

CHAPTER NINE THE BULLS OF APPROBATION

INTRODUCTION

Apart from Dominican legislation itself, there are five papal bulls (one from Innocent III and four from Honorius III) which, along with a charter from Bishop Foulques of Toulouse, have had a decisive influence upon the rule of religious life for the Order of Preachers.⁽³⁵⁾

The letter dated November 17, 1206 is one of the many sent by Pope Innocent III to his preacher-legates in Norbonne between the years 1203 and 1208. We have omitted the beginning of the document, which consists of a general description of the invasion of heresies into the Church. The key to the particular importance of this document is to be found, not only in the fact that it is concerned at least in part with Bishop Diego and St. Dominic, but more especially in the papal approval of the evangelical and apostolic approach to preaching which was proving effective in the spiritual battle against the Albigensians. The legates and the religious appreciated this letter in a special way because they had been accused of aping the heretics in their manner of preaching. Along with his approval, Pope Innocent also gave Dominic a canonical commission or right to preach; from this date onwards Dominic always signed his name *Frater Dominicus Praedicator*, knowing that he had the privilege of sharing a right normally reserved to bishops alone.

The new Order of Preachers had been organized within the diocese of Toulouse. For this reason, it fell to Bishop Foulques, ordinary of this diocese, to approve the new Order. By a charter of April, 1215, Foulques appointed St. Dominic and his companions “preachers in our diocese” and recognized them as a religious Order founded in apostolic poverty for preaching. To aid them he also granted the Order a share in diocesan tithes set aside for the poor.

In answer to petitions from St. Dominic, Pope Honorius III issued a number of bulls in favor of the Order. Three of these have special significance. The first, entitled *Religious life*, dated December 22, 1216, confirmed the Order as an Order of Canons Regular and regulated such matters as the clerical life, the canonical office, ordinations, the regular life, religious profession, election of superiors, rights of burial, granting of churches, and such matter.⁽³⁶⁾ Dominican poverty never excluded the ownership of ecclesiastical property (churches and priories, and the land on which these stood). St. Dominic and the brethren decided in the Spring of 1216 that the Order might hold only this type of property as well as revenues, but the latter only for the time being. These were to be renounced by the general chapter of 1220. The present bull (apart from the lands of the monastery of Prouille, which, according to the Second Order Constitutions, might own property) lists only the type of possession decided upon earlier in the year: churches and two sources of rent (Caussanel and the diocesan tithes of Toulouse).

A month later, January 21, 1217, Pope Honorius issued a second bull to St. Dominic which crowned the first and completed the confirmation of the Order. Whereas the earlier bull had confirmed the Order, it had left much unsaid. The new bull, “To the Giver of All Good Gifts,” brings out clearly the special, we might say revolutionary, character of the Order, conferring on it a proud name and office — it is an Order founded for preaching. Honorius, addresses Dominic

and his sons as “Friars Preachers” and entrusts them with the preaching mission. Dominic had obtained, explicitly and officially, what he had first petitioned from Innocent III—“An Order which would be called and would be an Order of Preachers.” A further bull, a letter of recommendation to the Catholic hierarchy, defined more exactly the Order’s name and its preaching office. Entitled “If You Take Care to Love and Honor Religious Persons,” it was issued February 11, 1218. In his own name and that of the Apostolic See, the Pope brings the Order to the attention of the universal Church, recommending “the friars of the Order of Preachers” and praising their preaching apostolate. He addresses an earnest mandate to the whole hierarchy to encourage and help them. In this bull the Order stands before the Church as fully recommended and approved. Its end, its means, its commission, its universality are summarized and symbolized in its official name — The Order of Preachers.(37)

Honorius III Confirms the Order

TEXT

Honorius, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to the beloved sons Dominic, prior of St. Romanus in Toulouse, and his brethren, both present and future, professed in the regular life. *In perpetuum.*

It is fitting that apostolic protection should be extended to those choosing the religious life, lest temerarious attacks should possibly turn them away from their purpose or, God forbid, destroy the vigor of the sacred religious institute. Wherefore, beloved sons in the Lord, we benevolently assent to your just requests. We take the Church of St. Romanus in Toulouse, where you have given yourselves to the service of God, under the protection of St. Peter and our own, and we secure it with the present written privilege.

In the first place, indeed, we decree that the canonical Order which is known to be established according to God and the Rule of St. Augustine in the said Church should be inviolably preserved forever.

Moreover, that whatever possessions and whatever goods the said church at present justly and canonically possesses or shall be able, the Lord granting, to acquire in the future through the concession of the popes, the liberality of kings or princes, the offerings of the faithful, or other just means, should belong firmly and inviolably to you and your successors. Among these goods, we have deemed it well to name the following: the place itself where the said church is situated, with its properties; the church of Prouille with its properties; the estate of Caussanel with its properties; the church of St. Mary of Lescure with its properties; the hospice in Toulouse, called “the Hospice of Arnold Bernard,” with its properties; the church of the Holy Trinity in Loubens, with its properties; and the tithes which, in his good and provident liberality, our venerable brother Foulques, the bishop of Toulouse, with the consent of his chapter, has given you, as this is more explicitly contained in his letters.

Also let no one presume to exact or extort from you tithes from the fruits of the lands which you cultivate with your own hands or at your own expense, or from the produce of your animals.

Moreover, you may receive and keep, without opposition from anyone, members of the clergy or the laity who are free men and unencumbered by debt, who flee from the world to enter the religious life.

Furthermore, we prohibit any of your brethren, after they have made profession in your church to depart from it without the permission of their prior, except for the purpose of entering a stricter religious institute. If one should leave, let no one dare to receive him without the authorization of a letter from your community.

In the parochial churches which you hold, you may select priests and present them to the bishop of the diocese, to whom, if they are worthy, the bishop shall entrust the care of souls, so that they may be responsible to him in spiritual matters and to you in temporal matters.

We decree further that no one may impose new and unjust exactions on your church, or promulgate sentences of excommunication or interdict on you or your church without a manifest and just cause. When, however, a general interdict shall be laid on the whole territory, it will be permitted to you to celebrate the divine office behind closed doors, chanting in a low voice, not ringing the bells, and excluding those under excommunication and interdict.

The sacred Chrism, holy oils, the consecration of altars or basilicas, and the ordination of clerics who are to be promoted to holy orders, you shall obtain from the bishop of the diocese, so long as he is a Catholic and in grace and communion with the most holy Roman See and is willing to impart these to you without any irregularity. Otherwise, you may approach any Catholic bishop you may choose, provided he be in grace and communion with the Apostolic See; and armed with our authority, he may impart to you what you petition.

Moreover, we grant this place freedom of burial. Let no one, then, place an obstacle to the devotion and last will of those who choose to be buried there, provided they are not excommunicated or under interdict. However, the just rights of the churches from which the corpses are taken must be safeguarded.

When you, who are now the Prior of this place, or any of your successors shall go out of office, no one shall be appointed by secret craftiness or violence; but only he whom the brethren, by common agreement, or whom those brethren who are of more mature and sound judgment shall choose to elect according to God and the Rule of St. Augustine.

Furthermore, the liberties, ancient immunities, and reasonable customs granted to your church and observed up to this time, we ratify and command that they shall endure inviolably for all future time. We decree, therefore, that no one may rashly disturb the aforementioned church, take away its possessions or, having removed, keep them, diminish them, or harass them by any

kind of molestation, but all these goods shall be preserved intact entirely for the control, sustenance, and use of those for whom they have been granted, saving the authority of the Apostolic See and the canonical rights of the diocesan bishop.

If, therefore, in the future any ecclesiastical or secular person whosoever, having knowledge of this our document, shall rashly attempt to contravene it, and if, after a second or third admonition, he refuses to correct his fault by fitting satisfaction, let him forfeit the dignity of his power and honor; and let him know that he shall stand guilty of the perpetrated evil before God's judgment and shall be denied the most sacred Body and Blood of our God and Lord, our Saviour Jesus Christ, and shall, at the last judgment, be delivered to strict vengeance. Nevertheless, may all those who uphold the rights of the said place have the peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, receive the fruit of good action here on earth, and, before the Just Judge, receive the rewards of eternal peace. Amen, amen, amen.

I, Honorius, Bishop of the Catholic Church.

Perfect my steps in your ways. Fare ye well!

[Then follow the signatures of eighteen cardinals.]

Given at Rome at St. Peter, by the hand of Ranerio, Prior of Santo Fridiano in Lucca, Vice-Chancellor of the holy Roman Church, on the eleventh of the kalends of January, the fifth indiction, the 1216th year of Our Lord's Incarnation, the first year of the Lord Pope, Honorius III.

Honorius III Praises the Zeal of the Prior and the Brethren at St. Romain and Exhorts Them to Persevere Courageously

Honorius, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to the beloved sons, the prior and brethren at St. Romanus, preachers in the region of Toulouse: health and apostolic benediction.

We give fitting thanks to the Giver of all Good Gifts for the grace which God has given you [I Cor. 1:4], in which you stand [I Peter 5:13] and shall stand, we hope, until the end; since, burning interiorly with the fire of charity, you diffuse exteriorly the perfume of a reputation which delights sound minds and heals those which are sick. Lest these should remain sterile, you offer them, like eager physicians, spiritual mandragoras, and enrich them with the seed of the work of God by your salutary eloquence. Thus, like faithful servants, you lay out the talents entrusted to you, so that you can return them twofold to the Lord [Matt. 25:20]. Thus, like Christ's unconquered athletes, armed with the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation [Ephes. 6:16], you do not fear those who can kill the body [Matt. 10:28], but valiantly trust the word of God, which is keener than any two-edged sword [Heb. 4:12], against the foes of the faith. Thus, you hate your souls in this world, in order to keep them for eternal life [John 12:25].

Moreover, since the goal, rather than the combat, grants the crown, and since, among all the virtues, only perseverance receives the offered crown for those running in the race (I Cor. 9:24), we call upon your charity and earnestly exhort you with the command, which we impose through these apostolic letters for the remission of your sins, that, ever more strengthened in the Lord, you strive to spread the Word of God by being insistent in season and out of season and fulfilling the work of the evangelist in a praiseworthy manner. Now if you undergo tribulations for this cause, you must not only tolerate them with equanimity, but even glory in them, rejoicing with the Apostle that you are deemed worthy to endure outrages for the name of Jesus [Acts 5:41]; since the “present light affliction, which is for the moment, prepares a weight of glory that is beyond all measure” [II Cor. 4:17], to which “the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared” [Rom. 8:18].

Seeking to cherish you as special sons with our favor, we, also, ask you to offer the sacrifices of your lips for our intentions [Heb. 13:15], so that what we cannot obtain by our own merits we may gain by your prayers.

Given at the Lateran, the twelfth of the kalends of February, the first year of our pontificate.

Honorius III Recommends the Brothers of the Order of Preachers to All the Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Priors, and Prelates of the Church

Honorius, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to the Venerable brethren archbishops . . . , bishops . . . , to his dear sons . . . abbots, priors, and other prelates of churches, to whom this letter comes: health and apostolic benediction.

If you have a care to love and honor religious persons, you perform a most pleasing service to God, Whom to serve is to reign; Who has asserted that what is done for the least of His brethren is done for Him [Matt. 25:40]. Therefore, we ask your allegiance and, commanding you by apostolic letters, strongly urge that, with us, you encourage in their praiseworthy design the friars of the Order of Preachers (whose salutary ministry and religious institute we believe to be pleasing to God) and regard them, out of reverence for us and the Apostolic See, as approved. Assist in their needs these men who, faithfully preaching the word of the Lord without recompense, and imitating the Lord Himself alone in seeking the good of souls, have given their preference to the title of poverty.

Carry out our requests and commands in such wise that, on the day of the rigorous judgment, being placed at the right hand among the elect, you may enter, with them, into the eternal kingdom; and not hear the sentence of damnation of the reprobate. For God will send into the eternal fire those who have contempt for such persons [the friars], because He asserts that He Himself is being despised in this contempt.

Given at the Lateran, the third of the ides of February, the second year of our pontificate.