a more perfect life, was to be a truly great ornament and defense to the Church.

9. Handed down by their Father and Lawgiver, the heritage of such devotion to this See passed to the children. As often, therefore, as, through the infatuated minds of men, the Church had to suffer from popular movements or the tyranny of princes, this Apostolic See had in the Dominicans, the defenders of truth and justice, a most opportune help in the preservation and honor of its authority. Who does not know the glorious deeds in that connection of the Dominican Virgin, Catherine of Sienna? Urged by the charity of Jesus Christ she persuaded the Roman Pontiff, what no one else had been able to do, to return to his Roman See after an interval of seventy years. Afterwards, while the Western Church was torn by a dire schism, she kept a great number of Christians in loyal obedience to the legitimate Pontiff.

10. And, to pass over other things, We cannot but recall that four great Roman Pontiffs

came from the Dominican ranks. Of these, the last, St. Pius V, won undying gratitude from Christianity and civil society. He joined together, after unceasing efforts, the arms of the Catholic princes, and under the patronage of the Virgin Mother of God, whom, therefore, he ordered to be saluted in future as Help to Christians, destroyed forever at Lepanto the power of the Turks.

#### *The Most Holy Rosary*

11. In this is amply shown the third quality We have noted in Dominican preaching: a most zealous piety towards the Mother of God. It is said that the Pontiff knew by Divine revelation of the victory of Lepanto achieved at that very moment when through the Catholic world the pious sodalities of the Holy Rosary implored the aid of Mary in that formula initiated by the Founder of the Friar Preachers and diffused far and wide by his followers. Loving the Blessed Virgin as a Mother, confiding chiefly in her patronage, Dominic started his battle for the Faith. The Albigenses, among other dogmas, attacked both the Divine maternity and the virginity of Mary. He, attacked by them with every insult, defending to the utmost of his strength the sanctity of these dogmas, he invoked the help of the Virgin Mother herself, frequently using these words: "Make me worthy to praise thee, Sacred Virgin; give me strength against thine enemies." How pleased was the Heavenly Queen with her pious servant may be easily gathered from this, that she used his ministry to teach the Most Holy Rosary to the Church, the Spouse of her Son; that prayer which, being both vocal and mental, in the contemplation especially of the mysteries of religion, while the Lord's Prayer is fifteen times repeated together with as many decades of the Hail Mary, is most adapted to fostering widely piety and every virtue. Rightly, then, did Dominic order his followers, in preaching to the people, to inculcate frequently this manner of prayer, the utility of which he had experienced. He knew, on the one hand, Mary's authority with her Son to be such that whatever graces he confers on men she has their distribution and apportionment. On the other hand, he knew that she is of a nature so kind and merciful that, seeing that it is her custom to succor the miserable of her own accord, it is impossible she should refuse the petitions of those who pray to

her. Accordingly the Church, which is wont to salute her "the Mother of Grace and the Mother of Mercy," has so found her always, but especially in answer to the Rosary. Wherefore the Roman Pontiffs have let pass no occasion of commending the Rosary and have enriched it with Apostolic Indulgences.

#### *The Third Order of St. Dominic*

12. Now the Dominican institutes, as you yourself understand, Venerable Brethren, are not less opportune at present than in the time of their Founder. How many today, destitute of the bread of life, that is, celestial doctrine, are, as it were, in a state of starvation. How many, deceived by the appearance of truth, are turned away from the Faith by a variety of errors. That priests may minister fittingly to the necessities of all these by the Word of God, how zealous must they be for the salvation of others and how grounded in solid knowledge. How many, too, ungrateful and forgetful children of the Church, are turned away from the Vicar of Jesus Christ by ignorance of facts or by a perverse will whom it is necessary to lead to the common bosom. For the healing of these and every other ill how much do we need the maternal patronage!

13. The Dominicans have, therefore, an almost boundless field in which to labor for the common welfare. Wherefore to all of them We wish that in these centenary celebrations they renew their devotion to the holy example of their founder, and make themselves daily more worthy of such a father. In this let a fitting lead be taken by his children of the First Order, and let them be ever more zealous in preaching the Divine Word, such as may give men a reverence for the successor of St. Peter and a devotion to the Virgin Mother, and may spread and defend the truth. But from the Dominican Tertiaries, too, the Church looks for much, if they study to conform themselves to the spirit of their patriarch, in the instruction of the rude and unskilled in Christian doctrine and morality. In this We hope they will be assiduous, as it is a matter of great consequence for the good of souls. Finally, We wish this to be a special care of the Dominicans—the spread and frequent use of the Rosary among Christian people. We make this exhortation in these troublous times, following our predecessor, Leo XIII, and should it bear fruit this centenary celebration will not have been in vain.



*Fausto appetente  
die  
191*



BENEDICT XV

Meanwhile, as an augury of the Divine gifts and a proof of Our benevolence, We impart the Apostolic Blessing, Venerable Brethren, to you, your clergy, and your people.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, June 29, Feast of the Prince of the Apostles, 1921, the seventh year of Our Pontificate.

†

LATIN TEXT: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 13 (1921), 329-35.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: *Catholic Mind*, 19 (August 22, 1921), 301-06.

COMMENTARIES:

"Benedict XV and St. Dominic." *Ecclesiastical Review*, 65 (October, 1921), 335-39.

Commer, Ernst. "Zur Enzyklika *Fausto appetente die*." *Divus Thomas*, ser. 2, 9 (1922), 6-16.

"La parola del papa nel VII centenario della morte di S. Domenico." *Civiltà Cattolica*, 72 (27 luglio 1921), 3:204-06.