

Saint Dominic

BIOGRAPHICAL DOCUMENTS

Edited with an Introduction by **FRANCIS C. LEHNER, O.P.**
Foreword by **MOST REVEREND ANICETO FERNANDEZ, O.P.**
Master General of the Order of Preachers

Foreword

This little volume, *St. Dominic – Biographical Documents*, presents to the English-speaking world the primary sources of information on the life of St. Dominic, our Holy Founder, and on the first years of our Order's existence. It fulfills a hope expressed by the Very Reverend Terence S. McDermott, then Vicar General of the Order, in an introduction written for a similar volume in the French language, that comparable translations in the other modern languages would soon be published.

Within these pages the principal early documents, as well as some of a later date which supplement them, speak to the reader with the voice of those who knew the Saint personally or had first-hand information about him. These sources possess the simplicity of truth. Their message is not beclouded by the reflections and interpretations which can so easily creep into biographies written at a later date. Although the pictures drawn are often fragmentary, they are genuine. The witnesses write of what they have heard and seen.

This book will be of great value to members of the Order. The Fathers will find in it a splendid means of renewing their own spirit and a rich source of material for their conferences and sermons. Students, Novices and Brothers will learn the great purposes of their Order from the most authentic fonts of Dominican history. The Sisters will draw from it a better appreciation of their relationship to the First Order and through it will share in the zeal and spirit of their spiritual Father. In this book Tertiaries will see the breadth of the apostolate envisaged by St. Dominic and will be inspired to contribute to its realization. Everyone interested in the history of the thirteenth century will, in these records, discover valuable insights into the characteristics of that great age which continues to work its influence on present-day culture.

To Father William A. Hinnebusch, to Father Francis C. Lehner and to all who assisted in the publication of this excellent volume, I extend my sincere congratulations. May St. Dominic bless the work.

Aniceto Fernández, O.P.
Master General

Introduction

There have been many biographies of St. Dominic. These works are necessary and important, but they are all, to some degree, unsatisfactory. Some of them, linking together incidents from Dominic's life in a way which seems to divorce him from the concrete circumstances of life, lack vitality. Others fail to catch his spirit. Those who have best succeeded are Père Henri Lacordaire, Father Bede Jarrett, and Père M. H. Vicaire. The work, *Histoire de Saint Dominique*, by Père Vicaire is the most reliable of all accounts of the Saint's life.

All biographies, whatever their merit, lose something of the freshness and vigor of the sources, but we must not be harsh in judging their authors. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to match the vividness with which the Saint's contemporaries have reported him. The best way to look at a saint's life is through the eyes of his contemporaries, the people who knew him, saw him, spoke to him, and loved him. In this conviction we present this volume of translations from the biographical sources for St. Dominic's life. They are arranged to provide a progression in understanding St. Dominic. Thus the reader, having considered these documents, may put down this book with the judgment: "Now I begin to appreciate the life of St. Dominic."

We start with Jordan of Saxony, the Saint's best biographer, inserting therein quotations from other historians such as Humbert of Romans, Constantine of Orvieto, Peter de Vaux Cernai, and Gerard of Frachet. The sections borrowed by these latter authors from Jordan we do not translate in their entirety, but present only those passages which supplement Jordan or add more colorful details. St. Dominic's letters conclude the first part of the volume.

The second part embraces documents concerning Dominic's sanctity: the process of canonization (the official investigations into his life and miracles), the bull of canonization, St. Dominic's *Nine Ways of Prayer*, Sister Cecilia's account of Dominic's miracles, and Jordan of Saxony's prayer to St. Dominic.

To complete the presentation, we add, in the third part, an important document related to the organization of the Order of Preachers: the primitive legislation of the Order. These Constitutions embody the thought and wishes of St. Dominic, although the actual wording (except for the first part which incorporates the legislation of the Premonstratensians) is probably that of Jordan of Saxony, written under Dominic's supervision.

Our translations aim at presenting the precise sense of each text in idiomatic English. The style will occasionally seem quaint. This comes from the text itself and has been retained to give the flavor of the original.

The part of the editor has not been the greatest, or even the most important, in the production of this book, which is a work of collaboration. A number of individual Dominicans and two provinces of the Order have made their contribution. Father William A. Hinnebusch initiated the work and constantly encouraged and counselled those who carried it out. The major part of the translation was done by Father R. F. Larcher, who did the English renderings of the *Libellus* of

Blessed Jordan, the excerpts from Peter Ferrand, Frachet, the *Chronica*, Cernai, Humbert of Romans, Constantine of Orvieto, Bartholomew of Trent, and the Process of Canonization at Toulouse. Father Ceslaus Hoinacki has provided the translations of most of the testimonies at Bologna, and Father Andrew Kolzow made the translation of *The Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic*. The names of the other translators have been noted in connection with each piece. A word of acknowledgement is due also to the Very Rev. M. H. Vicaire, whose arrangement of the minor pieces as worked into Jordan's *Libellus* was adopted. Brother Pius Cangelosi wrote the particular introductions.

F. C. L.

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