

In 1170, Dominic Guzman was born in Spain. He lived a life of privilege as a young person being born into a family of means. One must also believe he lived a life of piety as both his mother and brother would go onto become saints. Truly, the family lived out the teaching of Jesus on discipleship that “whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Mt 12:50).

During his years at University, Dominic’s heart was filled with concern for those who had nothing. At time when books were very rare, he sold his entire collection of them to provide for the relief of the poor. The most valuable book to him was the Bible in which Jesus teaches: “Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be” (Luke 12:33-34).

He became a priest and lived a life of prayer in the Diocese of Osma where he tried to live simply and tend to his priestly duties. “The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common” (Acts 4:32).

While traveling in France with his bishop, Dominic observed firsthand the ill effects of the Albigensian heresy. The “pure ones” held the belief that all matter is evil. They denied the Incarnation and the sacraments. However, they lived a very austere life and were admired for that.

For the better part of a decade, Dominic was sent as an itinerant preacher to combat the false teaching and to teach the beauty of the faith. He noticed that other Catholic preachers were ineffective because they traveled in luxury and undermined the message of the Gospel. Dominic subsisted only on what others offered to him. He and a few Cistercians had great success among ordinary people by following the teaching of Jesus. “Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals... Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God is at hand for you’” (Luke 10:4a, 8-9).

In 1215 Dominic formed a religious community, the Order of Preachers. Today they are more commonly known as the Dominicans. The community linked their life with God through study and prayer in order “to pass on the fruits of contemplation” and work tirelessly for the salvation of souls. Dominic himself is credited with converting close to 100,000 souls.

Pope Benedict XVI sings the praises of this man who so faithfully lived out his calling in life:

Saint [Dominic] reminds us that in the heart of the Church a missionary fire must always burn. It must be a constant incentive to make the first proclamation of the Gospel and, wherever necessary, a new evangelization. Christ, in fact, is the most precious good that the men and women of every time and every place have the right to know and love! And it is comforting to see that in the Church today too there are many pastors and **lay faithful** alike ... who spend their lives joyfully for this supreme ideal, proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel!

Dominic died on the Feast of the Transfiguration, August 6, 1221. Blessed Jordan of Saxony, his immediate successor said of Saint Dominic: “All men were swept into the embrace of his charity, and, in loving all, he was beloved by all.... He claimed it his right to rejoice with the joyful and to weep with the sorrowful.”

Sources:

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