

# The Dominican Soul

## St. Dominic and the Preachers: A Spiritual Crusade

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*The following are lecture handouts given by Professor Cuddeback to his students at the Institute of Catholic Culture, to accompany the lecture: Used with permission of the author.*

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Talk 1: Dominican Life: God's Sword for the Middle Ages

Talk 2: Dominican Life: A Plan for Renewing the Church in Our Age

### I. Christian Vocation and Dominican Vocation

The Dominican way of life is the fruit of St. Dominic's relentless effort, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, *to live the life of the apostles in its fullness.*

While not all are called to be Dominicans, Dominican spirituality presents us with an excellent opportunity to see key features of the Christian life.

From The Fundamental Constitution of the Friars Preachers:

"We also undertake as sharers of the apostolic mission of the life of the Apostles in the form conceived by St. Dominic, living with one mind the common life, faithful in the profession of the evangelical counsels, fervent in the common celebration of the liturgy, especially of the Eucharist and the divine office as well as other prayer, assiduous in study, and persevering in regular observance. All these practices contribute not only to the glory of God and our sanctification, but serve directly the salvation of mankind, since they prepare harmoniously for preaching, furnish its incentive, form its character, and in turn are influenced by it. These elements are closely interconnected and carefully balanced, mutually enriching one another, so that in their synthesis the proper life of the Order is established: a life in the fullest

sense apostolic, in which preaching and teaching must proceed from an abundance of contemplation.” #IV

## II. Features of Dominican Life

### 1. Sacrifice of the Mass

Vatican II: The Mass is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” [Lumen Gentium #11, see Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) #1324]

Catechism of the Catholic Church (quoting Vat. II, SC #10), “The liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows.” #1074

Book of Constitutions of the Friars Preachers:

“In the liturgy, together with Christ, the brethren glorify God for the eternal plan of his will and for the wonderful order of grace, and they intercede with the Father of mercies for the whole Church as well as for the needs and the salvation of the whole world. Therefore, the celebration of the liturgy is the center and heart of our whole life, whose unity especially is rooted in it.” # 57

### 2. Liturgy of the Hours

CCC: “The mystery of Christ... which we celebrate in the Eucharist... permeates and transfigures the time of each day, through the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, the divine office.” #1174

Book of Constitutions of the Friars Preachers: “...the order of the [Liturgy of the] hours shall be so arranged in every community that through their celebration the different times of day will be truly sanctified.” #62

### 3. Prayer, Meditation, Study

Primitive Constitutions of the Friars Preachers: “...how they should be intent on study, so that by day and by night, at home or on a journey, they should be reading or reflecting on something; whatever they can, they should try to commit to memory....” XII

### 4. Preaching

Book of Constitutions of the Friars Preachers: “Following the example of St. Dominic, who was most desirous of the salvation of all men and of all nations, the brethren should realize that they have been sent to all men, groups, and nations, believers and unbelievers, and especially to the poor. They should focus their attention on preaching the gospel and

establishing the Church among the nations, and on explaining and strengthening the faith in the Christian people.” #98

Examples from the life of St. Dominic and of St. Thomas Aquinas:

1 and 2. Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours:

Numerous witnesses attest that they never saw St. Dominic celebrate Mass without tears. One witness also recounts how during the Office in the priory, “He would walk around on each side of the choir urging the brethren by word and example to sing well and attentively and to recite the psalms devoutly. He himself was so faithfully intent on what he was praying that he was never distracted by any tumult or noise.” (Vicaire, p. 85)

St. Thomas Aquinas on the Eucharist:

“How precious and wonderful is this banquet, which brings us salvation and is full of all delight. What could be more precious? It is not the meat of calves or kids that is offered, as happened under the Old Law; at this meal Christ, the true God, is set before us to eat. What could be more wonderful than this sacrament? No sacrament contributes more to our salvation than this; for it purges away our sins, increases our virtues, and nourishes our minds w/ an abundance of all the spiritual gifts. ... Finally, no one is capable of expressing the delight of this sacrament, through which the sweetness of the Spirit is tasted at its source, and the memory is celebrated of that surpassing love which Christ showed in his passion.” (Opusc 57, 1-4; in Office of Readings for Corpus Christi)

3. Prayer, Meditation and Study

“In letters and in his spoken words [St. Dominic] encouraged the brethren to apply themselves to the study of the New and Old Testaments more than to any other reading. He always carried round with him the gospel of Matthew and the letters of Paul, and he read them so often that he knew them by heart.” Testimony of John of Spain, #29.

III. Plan for the Renewal of Christian Life

A. Basic Principles

1. Worship, especially liturgical worship, is the source and the goal of all that we do.

CCC: “(Finally), by the Eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all.” #1326

Vat II’s *Sacrosanctum concilium* #11 “In [liturgy] full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. From this it follows

that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.” (quoted in CCC #1070)

2. An interior life of communion with the Word of God overflows and gives form to our specific vocations

“Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God, and keep it.” (Luke 11:28)

“And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deut 6:6ff)

## B. Practical Suggestions

1. Towards deepening our interior life:

a. LECTIO DIVINA (“divine reading”)

Pope Benedict XVI:

“In this context, I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of *Lectio divina*: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 25). If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church—I am convinced of it—a new spiritual springtime.” (Address to International Congress Commemorating 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Dei Verbum*, 16 Sept 2005)

CCC #1177 “The lectio divina, where the Word of God is so read and meditated that it becomes prayer, is thus rooted in the liturgical celebration.” (this is in a section on the Liturgy of the Hours)

“The Eighth Way of Prayer: The holy father Dominic also had another beautiful way of praying, full of devotion and grace. After the canonical Hours and the grace which is said in common after meals, the father would go off quickly on his own to a cell or somewhere, sober and alert and anointed with a spirit of devotion which he had drawn from the divine words which had been sung in choir or during the meal; there he would sit down to read or pray, recollecting himself in himself and open some book before him, arming himself first with the sign of the cross, and then he would read. And he would be moved in his mind as delightfully as if he heard the Lord speaking to him. As the Psalm says, ‘I will hear what the Lord God is saying in me.’ It was as if he were arguing with a friend; at one moment he would appear to be feeling impatient, nodding his head energetically, then he would seem to be listening quietly, then you would see him

disputing and struggling, and laughing and weeping all at once, fixing his gaze, submitting, then again speaking quietly and beating his breast. If anyone was inquisitive enough to want to spy on him secretly, he would find that the holy father Dominic was like Moses, who went into the innermost desert and saw the burning bush and the Lord speaking and calling to him to humble himself. The man of God had a prophetic way of passing quickly from reading to prayer and from meditation to contemplation.” (Early Dominicans, p. 101)

## b. ROSARY

Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter on the Rosary:

“But the most important reason for strongly encouraging the practice of the Rosary is that it represents a most effective means of fostering among the faithful that commitment to the contemplation of the Christian mystery which I have proposed in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* as a genuine ‘training in holiness’: ‘What is needed is a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer.’” #5

“If the Liturgy, as the activity of Christ and the Church, is a saving action par excellence, the Rosary too, as a ‘meditation’ with Mary on Christ, is a salutary contemplation. By immersing s in the mysteries of the Redeemer’s life, it ensures that what he has done and what the liturgy makes present is profoundly assimilated and shapes our existence.” (#13).

“Mary’s contemplation is above all a remembering. We need to understand this word in the biblical sense of remembrance (*zakar*) as a making present of the works brought about by God in the history of salvation.” (#13)

2. Family Life in the Home: reproducing the atmosphere of Nazareth in our homes.

Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter on the Rosary:

“At times parents suffer acute disappointment at the failure of their children to resist the seductions of the drug culture, the lure of an unbridled hedonism, the temptation to violence, and the manifold expressions of meaninglessness and despair.” #42

“Many of the problems facing contemporary families, especially in economically developed societies, result from their increasing difficulty in communicating. Families seldom manage to come together, and the rare occasions when they do are often taken up with watching television. To return to the recitation of the family Rosary means filling daily life with very different images, images of the mystery of salvation: the image of the Redeemer, the image of his most Blessed Mother. The family that recites the Rosary together reproduces something of the atmosphere of Nazareth: its members place Jesus at the center, they share his joys and sorrows, they place their needs and their plans in his hands, they draw from him the hope and the strength to go on.” #41

## Lord's Day

Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter "The Lord's Day":

"Sharing in the Eucharist is the heart of Sunday, but the duty to keep Sunday holy cannot be reduced to this. In fact, the Lord's Day is lived well if it is marked from beginning to end by grateful and active remembrance of God's saving work." #52

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From St. Thomas's Commentary on the Creed, 2<sup>nd</sup> article:

Here he gives Five Ways of Responding to the Word of God (listen, believe, meditate, communicate/preach, put it into practice), and then explains how the Blessed Mother did each of these five most perfectly:

Now, if the Word of God is the Son of God and all the words of God bear a certain likeness of this Word, then we ought to hear the word of God gladly; for such is a sign that we love God. We ought also believe the word of God whereby the Word of God dwells in us, who is Christ: "That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts." "And you have not His word abiding in you." But we ought not only to believe that the Word of God dwells in us, but also we should meditate often upon this; for otherwise we will not be benefited to the extent that such meditation is a great help against sin: "Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee." Again it is said of the just man: "On His law he shall meditate day and night." And it is said of the Blessed Virgin that she "kept all these words, pondering them in her heart." Then also, one should communicate the word of God to others by advising, preaching and inflaming their hearts: "Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth; but that which is good, to the edification of faith." Likewise, "let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another." So also: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine." Finally, we ought to put the word of God into practice: "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

The Blessed Virgin observed these five points when she gave birth to the Word of God. First, she heard what was said to her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee." Then she gave her consent through faith: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." And she also received and carried the Word in her womb. Then she brought forth the Word of God and, finally, she nourished and cared for Him. And so the Church sings: "Only a Virgin didst nourish Him who is King of the Angels."

St. Thomas Aquinas's Prayer for the Attainment of Heaven

[from *Devoutly I Adore Thee: The Prayers and Hymns of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Sophia Institute Press]

God of all consolation, You Who see nothing in us but what You have given us,

I invoke your help: after this life has run its course, grant me knowledge of You the first Truth, and enjoyment of Your divine majesty.

O most bountiful Rewarder, endow my body with the splendor of a beautiful soul, with swift responsiveness to all commands, with complete subservience to the spirit, and with freedom from all vulnerability.

Add to these an abundance of Your riches, a river of delights, and a flood of other goods,

So that I may enjoy Your solace above me, a delightful garden beneath my feet, the glorification of body and soul within me, and the sweet companionship of men and angels around me.

With You, most merciful Father, may my mind attain the enlightenment of wisdom, my desire what is truly desirable, and my courage the praise of triumph.

There with You is refuge from all dangers, multitude of dwelling places, and harmony of wills. There with You resides the cheerfulness of spring, the brilliance of summer, the fruitfulness of autumn, and the gentle repose of winter.

Give me, O Lord my God, that life without death and that joy without sorrow, where there is the greatest freedom, unconfined security, secure tranquility, delightful happiness, happy eternity, eternal blessedness, the vision of truth, and praise, O God. Amen.