

THE PILLARS OF DOMINICAN LIFE

DOMINICAN SPIRITUALITY FOR THE LAITY

PREFACE

The following chapters are adaptations of conferences I gave to the members four 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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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 is 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 need of our time. Only Dominican spirituality can and will fulfil 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 endeavour 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. (v. 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 colour, shape and mould 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 worst 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 fulfil 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, neighbourhoods, 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 fulfil 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 she, or 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 choose 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 share it with the world, even if your world is confined to the office, your neighbourhood or classroom. While you may be very active, your main goal is directed principally to 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 Encyclopaedia 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: we may use material things but we cannot let them use us - to 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 keep 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 marvellous 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 who are by the grace of their vocation contemplatives in their 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 New Catechism 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 Book of Christian Prayer 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 you will find in the New American Bible or the New Jerusalem Bible. They are brief and have been written by top-notch Catholic scholars.

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.

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 marvellous 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 New Catholic Catechism 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 sixth 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." Reading Sister Jean Dorcey's " St. Dominic's Family" cannot only be fun, but you will become acquainted with your brothers and sisters who are the saints, blesseds and holy members of our 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 necessary for salvation, but with regard to those that are necessary to salvation, they are sufficiently instructed by the Holy Spirit. (II, II, q. 8, art. 4, 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 about thirty years ago we had 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 had our own rite was 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 whole new way of celebrating Mass every time he moved. It got so that our men were spending about as much time re-learning how to celebrate Mass 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 until recently.

The reason we 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, 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. When the new rite of the liturgy was approved in the 60's we adopted it because there were no strong reasons for holding on to our old Dominican Rite, especially since many of the features of the new rite were more similar to the old Dominican Rite than it was to the old Roman Rite. Our old Solemn Mass was even more magnificent than the Pontifical Mass celebrated by bishops. Its only problem was that it was so complicated that few of us were able to get through it without making quite a number of errors, and we had no Master of Ceremonies to keep us on the right track as the Roman Rite did.

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 celebrating Mass or 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 centred in the Mass and expanded in the Divine Office or Prayer of Christians. When one joins in celebrating Mass or when he or she says the Prayer of Christians, even when saying it alone, he or she 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 the 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 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 Festigire, 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." (Loc. cit., p. 91). Back in 1919, 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 marvellous 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 years have done so. They have - and still do - see

it as an effective antidote to the activity of preaching and prevents the preacher from getting caught up in the hustle and bustle of travelling from place to place and also 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 Friars engaged in teaching, the Liturgy prevented 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 endeavouring 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 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.

For this reason, the General Rule for all Dominican Laity, promulgated in 1987, recommended, "the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours in union with the whole Dominican family." Most Province 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 any rate, 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 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 anyway. Some days you cannot, so do not worry about it.

The General Rule also recommends that the laity attend "as far as possible, daily Mass and Communion." Another advantage the revised liturgy has brought is evening Mass which makes it so much easier for people to get to Mass on a daily basis. But as the Rule recognizes this is not always possible, and for many it will be impossible all the time because of the hours of work, a long commute, family and home responsibilities and a number of other factors over which we have no control. It is, however, an ideal and a goal we should keep in mind so that someday we will be able to. 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, along with the Prayer of Christians, are the most powerful means available to us to grow spiritually, to become more like Christ, and 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 Prayer of Christians. 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 up 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 psychological 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 partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe . (Heb.1: 1 & 2)

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 in his own way 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. Very rarely, if ever, will he speak to us in what seems like words, although no voice or sound is 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 neighbour to share this wonderful bit of information. The neighbour lady was very loquacious and began talking a blue streak the moment the old lady walked in. Every time the neighbour 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. 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 praying do not babble like the pagans, who think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him (Matt. 6: 7&8)

What he is saying is that we do not pray to inform God of our needs, or 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)

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 got 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.

THE PILLARS OF DOMINICAN LIFE

VI. MEDITATION OR MENTAL PRAYER

The early Dominicans would have been appalled if anyone had suggested that meditation could be reduced to a mathematically calculated fraction of the day. For them, meditation, and its fruit, contemplation, was an essential occupation of a Dominican. Yet the Code of Canon Law of 1918 imposed on us an hour of meditation every day. The saying of the Rosary cut that down to 45 minutes.

Systematised methods of meditation began to be developed in the 15th. century and reached their peak in the 16th. The most influential was the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Many of the newly founded religious congregations and societies - as distinguished from Orders, such as the Jesuits, Passionists, Redemptorists, Sulpicians 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.

One of the reasons for all this creativity was that these new foundations had eliminated the Divine Office in common and the monastic observances which St. Dominic had incorporated into the daily life of our Order and they needed something to replace them. That something was a specified period of meditation in common. What you had then was a group of grown men sitting in a chapel thinking their own thoughts and saying the Divine Office, the Prayer of the Church, privately. To a Dominican, it does not seem to be a good trade-off.

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," a rather pale rendering of the Latin but it is the best we can do. 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 to love. The entire letter to the Ephesians is marvellous 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 marvellous and provides so much material for prayerful

reflection. Psalm 104 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 as 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 that every part of it is suitable for meditation. There is not much to be got out of the books of Joshua and Judges.

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 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.

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VII DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The story is told that St. Dominic once 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. Our holy Father told him that it was because he could see none of his children there in heaven. Our Lord motioned to his mother; she opened her beautiful blue mantle and Dominic could see under it a multitude of Dominicans. While there is no historical proof of authenticity of this story it is one that is dear to all Dominicans for we like to think of ourselves as being in a special way under the mantle of Mary our Mother. And rightly so 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. 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 and St. Catherine of Alexandria, both virgin martyrs of the early Church, 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 the scapular of our holy Order, the most important part of our Dominican habit, the mother's pledge from heaven of the love of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary towards us, under whose wings and mantle you shall find a shade from the heat, and a bulwark and defence in life and death from all dangers of soul and body.

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 when he was Provincial of the Province of

Lombardy by Blessed Jordan of Saxony who would later succeed St. Dominic as Master of the Order. As he himself tells it in his little book "On the Beginnings of the Order of Preachers" one of the brothers in the house at Bologna, where St. Dominic died and is buried, was plagued by a most savage demon who 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 dependable religious once told me that he had often seen in spirit, while the brethren were singing, "Turn then, most Gracious Advocate," the mother of the Lord prostrating herself in the presence of her Son and praying for the safety of the whole Order. The memory of this ought to be preserved, so that when the brethren read of it, they will be inspired to an even greater devotion in their praises of the Virgin.

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 to Mary. Those of you who have made your profession can surely remember saying:

To the honour of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Blessed Dominic, I, brother or sister so and so, before you, Father Director and before you, Prior or Prioress, and so on.

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 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 it was given to St. Dominic by our Lady, nor is there any indication that he knew anything like it. We are all familiar with that painting that shows our Lady giving St. Dominic the Rosary. Sad to say, it is not based on reality.

It seems that the originator of the Rosary essentially as we have it today was a Dominican named Alain de la Roche who lived from 1428 to 1475. I say "essentially" because, first of all, the Hail Mary, as it was

recited by St. Dominic and Alain 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 the Christian fleet over the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto, perhaps the most crucial naval battle of all time. During the battle he asked the Rosary Confraternity of Rome to be constantly reciting the Rosary in our church of the Minerva while he himself was saying 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 celebrated in many 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 tradition from which it came. We have already noted his tender and fervent devotion to our Lady. We noted also his physical involvement in his prayer by repeating the Hail Mary as he genuflected each time he said it. We have also talked about, in our chapter on meditation, his emphasis on the importance and value of meditation in our spiritual life. 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 Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Bes. 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 Marys and one Glory Be we meditate on the major mysteries 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. What a beautiful devotion it is, one that helps us to grow in our Christian 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)

One thing the Friars did was to establish Confraternities of the Most Holy Rosary everywhere they went and it is richly blessed by many indulgences and blessings by the Holy See. There is one in the western United States with its headquarters in Portland, Oregon. Father Paul Duffner is the director. It issues a publication every two months called "Light and Life." Each issue contains a section called "Theology For The Laity" which is excellent. It is now on WWW with the address of

rosary@teleport.com. 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. [In the Province of the Assumption, contact Fr Benedict Hensley OP, P.O. Box 305, CARINA QLD 4152]

On the wall of the Sistine Chapel there is that magnificent mural by Michelangelo called the Last Judgement and most of you have seen at least pictures of it. A little noticed detail is in the middle on the left hand side. A man is leaning over holding out a Rosary and two men who are falling into hell have grabbed it and are being pulled up into heaven. That was the expression of Michelangelo's belief in the power of the Rosary in one of the world's great masterpieces of art. There is a rumour that this author cannot confirm that Michelangelo was a Dominican layman. We do know his brother was a Dominican Friar, and he had done, as a beginner in the art of sculpture, an angel on the tomb of St. Dominic in Bologna. Whether a Dominican lay man or not, he was convinced of the power of the Rosary to save souls. We as Dominicans are firmly convinced of that today. Let each one of us, then, use the Rosary as a means of drawing us closer to Christ by meditation on his sacred mysteries which wrought our salvation.

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VIII. PENANCE

Back in 1285, the seventh Master of the Order, Munio de Zamora, issued the first rule for lay Dominicans. It was called "The Rule of the Third Order of Penance of St. Dominic." In the revision of it in 1923 it was entitled "The Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Secular Third Order of St. Dominic," but its opening words speak of "The Third Order of Penance of St. Dominic." In the latest revision in 1987, the word "Penance" is dropped from the title and is given only passing mention in the text itself. The title of the new Rule is "The Rule of the Lay Communities of St. Dominic, commonly known as the Dominican Third Order."

This represents quite a change in the tone and spirit of the Rule as well as in the purpose of the Third Order itself. It was an outgrowth, as you may know, of groups of lay people in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries known as Penitentes. They practised severe penances, such as fasting, self-scourging, the wearing of hair shirts, chains and the like. These practices sound rather repugnant to our ears and we may wonder why they were so popular. We read the lives of the saints and are appalled by the severity of the penances they inflicted upon themselves. We may even think that we should imitate them, and, in a way, we should.

To understand what I mean, we must keep in mind that penance is so closely connected with prayer that it cannot, and should not, be separated from it, but we do not have to go to the extremes St. Dominic and many of his followers went to. In the first place, it is hard for us to imagine how extraordinarily difficult every day living was for the average person in the Middle Ages. In the winter time, particularly, the diet was completely monotonous. There was no way they could preserve meat, for example. French and Italian cuisines were undreamed of. There was no pasta, no potatoes, rice, tomatoes or a great many other vegetables that are staples nowadays. Few spices were available and they were dearly expensive. There was gruel, root vegetables like turnips and rutabagas, and, of course, bread but not much else. At best, the people were undernourished, even the wealthy.

The houses were most uncomfortable. When you visit restored peasant homes and palaces in Europe you might conclude that the peasants lived better than their lords. The peasants' cottages were small but with large fireplaces so that they could at least keep warm. Palaces had fireplaces too, but they were big stone buildings and even with the use of tapestries on the walls they were unable to keep out

the freezing cold. Monasteries did not even have fireplaces. The author was told by a Spanish Dominican who had done his studies in Avila, Spain, that the stones out of which the monastery was built were always moist. He said that on winter days he could reach out of bed in the morning and touch the walls and they were covered with a thin sheet of ice. In situations like that, what are you going to do for penance? Their whole way of life sounds like a penance to us. But they took it for granted. The result was that they had to find some way of depriving themselves of even what little they had according to our standards. It was those practices they adopted that sound so dreadful to us.

Another factor is that they had no idea of any of the principles of mental and physical hygiene that are commonplace nowadays. As a result, they abused their bodies by a lack of proper food, which, by and large, they did not have anyway, or adequate rest and they beat themselves until they bled and did all the other things that we know now are harmful to the human system and psyche. It is no wonder then that St. Dominic wore himself out and died before he was fifty. Yet, this was well beyond the normal life expectancy at that time.

In evaluating the role of penance in our lives, we must keep in mind that those people of the Middle Ages were starting from their life situation and so must we. What would be penance for them would be agony for us. But what would be severe for us would be sheer luxury for them. We have a lot more choices of things to give up than they did and we should be grateful to God for that.

Nonetheless, our practices of penance must come from the same three principles that motivated them. The first of these is that, as in all religions that emphasize contemplation, we must bring under control our love of pleasure and comfort if real serenity of mind is to be achieved. This is essential for contemplation, which as we as Dominicans are committed to, as we saw in our chapter on contemplation.

The second principle is that original and actual sin are facts of the human condition. We find it difficult to free ourselves from sin and achieve that inner harmony God intended us to have when he created us. We can do this only by disciplining our appetites and subjecting them to the governance of reason enlightened by faith.

The third principle that guided the medieval folk and should also guide us is a desire to identify ourselves with Christ and him crucified. We want to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow

in his footsteps, and we cannot do this if we put our own pleasure and comfort first.

Another factor that must be taken into consideration is the lack of consciousness of sin in our times, in our culture. In 1973, Dr. Karl Menniger of the famous Menniger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, published a book called "Whatever Became Of Sin?" in which he decried the loss of a sense of responsibility for our words and actions. It is always someone or something else's fault - not ours. This attitude of society affects us and our awareness of our own sinfulness. The biggest problem is that we truthfully recognize that we are not guilty of the crimes, misdemeanours and evils that we read about, see on television or hear about from office gossip that are being committed daily in great numbers. We certainly are not sinners in that sense. But when we read of the saints like St. Dominic who frequently bemoaned the fact that they were such great sinners, we may wonder how they could honestly say that.

The answer lies in their clear and keen realization that their response of love to the love God has shown them is totally inadequate. They can see that they have received so much from him and they are giving back so little. Any flaw, any failing, any imperfection that interferes or gets in the way of our response to the love of God is a horrid thing, a thing to be deeply regretted and grieved over. That holds as true for us as it did for them. We can, then, say with St. Dominic, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."

On the practical level we must begin with a clear realization that while we may not commit big sins and certainly not mortal ones, we do commit smaller ones or, as they are called, venial sins. As our Lord told us, "Even the just man falls seven times a day." Over and above this, our response to God's love is so often feeble and lukewarm. All of these interfere with our love of God so we despise them and yearn to be free of them. We will not be, of course, until we get to heaven, but while we are here on earth we can do penance for them.

Penance can do two things for us. First, as we have said, its discipline will help us to develop those virtues that are so necessary to our inner serenity. Secondly, it can serve as reparation for our sins. Whenever we hurt someone we love we will try to atone for it. Flowers and candy are popular ways of doing this, as is preparing a favourite meal for an offended husband, and there are, of course, many others. But behind them all is a deep human need to go beyond saying, "I'm sorry." If we will do this sort of thing for other human beings we will most certainly do it for God. When we do them for him, we call them

penances, the concrete expressions of our sorrow for having offended him. Thus, they are a form of prayer.

Ideally, the expression of this sorrow that we choose will accomplish both purposes of penance. Besides being acts of reparation for our sinfulness, they will also help us to grow in one or more of the virtues. The important point to remember is that they should not be chosen in imitation of St. Dominic or any of the other saints. As we have shown, their life situation was much different than ours. We should, however, be motivated by the same principles that motivated them, namely, our desire to foster contemplation by mastering our love of pleasure and comfort; the development of those virtues that free us from our sinful impulses; and thirdly, our desire to take up our cross and follow Christ.

We should not overlook, either, those crosses that present themselves without our willing or desiring them, such things as illness, the debility of advancing years, heartaches, hurts inflicted on us by others and so forth. Accepting them as crosses to bear with Christ can be most fruitful penances.

Penance, then, should be an integral part of our lives as Dominicans. It is especially your heritage as lay Dominicans. As the new Rule says, one of the sources from which you draw strength to grow in your vocation is "conversion of heart and penance according to the spirit of the Gospel." (II, 10, e) In this sense, you are still members of the Third Order of Penance of St. Dominic.

THE PILLARS OF DOMINICAN LIFE

IX. COMMUNITY LIFE

Community life is of key importance to all Dominicans of every stripe. It is in fact, one of the pillars of Dominican life. For the members of the First, Second and Third Order Religious it means a group of men or women leading a common life according to a rule. All of us in these categories live under the same roof, follow a common rule under a superior and try to put up with each other twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It can be difficult when personalities clash, irritations and frustrations can create friction and tension and human failings and individualities can cause hurt, disappointments and heartaches. But, on the other hand, it can also be a tower of strength.

Living in community demands sacrifice, giving up personal desires, concessions to others, keeping quiet when you feel like blowing up and all sorts of other things, but they are worth it because the rewards - the inspiration given by your brothers and sisters, their companionship, their help and concern and, most of all their love, greatly outweigh the disadvantages. It is your home, the place where you belong and where you have been called to be.

You, as lay Dominicans, will not live in such close quarters as those of us who belong to the Friars, Nuns and Sisters and yet your chapter is a real community. You are members of the same family, brothers and sisters in St. Dominic, having a common goal, purpose and mission. The chapter is your community, the place to which you have been called to be a member.

In a very real sense, you are similar to the early Christian communities to whom St. Paul wrote his letters. They did not live under the same roof either. They too met occasionally, once a week as rule for the Eucharist when conditions permitted. Persecution, lack of priests and barbarian invasions would often hinder them. It might be helpful to recall some of his exhortations to those communities and apply them to ourselves.

To the Romans he wrote:

Love one another in mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honour. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. (Rom. 12: 10-13)

He told the Galatians:

Bear one another's burdens and so you will fulfil the law of Christ.
(Gal. 6: 2)

He urged the Philippians:

Complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also everyone for those of others. (Phil. 2: 2 & 3)

The most beautiful passage is to be found in his letter to the Colossians:

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect. (Col. 3:12-14)

When we analyze these passages we can see that love should be the hallmark of a Christian community, a love which expresses itself in affection, giving honour, acting with humility, compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience. If conflicts arise, all should be quick to forgive. It is the kind of community that requires concessions, the giving up of personal likes and dislikes, having no axes to grind and hanging in when things do not go as the individual would like. Its great reward is that it is a school of love.

St. Paul based these exhortations on the fact that all Christians were bound together as members of the one body of Christ. In our communities, our chapters, you are not only bound in that way, you are also bound together as brothers and sisters in St. Dominic, so that everything St. Paul said about those communities holds doubly true for you.

This is why the Rule is so insistent that members attend the chapter meetings each month. As it says:

It is the responsibility of all members to attend meetings regularly where their attendance is recorded, and to notify the secretary treasurer or other officers in advance if they are unable to attend. (III, B., 1,c)

It also gives the reason why it is a responsibility: The Community is dependent on the talents and loving service of each member. It provides ways to grow in charity and desire for perfection. (II, A)

It then goes on to list these ways, such things as uniting in our common love of God and sharing it in the Eucharist and prayer in common, study, giving service to others, mutual support, tenderness toward those in pain or sorrow and a special concern for our deceased members.

This brings out the idea that the chapter, our Dominican community, should be something more than just a meeting to attend. Yet attendance at the meetings is tremendously important for us to develop these qualities. Another aspect is that without your presence we are less than we should be or could be. We are deprived of that important element only you have to share with us. In other words, you need us, but we also need you. The fact is, we need one another.

This takes time to develop, but develop it will. While it is developing, you will get out of your community only as much as you put into it. I have known members of the First Order who complained that they got nothing out of community. Of course, they didn't. They put nothing into it. They sat back and waited for the community to do things their way. Community in any branch of the Order does not work that way. It does not work that way for the Friars and it certainly will not for the Laity.

Any chapter that has been established for a number of years will have members who, because of age or infirmity, cannot come any longer to the regular meetings. They become what we call prayer members. They are important to the chapter because they pray for its growth, vitality and development. As St. Dominic recognized when he founded the cloistered nuns, their prayer was essential if the work of those out on the lines was to be fruitful. Each chapter should have some way of keeping in contact with those people who in past years contributed so much to it, whether it is an individual or a group that telephones or visits these prayer members on a regular basis.

But a sense of community means more than a concern for those who cannot come to the meetings. It also means a care and concern for those who are here. One way of doing that is to have a portion of our meetings devoted to a sharing of our concerns, problems and sorrows and a request for prayer. We should also share our joys and special blessings and ask that all join in thanking God.

This helps us to get to know one another as brothers and sisters. Another way is community recreation which is an important element for the Friars. One simple way is to share coffee and cookies at the meetings and perhaps a potluck dinner or agape meal from time to time to help to foster a sense of community and togetherness. All this is just as essential for Dominican life for the Laity as it is in the Friars.

Over and above the individual chapters, there is the larger unit of the Province with a Provincial Promoter and a Provincial Council that meets at least once a year to bring a sense of cohesiveness to all the chapters and is a means of sharing ideas, programs and activities. There are also national or regional meetings and the Laity like the Friars are world-wide and every so often there is a world meeting of Lay Dominicans. This helps to bring out that all us are part of the same family, the Dominican Family --- all of us, Friars, nuns, sisters and laity, are brothers and sisters in St. Dominic.

We do promise you a rose garden, but it also has its thorns. It needs tending, cultivating and cherishing. If we, each one of us, do that, then the roses will bloom profusely and we will be surrounded by beauty, and imbued with the sweet aroma of sanctity.

PILLARS OF THE DOMINICAN LIFE

X. POVERTY

St. Dominic emphasized the need for poverty for his Order of Preachers. He differed, however, from his contemporary, St. Francis of Assisi, in his reasons for it. For St. Francis, poverty was an ideal, a way of life, a value to be lived. In his poetic fancy, he sang of "Lady Poverty" It was an end in itself too, doing this makes us more Christlike.

For St. Dominic, it was a means to an end his Order should use if its preaching was to have an impact. As a canon regular in the Cathedral of Osma he had taken a vow of poverty which was a sharing of common property and living off the generosity of the laity. When he came to Southern France to begin his ministry of preaching he saw how the perfect of the Albigensians could exert their tremendous influence, not only by the austerity of their lives but by their poverty, depending entirely on the alms of their faithful followers. This was not difficult where most of the people were friendly. St. Dominic realized that if his preachers were have any effect they would have to be just as poor as the perfect. He was taking a great risk doing this in an area where the majority were unfriendly.

For this reason, he urged the Cisterians who had been sent to preach against the heresy to take off their splendid garb and get off their fine horses, dress simply and walk among the people. The Cisterians did this willingly because they were men of a simple life used to living poorly. Since they were officially papal legates they thought they had to take on the splendour that papal legates commonly used in those days.

Dominic himself lived in great poverty and required his little band of preachers to live the same way. As the Order spread throughout Western Europe he continued to hold to that principle, but as time was to show it was excessive in its application. Its severity had to be mitigated. It was St. Thomas Aquinas who laid down the realistic purposes and limits of religious poverty.

Members of religious orders must take a vow of poverty, for religious life would be impossible without it. Now, the question arises: what about the laity? Are they required to take a vow of poverty and to own nothing? That would be unrealistic, particularly if there were families involved. They have to work for a living, buy food and clothing, provide shelter and furniture and, of course, they have to pay taxes. Does this mean that poverty, which is so essential to the

Order, plays no role in their lives? Of course, not. There is such a thing as what the New Catechism calls "poverty of the heart."

The basis for all voluntary poverty is to be found in the First Beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Pay special attention to those words "poor in spirit." Our Lord is not requiring material poverty or penury. Rather, he is asking for a spirit of detachment from worldly goods. As the New Catechism says:

The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. (no. 2544) It goes on to explain: All Christ's faithful are to direct their affections rightly, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect charity by the use of worldly things and by an adherence to riches which is contrary to the spirit of evangelical poverty. (no. 2545)

Thus even rich people can cultivate a spirit of poverty, although it is more difficult for them than it is for those of modest means. A wealthy woman, a Lay Dominican, once told me that she could feel the tug of her wealth and she had to resist it firmly. She could drive any make of car she wanted, even the most expensive, but she chose to drive a small Ford until it wore out. She could afford a mink coat but she bought only cloth ones. Her husband's position required a certain amount of luxury and elegance, but she resisted becoming attached to them.

On the other hand, just because people are poor does not mean that they have the spirit of poverty. They can avariciously long for material things, covet the riches of others and be attached to possessions they may not have but want. The great Dominican theologian, Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange summed it up in these words:

Voluntary poverty can be practised either in the midst of the abundance of worldly good, when the spirit is not attached to them, or in destitution when one bears it generously for love of God (Three Ages of the Interior Life, Vol. II, page 141)

He urges us to keep in mind the words of our Lord:

O you of little faith? 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. Do not worry about tomorrow;

tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil. (Matt. 6: 30b-34)

Thus, poverty of the spirit is closely connected with confidence and trust in God. As Father Garrigou-Lagrange says:

Voluntary poverty and confidence in God go hand in hand; the more detached a man is from earthly goods, the more he desires those of heaven; and the less he relies on human helps, the more he place his confidence in God's help. Thus confidence in God is the soul of holy poverty. All Christians should have the spirit of this counsel. (ibidem. pages 143-44)

Another benefit of the spirit of poverty is that it makes us more like unto Christ. St. Francis saw this clearly, but St. Dominic also recognized its value because he was convinced that anyone who preaches Christ should imitate him as much as possible. Christ, as we know, became poor for our sakes. He could have chosen to come as an earthly prince, dressed in fine clothes and living in a splendid palace with dozens of servants at his beck and call. Rather he chose to come as a poor man - not a destitute one. The trade of a carpenter was an honourable one and those who plied it could live reasonably well by their standards. Of course, there were times when people could not afford to have work done and the Holy Family had to be concerned about where the next meal was coming from. A good example of this combination of poverty and trust in God was during the flight into Egypt. The angel had appeared to Joseph in a dream and ordered him:

Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him. (Matt. 2: 13) Nothing was said about where he was to go in Egypt or how he was going to make a living to support his wife and her child. The message was "just go." Joseph, without question, got up, packed their sparse belongings and set out. They had nothing but their confidence in God to take with them. Apparently it was enough because after the death of Herod about two years later, they were able to return to Nazareth where Joseph was able to resume his trade as carpenter. If God treats people as much as he loved the Holy Family in this way, we can expect no better. We must imitate them and trust in God to keep his promise to see to it that we will have enough to live on.

The spirit of detachment and voluntary poverty will also make it possible for us to fulfil the command to give of our superfluity to the poor. In this, we imitate Christ who had a concern for the poor and even worked a miracle to feed them in their need. The Church from the beginning has shown its love and care for the widows, orphans

and the sick. In time religious orders were founded that dedicated themselves to these needs, but the laity have always been active in assisting or financing these corporal works of mercy. Our Dominican Laity should also be involved in these works, as, indeed, they have. As we read down through the lives of our Dominican lay saints we can see that everyone of them has reached out to care for the underprivileged. St. Rose of Lima is a good example. She is, in fact, considered to be the founder of social services in the Americas.

All of this involves a simplicity of life style, of detachment from this world's goods, as desirable as they may be and a deep trust in God's providence and love for us. It is in this way that the Dominican Laity can participate in the spirit of voluntary poverty that St. Dominic felt was so essential to the work of his Order. All we have to do, really, is to make our own the words of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," and seek nothing more.

THE PILLARS OF DOMINICAN LIFE

XI. LOYALTY TO THE CHURCH

There is tradition that Pope Innocent III saw in a dream the Basilica of St. John Lateran collapsing but two men were holding it up. To understand the significance of this dream you must remember that the Lateran, and not St. Peter's, is the cathedral of Rome and of the world. As such, it symbolizes the universal Church, so what the Pope saw was the Catholic Church collapsing. Shortly afterwards he met St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic for the first time and he recognized them as the two men he had seen in his dream holding up the Church.

Loyalty to the Church and its magisterium has been a hallmark of the Dominican Order from the beginning. As you know from the life of St. Dominic, the first thing he did, after he had worked out plans for founding the Order, was to go to the Pope to get approval for it. After Pope Innocent died, he went to his successor, Pope Honorius III for final confirmation which, of course, was granted in a series of four bulls.

His sons were to continue in the same spirit of submission to the authority of the Church. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, humbly submitted his writings to the judgement of the Holy See. One of the most beautiful and touching stories along this line is the case of Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange. He was the greatest of all modern scripture scholars and the founder of the prestigious Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem. He lived from 1855 to 1938. When he first began publishing his articles and commentaries on Scripture he was considered to be a "dangerous radical." One time Pope St. Pius X called in the Master of the Order and told him to give Father Lagrange a formal precept not publish any more. A formal precept is a command given by a major superior - prior or above - that binds under pain of mortal sin. It is very serious and rarely used. The Master of the Order answered, "I don't have to give him a formal precept. All I have to do is to ask him." He did and Father Lagrange obediently ceased publishing, but not writing fortunately. In our own time, the great French theologians, Fathers Congar and Chenu were silenced by the Holy See, which they accepted humbly. But they emerged from under the cloud to become the stars of Vatican II.

Down through our long history we have been extraordinarily loyal to the Holy See, submitting ourselves to its magisterium. Only a tiny few have been exceptions to that general rule. In fact, the official theologian to the Pope, the Master of the Sacred Palace, is always a Dominican and has been since the time of St. Dominic who was the first to hold that office.

That same loyalty hold true for the Dominican Laity. Where could you find a more loyal, devoted and zealous advocate and supporter of the Holy See than St. Catherine of Siena? Every Dominican can take pride in some words of Pope John XXII. In the year 1316 he lamented that tertiaries and beguines in large numbers were falling into heresy. But he went on to say, "I exclude the Dominican Tertiaries whose faith and docility to the Church are irreproachable. "

This is just common sense on our part. After all, we have the clear words of our Lord:

And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 16: 18 and 19) Thus we have his guarantee that the gates of the netherworld or hell would not prevail against it. This means that falsehood could never breach its walls. Satan, the father of lies, is the source of all falsehood and loves to sow it among us poor mortals. We have our Lord's assurance that there is one place it cannot be sown and that is the Roman Catholic Church. We know that in it we shall always find the truth.

It just stands to reason that an Order dedicated to the truth, as ours is, will be completely loyal to the Church for it is the only source of divine truth in this world. To where else can we turn?

While we must accept its teaching we do not have to overlook or deny the sins of its members, condone the failings of its clergy, accept as Gospel the opinions of theologians or even the highest authorities including the Pope. Let me give you an example of this. In the late 500s conditions were so chaotic in Europe that Pope St. Gregory the Great predicted in a sermon that the end of the world was at hand. It was not an ex cathedra statement - that is to say, one we have to believe - but an opinion that turned out to be erroneous.

The word "magisterium" is one that is commonly used these days. Today, in some circles, it seems to mean whatever the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Defence of the Faith says. But not even the Prefect would agree with that assessment. A better understanding can be found in what are called the Loci Theologici (Theological Places) proposed in the sixteenth century by Melchoir Cano, the great Spanish Dominican theologian. After Scripture, of course, at the top of the list are apostolic traditions, the defined dogmas of the Church, defined either by Ecumenical Councils in concert with the Pope or by

the Pope alone speaking "ex cathedra," which is rare. Only two come to mind, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of our Blessed Mother. Next come teachings, as distinguished from dogmas, of Ecumenical Councils in concert with the Pope, as for example, Vatican II which defined no new dogmas. Next in order are statements of the Popes in bulls, apostolic constitutions and the like. Then comes the teachings the Church Fathers, and the common opinions of theologians, not necessarily unanimous, but an overwhelming majority of them are. Finally, there is the common belief of the faithful, which we call "sensus fidelium." All of these put together make up what is the teaching of the Church. I submit that this is what we mean or should mean when we use the term "magisterium."

It is this body of doctrine that we have to accept as what we must believe if we have good sense. But where are we going to find it? Fortunately, recently a new Catechism has been published in English that is a summary of authentic Catholic teaching, approved by the Pope. Hopefully, this will serve to at least reduce the number of what are known as "cafeteria Catholics." We use the word "cafeteria" because these Catholics are something like the diners in a cafeteria who pick and choose whatever they like to eat, leaving what does not appeal to them at the serving tables. In much the same way, this kind of Catholic picks and chooses whatever doctrines from the truths taught by the Church that he or she likes, denying or ignoring the rest.

This approach is not only arrogant but also illogical. Illogical because, at least implicitly, it denies the infallibility of the Pope but assumes that they are infallible in that they are able to choose what is true and what is not. As someone has said, there are as many popes as there are cafeteria Catholics.

Not only are they illogical, but very often they are contradictory. Let me give you an example of what I mean. There are people who will deny that there is a hell. But if there is no hell, why would we need to have a redeemer? In one fell swoop these people wipe the need for Christ, his incarnation, his suffering, death and resurrection. It makes you wonder, if these people are correct, why God would go to the trouble of going through all the pain and suffering that he did.

You could go on right down the line and find one inconsistency, one fallacy after another. For many of these people it is due to a sheer ignorance of their religion. This is so widespread and unfortunately there is no interest or desire to learn more about it. It would seem reasonable for them to say, "Well, if the Church teaches this, there must be a reason," and then make an honest effort to find out what the

reason is. This it seems to me is why all Dominicans should be eager to know their faith and know it thoroughly. Certainly, it is one powerful reason why study is one of the pillars of Dominican life.

For others, it is a matter of wanting to have their cake and eat it too. They want to be Catholic but do not want to accept everything it believes and teaches. But it does not work that way. Either you buy the whole package or you end up with nothing. If you buy it, you have truth, divine truth guaranteed, not based on human opinion, likes or dislikes, but on the word of Christ. This brings out, it seems to me, what a beautiful and precious gift we have in the Church, one we should treasure. This is why loyalty to Church is one of the pillars of Dominican life.

THE PILLARS OF DOMINICANS LIFE

XII PREACHING

You probably have been wondering when we would ever get around to talking about preaching. Your thinking may have been: if there is anything that is a pillar of Dominican life it would be preaching, and you would be completely correct. That is why it has been left until last. All the other pillars we have talked about exist to support and uphold preaching. In fact, it might more accurately be called the capstone of Dominican life, for it ties all the others together and with them forms the structure of Dominican life. Without it, they would merely be a series of decorative columns with no particular reason for existing outside of being beautiful.

You may be further wondering and saying to yourself: I can see how the Friars of the First Order can be preachers. They can get into the pulpit and preach the Word of God. I can even see how the nuns of the Second Order can be involved in preaching because they pray for the success of the Friars' preaching, and without prayer we can do nothing, as St. Dominic saw so clearly. I can also see how the Sisters of the Third Order Religious can, in a broad sense anyway, be called preachers because they are teachers, run hospitals and do all sorts of works for the Church so competently and fruitfully. But can I as a lay person be a preacher and yet I belong to the Order of Preachers? How can I preach?

It is true that in English, preaching means pulpit oratory, but St. Dominic did not name his Order in English, but in Latin - *Ordo Praedicatorum* - meaning those who are engaged in "praedicatio." If you look in a Latin dictionary you will find that "praedicatio" means "making known" or "proclamation." This has a much broader, much wider meaning than mere pulpit oratory. It would include writing and teaching, areas in which Dominicans in all branches of the Order have always excelled.

In this sense of proclamation or making known, lay Dominicans have a far broader range of activities available to fulfil their vocation than do the Friars, Nuns or Sisters. It would most certainly include the sharing of their faith by parents to their children, by teaching in Catholic schools or CCD classes for public school children. These are the obvious ones. But there are many more. But to find out how past Dominicans have utilized the means they had available let us take a look at our Third Order Dominican saints as a starter.

St Catherine of Siena endeavoured to bring Christian principles into the innumerable conflicts between the various city states of Italy and

settle their disputes and she was quite successful at it. She was also successful at convincing the Pope to return to Rome and be truly the bishop of the Eternal City, a rather basic Christian principle.

St Rose of Lima was devoted to her family which had fallen on hard times and used her talents to grow flowers and do fancy needlework to support her parents. She also cared for the sick, poor and oppressed of the city of Lima to the extent that she is known as the founder of social justice in the New World. But it was all done very simply and humbly. There were no social workers, no complicated forms to fill out. It was done on the basis of need out of love.

St. Lorenzo Ruiz was a catechist who left his home, family and friends in the Philippines to go to Japan with the Friars to help them bring the people of that country to the Faith. In doing so, he gave his life as a martyr to witness for the Faith. Joined with him are the forty or more lay Dominican martyrs in the Far East. There is no more eloquent way of proclaiming, making known the truth of the Catholic Faith than giving your life for your beliefs, your faith.

But let us face it. It is quite likely that none of you are ever going to be called upon to give your lives for the Faith. You are not going to be able to settle disputes between city states of Italy, because they do not exist any more and the Pope does spend a good part of his time in Rome. You may indeed have to support your parents through whatever talents you may have and you may be able to help the poor and afflicted in various ways, but you will not have to be pioneers in this field. But, this does not exhaust the possibilities for your contributions to the life of the Church. It seems to me that Internet is now providing all of us Dominicans, but especially you as Lay Dominicans, a marvellous opportunity to reach the world and inject truth in the numerous discussions that go on it. This a medium for our modern times.

Another one is the example of living your faith fully and completely. More people are drawn to the Church by the example of Catholics than by any other reason. This is why the early Church grew so quickly. The pagans saw Catholics leading good moral lives, showing concern for one another, caring for each other, especially those who were poor and in trouble, such as widows and orphans. They used to say, "See the Christians; see how they love one another." Certainly they were willing to die for their faith, but more importantly they lived it, which can be much harder in the long haul.

St. Dominic saw the tremendous value of example as a essential quality of preaching. When the Cistercian monks arrived with their

abbot dressed in full panoply, robed in rich materials with full pomp and circumstance he told them to get down off their horses, throw away their fancy clothes and appear as poor men. The Cistercians actually lived very austere lives but they felt they, as Papal legates, had to put on all this show to impress the heretics but St. Dominic knew that just the opposite was true. He then insisted that his sons and daughters should give this same example by their lives of poverty and austerity.

This will hold true for you, as his sons and daughters. But what does it mean for you as lay Dominicans? First of all, it seems to me, is that you are going to have to resist the subtle, insidious allures of materialism that surround us on every side. They provide us with all kinds of clever rationalizations for embracing their alluring temptations. This all of us must do, As Dominicans we must live as simply as we can. This, as St. Dominic saw, was essential for us if we were to give good example to others.

Of course, the virtues we live by, our charity, our gentleness, our concern for and understanding of others are also important, as is our willingness to accept the unkindness, the thoughtlessness, the cruelty of those we work and live with. Nothing will win others more than our living our Christian lives, no matter how difficult it may be at times.

Another way of preaching that you as Lay Dominicans can do, is the sharing of your faith with others. You are going to run into people, as I am sure you do all the time, who have a false and twisted idea of what Catholics believe and they will challenge you. In these circumstances we should always follow St. Peter's advice: Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence. (I Peter 3: 16b-17a)

But to do this effectively you really have to know your religion thoroughly. There are so many false ideas out there about what the Catholic Church teaches, about the Scriptures and about morals. When they say, Catholics worship Mary, how are you going to respond? When they present all kinds of false ideas about the Bible, how are you going to answer them? When they approve of abortion or contraception and condemn the Church for its positions on these matters, how are you going to reply to their arguments? There are answers and it is incumbent on you, as Lay Dominicans, to know them. This is where study comes in and why it is so necessary for Dominicans.

Admittedly, none of these are spectacular or glamorous ways of preaching, but they are most effective ways. You may not seem to have been effective and you may think you have failed to make any impression at all and, of course, you may not have. But you never know how God is going to use what you say and how you say it. We must keep in mind that rarely is one person responsible for the conversion of another. The process of conversion is something like putting together a jig-saw puzzle. People along the way slip in a piece or two until finally the puzzle is complete but the picture is not finished until every single piece is in place. God may be asking you to put in a few pieces but they are necessary. You will not know that, however, until the Last Judgement when you will see the whole picture, completed and perfect.

That is, perhaps, the only way that any of us are going to be able to see the results of our preaching. Not even St. Dominic as he lay dying, knew that his work of preaching would continue long after his death. Little could he dream then that 768 years later it would still be going strong, still attracting men and women to its ideal. And so it is that each of us in our own way of bringing truth to the world share in his mission of *praedicatio*, of proclaiming the revealed Word of God to others. What a privilege we have, what a rich blessing from God is ours, that he has chosen us to share in this ministry, to be the children of Dominic. Let us thank God that he called us to be Dominicans. Let us pray that we will be faithful to our vocation. Let each one of us take seriously the charge of St. Paul:

Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship, perform the work of an evangelist; fulfil your ministry. (II Timothy 3: 2-5)

If we do this, then we can say with him:

I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance. (II Timothy 3: 7 & 8)

THE PILLARS OF DOMINICAN LIFE

CONCLUSION

We can, then, conclude that there is a Dominican Spirituality which merits to be ranked with the other schools of spirituality. It is based on solid principles which we have called the Pillars of Dominican Life. It is a spirituality that will lead us to a closer union with God and a greater holiness of life. It has been tested for nearly eight hundred years and has produced hundreds of Dominican saints and blessed, not to mention the innumerable men and women who, even though they have not raised to the altars of the Church, have achieved deep personal holiness. It is indeed a valid school of spirituality that is a great source of strength and guidance to those of us who have dedicated our lives to being bearers of the Torch of Divine Truth to the world we live in. Let us be grateful to God for it.

*Pillars of the Order
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