

SPIRITUALITY IN HISTORY SERIES

The Dominican Tradition

Phyllis Zagano

Thomas C. McGonigle, o.p.



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Preface

The worldwide explosion of interest in “spirituality” has sent inquirers in several directions. One of the more fruitful trajectories is toward the traditional spiritualities that have enriched and nurtured the church for many hundreds of years. Among the oldest Christian spiritualities are those connected to particular foundations, charisms, or individuals. This series on spiritualities in history focuses on five distinct traditions within the history of the church, those now known as Benedictine, Carmelite, Dominican, Franciscan, and Ignatian.

Each volume in the series seeks to present the given spiritual tradition through an anthology of writings by or about persons who have lived it, along with brief biographical introductions of those persons. Each volume is edited by an expert in the tradition at hand.

I have been honored to coedit the present volume of Dominican spirituality with Thomas C. McGonigle, o.p., of the U.S. Province of St. Albert the Great (Central Province), an historian and specialist in the Dominican tradition at Providence College, Rhode Island. Since beginning this project during my tenure as Visiting Aquinas Chair of Catholic Studies at St. Thomas Aquinas College, Sparkill, New York, I have benefited from the generous advice and assistance of a number of other experts in Dominican spirituality and history, including Mary Catherine Hilkert, o.p., University of Notre Dame, and John J. Markey, o.p., U.S. Province of St. Martin de Porres (Southern Province). Several other members of the Dominican family have most generously contributed in large or small ways by supplying materials, discussing particular points, and offering overall good cheer as the book progressed, including Mary de Paul, o.p., Hawthorne; Mary of Jesus, Corpus Christi Monastery, Bronx; Mary Reynolds, o.p., Sparkill; Carleton P. Jones, o.p., of the U.S. Province of St. Joseph (Eastern), New York; Marian McCarthy,

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Phyllis Zagano
October 4, 2005
Feast of St. Francis of Assisi

Introduction

“Dominican Spirituality” is at once both easy and impossible to define. It is the lived legacy of St. Dominic’s followers, members and affiliates of the Order of Preachers, centered in the mottos associated with the Order: *Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare*. To praise, to bless, and to preach, from the Preface of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Roman Missal: *Veritas*, or Truth; and *Contemplare et Contemplata Aliis Tradere*, To contemplate and to hand on the fruits of contemplation. Each motto reflects the core tradition of Dominican life: preaching for the salvation of souls. The many ways by which that core tradition has been understood and lived by Dominicans present a rich tapestry of service to God and God’s people.

The lives and writings of the men and women in this volume show how remarkable and dedicated Dominicans over eight centuries have been faithful to St. Dominic’s vision, as contemplative preachers in the service of the church in the proclamation of the Gospel. Each represents a different facet of the manifest spirituality of St. Dominic, chosen from among the thousands who have lived that spirituality over the centuries. Those included offer only a snapshot of the whole, without the rich detail that many volumes could present.

The first essay in this book presents a history of the Dominican Tradition and forms the framework and historical background for the individual entries that follow. The life and works of St. Dominic burst forth in the thirteenth century to create a new concept of preaching the gospel, in the vernacular, in and through whatever circumstances arose. St. Dominic’s life and preaching drew the first Friars of the Order of Preachers together, and even before he founded the Order for priests and lay brothers, he founded the monastery of Notre Dame de Prouille, with a community of nine women. Legend has it that Mary the Mother of Jesus appeared to Dominic at Prouille and urged him to preach the Rosary as

a remedy against heresy. The Dominican devotion to the rosary, which enabled secular persons who did not understand Latin to follow or extend the rhythms of the choral office, is celebrated in Caravaggio's famous painting, "Madonna of the Rosary" (1607), and Dominican saints and blessed are subject matter for numerous works of art.

Very little is known directly about St. Dominic. His letter to the Nuns at Madrid in this book is a rare example of his writing. His interest in Dominican nuns has been maintained by Masters of the Order to this day, although at times the charge to provide for the care of the nuns has been contested. The 86th Master of the Order is Argentinian Father Carlos Azpiroz Costa, the second non-European Master of the Order. His nine-year term follows that of the first British Master of the Order, Timothy Radcliffe, whose address to the students of Yale University ends this volume. The Order's mission to proclaim the Gospel through whatever means possible and appropriate depends on the traditional Dominican life of study, community and preaching, and each aspect of Dominican life is further nourished by private or "secret" prayer. Dominic's "Nine Ways of Prayer" present the ways in which he was known to pray beyond his participation in liturgy and choral office.

The great hallmarks of preaching and study are conjoined in the life of Albert the Great (c. 1206–1280), whose "Commentary on Dionysius' Mystical Theology" demonstrates his, and the Order's, intellectual history. His "Treatise on the Manner of Praying" is example of the fact that Dominican intellectual life is always rooted in contemplation.

Perhaps the best known of Dominican intellectuals is Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) whose many works incorporate the secular knowledge of philosophy and present a reasoned understanding of the truths of Christian belief. His "Compendium of Theology" presents a catechism of sorts to be used by brother preachers, and treats faith, hope, and charity, the foundations of a graced life of prayer and service to others.

The earliest Dominican women are mostly unknown. They lived enclosed lives of prayer in cloistered convents under the care of the Friars. They and the many other women whose spiritual lives were guided toward the Dominican charism are represented by Mechtilde of Magdeburg (1208–1282/1294). While Mechtilde never actually became a Dominican, her book *The Flowering Light of the Godhead* bespeaks their secret lives of prayer. Mechtilde also gives insight to the early troubles of the Order, and repeats Christ's promise to her that it will endure to the end of the world.

Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–1329), considered the father of German mysticism, is represented with his sermon on the Second Letter of Timothy. Here he considers the Dominican vocation to preaching in terms of the mystical life. His joyous acceptance of the mandate to “Speak the Word” conjoined with his understanding to “Work in all things” presents a spirituality totally dedicated to and flowing directly from the principals of Christian belief and of the Gospel that lead the individual to a Christlike perfection.

Catherine of Siena (1347–1380) lived the complete dedication Dominic prescribed and Eckhart elucidated. Her life of apostolic service as a Mantellata, essentially a secular third order Dominican, is centered on Truth. She is arguably the best known woman Dominican of history, and the section of her *Dialogue* on Truth gives mystical enlightenment to the intellectual quest.

Antonius Fierozzi (1389–1459), the prior who enabled the stunning Dominican artist Fra Angelico (c. 1400–1455), rejoices in the artistic work of God and of humans in the prologue of his *Summa Moralis*. The fine art of Fra Angelico is represented on the cover of this volume with the depiction of St. Dominic from “The Mocking of Christ” (1440–1441) his fresco measuring 188 x 164 cm or about two by three feet, which is in a cell on a upper floor of the Convento di San Marco, Florence. In Pius XII’s words, reprinted in these pages, Fra Angelico’s purpose was both to teach the truths of faith and to lead individuals to the practice of Christian virtues.

The Dominican charism of preaching spread to the New World with Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484–1566), whose preaching insisted that the rights and dignity of indigenous peoples be protected and respected. Las Casas’ instructions to preachers state the simple fact that preachers must live by their own words, for without the example of their own lives their preaching will remain unheard.

With the exception of some Mantellata, Dominican women remained mostly enclosed until modern times. Catherine de’ Ricci (1522–1590) is remembered as mystic and stigmatic who identified wholly with the Passion of Christ in her writing and her life. Her letter to another enclosed nun in Italy gives advice and instruction on the vocation to prayer, especially within a community of Dominican women.

Martin de Porres (1579–1639) was a lay brother who lived in Peru during the height of Spain’s colonial conquest of South America. The son of a Spanish nobleman and a freed black slave, he suffered the fate of an outsider, yet his simplicity allowed him to humbly hand forth the

fruits of his contemplation. He is remembered in the canonization homily by Pope John XXIII as “Martin the Charitable.”

Henri Dominique Lacordaire (1802–1861) was a young secular priest on his way to New York when the French revolution interrupted his plans in 1830. A brilliant orator, Lacordaire eventually determined his vocation was to help re-establish the Order of Preachers. He argues for its past and its future according to the founding vision of St. Dominic in an essay written shortly before he joined the Dominicans in 1839.

Rose Hawthorne Lathrop (1851–1926) also became a Dominican later in life, after the deaths of her husband and their child, through her vocation to nursing the dying poor. Her words from “Christ’s Poor,” an early magazine published by the “Hawthorne Dominicans” for friends and benefactors, show her complete dedication to apostolic ministry nourished by Dominican prayer and practice.

Georges-Yves Congar (1904–1995) devoted much of his prayer and study to ecumenism, particularly the relations with Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Churches, and his ecclesiology describes the pilgrim church enlivened by the Holy Spirit. The selections from his writings demonstrate the depth and breadth of his thinking after the Second Vatican Council.

Belgian-born Edward Schillebeeckx (1914–) is among Christianity’s most prominent theologians. His writings explore every aspect of systematic theology, and are impossible to summarize. This book reproduces his classic essay on Dominican spirituality, in which he writes “a definitive all-round definition of Dominican spirituality cannot be given” because it has varied according to the local circumstances of culture, history, and church.

The book ends, then, with Timothy Radcliffe (1945–) 85th Master of the Order of Preachers, and his vision of the gospel to be preached within and without the walls of academe.

Each of the sixteen Dominicans whose lives and writings are presented in this volume has lived and preached the truth, the fruit of prayer, study, and Dominican community life. Their stories and their words follow.

The Dominican Tradition

The Dominican Tradition has its origin in the life and ministry of St. Dominic de Guzmán (1172–1221), the son of a Spanish noble, who founded one of the largest Orders in the Catholic Church. Dominic’s charismatic vision of a way of responding to the needs of the church in the thirteenth century led to the establishment of the Order of Preachers, popularly known as the Dominicans.

The Thirteenth-Century World of Saint Dominic

The growth of an increasingly literate laity within the urban centers of thirteenth-century Italy and southern France posed a serious pastoral problem for the medieval church. These urbanized men and women experienced a strong dichotomy between the New Testament values of Christian life and the institutional church. The simplicity of Gospel living portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles, with its emphasis on shared common life and the preaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ in poverty, appealed to the hearts and minds of many and seemed to stand in stark contrast to the opulent lifestyle and moral laxity that often marked the clergy.

Because parish priests and the monks of the great abbeys seemed unable or unwilling to respond to their people’s needs for forms of Christian life and spirituality more in accord with the apostolic life presented in the New Testament, the laity of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries in parts of France and Italy turned away from the institutional church in increasing numbers. Lay movements, such as the Poor Men of Lyons organized by Peter Valdes (d. 1218), who came to be called the Waldensians, offered an alternative form of Christian living that sought to imitate the simple life of the early church by an exact following of the gospel narratives on poverty and preaching.

At the same time the dualist doctrine of the third-century Persian religious thinker Mani (216–276) began to resurface in western Europe. Medieval followers of his dualism were called Manichees, Cathars, or Albigensians (from the town of Albi in southern France where dualism took hold). The Albigensians rejected most doctrines of the medieval church and taught that salvation was achieved by freeing oneself from everything material through a life of asceticism. The teachers of the movement, the Perfect, lived austere lives with special emphasis on fasting, chastity, poverty, and preaching.

The simultaneous emergence of the Waldensians and the Albigensians created the need for forms of Christian life and spirituality that provided patterns of Gospel living in accord with the traditional teachings of Christianity. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) in Italy and Dominic de Guzmán (1170–1221) in Spain provided charismatic visions that would capture the ideals of the Gospel in new ways and draw many of the reform-minded men and women of the urban lay movements away from the Waldensians and the Albigensians and back into the medieval Catholic Church.

Saint Dominic, Canon Regular and Itinerant Preacher

Dominic de Guzmán completed his theological studies and was ordained a priest at Palencia in 1196. He became a Canon Regular (a member of a community of priests following the Rule of St. Augustine) of the cathedral of Osma in Spain. In 1203 Dominic encountered the Albigensians of southern France while on a diplomatic mission with his bishop, Diego de Acebes, to arrange a marriage between the son of King Alfonso VIII of Castile and the daughter of the King of Denmark. After the marriage negotiations failed in 1205, Dominic and Diego stopped at the papal court in Rome on their way back to Spain. Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) sent them to be part of the preaching mission against the Albigensians in Languedoc, the south of France. The nine years between 1206 and 1215 he spent preaching among the Albigensians taught Dominic a great deal about the impact of the Perfect on their followers. These years also served as the germinating period for the development of a charismatic vision of a way of living the Gospel in accord with the Christian faith that would appeal to the deepest ideals and needs of the men and women of his time.

Dominic's Vision of the Family of Contemplative Preachers

Dominic was guided by the image of the early Christian community in Jerusalem in the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, which was at the heart of the spirituality he had known as a Canon Regular. He believed that the renewal of Christian society necessitated communities of men and women committed to living the apostolic life. The major component of that apostolic life was to be the preaching of the Gospel by members of communities that lived in evangelical poverty, who were devoted to contemplative prayer and engaged in constant study of the word of God. In Dominic's understanding, preachers were called to be the living reflection of the Gospel they proclaimed. Hence for him the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience were meant to recreate and transform the preacher into an apostle, a living witness to the crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ.

During his early years of preaching in Languedoc, Dominic gathered a group of Albigensian women whom he had converted to form the nucleus of the first community of Dominican nuns. Through a life of contemplative prayer lived in a community dedicated to poverty and mutual service these Dominican women would incarnate the apostolic life and preach the Gospel by their witness to prayer and service. Although the Order of Preachers did not yet have official status, the first community of Dominican women at Prouille in the south of France, the preaching nuns, initiated an evolutionary development in which countless women in the centuries to come in collaboration with their Dominican brothers would fully participate in and help develop the life and ministry of the Order of Preachers, the Dominican family.

The Foundation of the Order of Friars Preachers

After the establishment of the Dominican nuns at Prouille, Dominic continued the implementation of his vision of communities of contemplative preachers living the apostolic life. In the spring of 1215, at the invitation of Bishop Fulk of Toulouse in southern France, Dominic brought the men who were his preaching companions in Languedoc to this important city to establish a formal religious community there under the direction of the bishop. Later in 1215, when Bishop Fulk set out to attend the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome, Dominic accompanied him, hoping to obtain papal approval for his new community of contemplative preachers. In accord with the legislation of the Council, Pope Innocent III promised Dominic that he would approve the founding

of the new Order of Preachers after Dominic had chosen one of the already existing Rules of religious life.

As a Canon Regular of Osma, Dominic was already following the Rule of St. Augustine. He supplemented this rule with legislation and customs borrowed from the Premonstratensians, an order of Canons Regular founded by St. Norbert at Premontre in 1120, who supported his own vision of the apostolic life sustained by liturgical prayer. The spirituality of the Canons Regular was that of a community of religious priests who dedicated themselves to carrying out the daily liturgy of the church through the solemn celebration of Mass and the Divine Office and to caring for the sacramental needs of the faithful. Dominic joined these priestly ideals of the Canons Regular to a ministry of preaching in poverty (mendicancy) that flowed from a life of contemplation and study.

In December 1216, Pope Honorius III (1216–1227), the successor of Innocent III, approved Dominic's plan for an order of contemplative preachers exercising the priestly ministry and living in mendicant poverty. They owned no property except for the land on which their religious houses (prieories) were built, and they were to work or beg for their daily needs. In the final four-and-a-half years of his life Dominic transformed the sixteen friars living in community at Toulouse into the international Order of Preachers whose lives and ministry would impact history until the present.

The Development of the Order of Preachers

In August 1217, Dominic sent seven friars to Paris to study, to teach, and to found a priory, and four to Spain to preach and establish priories. Three friars remained in Toulouse to continue the ministry they had begun under Bishop Fulk, and two friars went to Prouille to preach in Languedoc and to minister to the spiritual and temporal needs of the preaching nuns. Dominic himself set out for Rome to gain further support from Pope Honorius and to prepare the way for foundations in Italy. The years from 1217 to 1220 saw the growth of the Order through the reception of new members, the establishment of new priories, and the development of the preaching mission of the Order throughout Europe.

Under Dominic's direction, thirty representatives from the twelve priories in Europe gathered for General Chapters at Bologna in 1220 and 1221. The General Chapter of 1220 enacted legislation for preach-

ing, formation of new members, studies, the observance of poverty, and the procedures for General Chapters. Dominic insisted that the Order's laws were not to bind under sin, and that the Priors had the power to dispense from the Order's laws when necessary for the sake of preaching or study.

The General Chapter of 1221 created Provinces as subdivisions of the Order; these would gather the priories of a certain geographic area under the authority of a Provincial, who was responsible to the Master of the Order. The twelve Provinces established by St. Dominic and the General Chapter were Spain, Provence, France, Lombardy, Tuscany, Germany, Hungary, England, Greece, Scandinavia, Poland, and the Holy Land. However, the most significant work of the Chapter, which ended six weeks before Dominic's death, was the formulation of the basic constitutional legislation that would concretize his vision and provide the flexibility for the subsequent development of the preaching mission of the Order.

The Dominican Family

The breadth and universality of Dominic's vision made it possible to incorporate a variety of men and women into the Dominican family. Traditionally the Order of Preachers has been divided into the First Order, the Second Order, and the Third Order.

The First Order, the Friars, is composed of clerical brothers and lay brothers. Clerical brothers are friars who are either priests engaged in ministry or students preparing for the priesthood. Cooperator brothers (formerly called lay brothers) are friars who once cared for the temporal needs of the community but who now also serve in a variety of other ministries, including the diaconate.

The Second Order is composed of contemplative nuns living in cloistered monasteries, usually under the jurisdiction of the local bishop. The Master of the Order also provides oversight and support for the nuns in their contemplative life.

The Third Order, which came into existence at the end of the thirteenth century, is divided into the Third Order Regular and the Third Order Secular. The Third Order Regular was initially composed of women who chose to live Dominican religious life without the strict rules of a cloistered monastery. In the nineteenth century the Third Order Regular also came to include Papal and Diocesan Congregations of Dominican Sisters established to engage in active ministries of service

such as education and health care. Members of the Third Order Secular, originally called Tertiaries and now called the Dominican laity, are lay men and women living in the world. Their Rule states that “As members of the Order, they participate in its apostolic mission through prayer, study, and preaching according to the state of the laity.”

Dominican Spirituality

The *Fundamental Constitution of the Order* (1968) reaffirms the preaching mission of the Order—“preaching and the salvation of souls”—and the means to attain this mission: (1) the three vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty; (2) community life with the monastic observances; (3) the solemn recitation of the Divine Office; and (4) the study of sacred truth.

The Vows of Obedience, Chastity, and Poverty

The purpose of the three vows within religious life is to free the individual to follow Jesus Christ. From the Dominican perspective the vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty free a man or woman to live the mystery of Jesus Christ the preacher. Dominican friars promise obedience to the Master of the Order, who is chosen by the brothers to hold the place of universal leadership once held by St. Dominic. The Order of Preachers views obedience as a relationship of mutual service between brothers committed to the common mission of preaching the Gospel. The Prior is the superior at the local level, the Provincial is the superior at the regional level, and the Master of the Order is the superior at the international level. Each serves as a focal point of unity and direction in the shared mission of preaching. Dominican obedience is the free choice of placing one’s gifts at the disposal of the community, symbolized by the superior, for the sake of fulfilling the common preaching mission of the Order.

In the Dominican tradition the vow of chastity, like the vows of obedience and poverty, is related to the preaching mission of the Order. A Dominican man or woman chooses to live a celibate life within a community of contemplative preachers in order to share the family life of the Gospel community formed by the Holy Spirit through the proclamation and hearing of the word of God. A Dominican lives both in the family of other Dominican men and women committed to preaching and in the family of God’s people, which he or she helps to create and sustain through the preaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Since the lay movements of the thirteenth century saw evangelical poverty lived in apostolic simplicity as the guarantor of authentic preaching, the vow of poverty assumed special meaning within the Dominican tradition. Dominican friars were to be itinerant preachers living in mendicant poverty, to give up all possessions and fixed income, and to rely completely on the freewill offerings of the faithful. Each day the friars went out as mendicants begging for alms and their daily bread.

Community Life and the Monastic Observances

As the three vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty were understood as the first means of fulfilling the preaching mission of the Order, so community life with the monastic observances was seen to be the second means. The monastic observances within religious life, which Dominic received from the tradition of Benedictine monasticism, were silence, fasting, abstinence from meat, night vigils, the chapter of faults, acts of penance, and simplicity in religious attire and community life. Within the Dominican tradition the monastic observances provide a disciplined milieu in which contemplative preachers keep the word of God clearly focused in their minds and hearts as they prepare to engage in their ministry of preaching.

The Solemn Recitation of the Divine Office

The solemn recitation of the Divine Office, the Liturgy of the Hours, the third means of facilitating the preaching of the Gospel, centered the worship life of the community on the word of God. As a Canon Regular, Dominic had known the solemn celebration of the eight hours of the Divine Office: Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. With its patterns of hymns, psalms, Scripture readings, and prayers, the Office provided the place where a religious community daily encountered the word of God as it proclaimed the mysteries of salvation in the unfolding of the liturgical year. Daily Mass and the Divine Office constituted the common prayer of the community of contemplative preachers. Gathered together for prayer in common, they experienced the lifegiving water of the word of God and the living bread of the Holy Eucharist. This daily nourishment of word and sacrament strengthened and renewed the community of contemplative preachers so that they could share the same living water and bread of life with the people to whom they preached and

ministered. The common praise of God and the hearing of the Good News were meant to be joyous occasions of new life and empowerment for ministry, which also would be strengthened by the fourth means of facilitating the preaching mission of the Order, the life of study.

The Study of Sacred Truth

The renewal of Christian life in the thirteenth century with its developing urban centers and its nascent universities not only required preachers who practiced poverty but also preachers who were learned in Scripture and the teachings of the church. For St. Dominic, study was essential to ensure the doctrinal preaching that was necessary to deal adequately with the intellectual challenge to the Catholic faith offered by the Waldensians and the Albigensians. The integral place of study in the Dominican tradition would give the preaching friars a profound role in the development of the great universities of medieval Europe. Every Dominican priory was a school for training contemplative preachers in Scripture and theology. The Dominican Order would provide the church with some of its greatest theologians and speculative thinkers, such as St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, and St. Antoninus.

The vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty; community life with the monastic observances; the celebration of the Divine Office; and continuous study of Scripture and the truths of faith were meant to provide the contemplative basis for Dominican preaching. The fulfillment of St. Dominic's vision of a community of contemplative preachers requires a careful balancing so that both the active-preaching dimension and the contemplative-prayer-study dimension are held in creative tension.

This common framework for understanding the Dominican tradition in terms of the end and the four means was in use from the thirteenth century until 1968. The General Chapter of 1968 kept the traditional understanding for the First Order, but left the Second and Third Orders free to adapt the traditional understanding to their own Dominican experience in their own Constitutions. Hence while the Fundamental Constitution of the Order presents the guiding vision for the whole Dominican family, the Second Order (nuns) and the Third Order Regular (sisters) and Third Order Secular (laity) each have their own Constitutions that articulate their appropriation of the Fundamental Constitution. Thus congregations of Dominican sisters and the

Dominican laity in the United States present the Four Elements or Four Pillars in many revised Constitutions in the 1970s: community, prayer, study, and ministry. In these perspectives the vows are subsumed under the larger umbrella of community. The discussion of community includes the vows, prayer and study follow next, and everything is drawn together in ministry.

Independent of the various emphases placed on the guiding vision of St. Dominic, all Dominican men and women commit themselves through vows or promises to live in communities where common prayer and study enable them to preach the Gospel through diverse forms of ministry.

Thomas C. McGonigle, o.p.

Saint Dominic (1171–1221)

Dominic de Guzmán was born in Caleruega, Spain, about twenty miles from the Cathedral of El Burgo de Osma, in 1170 or 1171. His parents, Felix de Guzmán and Jane de Aza, were of minor nobility, she of higher rank than he. They were a pious family: one of Dominic's uncles was a priest, and eventually not only Dominic but his two brothers (Anthony and Mannes) as well as two sons of his sister, would become priests. All but Anthony, a Canon of Saint James, became Dominicans.

Despite his evident fame there is relatively little biographical material available about Dominic. The earliest and most authentic source document is the *Libellus* of Blessed Jordan of Saxony, the Second Master General of the Order, written sometime between December 1231 and July 1234. Even though the *Libellus* is ten years removed from the death of Dominic, Jordan had access to his own and others' direct memories of Dominic. Hence at least three friars said to have belonged to the first group of Dominic's followers—Peter Seila, Bertrand of Garrigua, and John of Navarre—and others were able to provide testimony to Jordan as he wrote the story of the beginnings of the Order.

There are many other early writings, including those of Peter of Ferrand, Constantine of Orvieto, Blessed Humbert of Romans (fifth Master General), Bartholomew of Trent, Stephen of Bourbon, Thomas of Cantimpré, Gerard of Frachet, Stephen of Salagnac, and Dietrich of Apolda, that seek to trace the life and works of the Canon of Osma who began a preaching of the Gospel that has encircled the world.

There is a legend, possibly true, that Dominic early preferred penance to comfort; it is said that as a child he preferred the hard floor to his soft bed. His Gospel charity is also well attested. Dominic entered studies at Palencia in the kingdom of Leon when he was 14, and while there sold his few possessions to aid those suffering from a famine. In 1190, at

the age of about twenty, Dominic became a member of the canonry at Osma, and was ordained to priesthood about five years later. The canonry, a communal foundation for secular clerics, followed the Rule of St. Augustine. Dominic, who was sub-prior by the time he was about thirty, was especially fond of studying the *Conferences* of John Cassian.

Dominic's travels with his bishop and his preaching against the heretical Albigensians are well known, and as he gathered followers the concept of a religious order dedicated to preaching must have formed in his mind and heart. But the first "Dominicans" were women. Reportedly, late on July 22, 1206 (the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene), Dominic saw a sphere of fire descending on a shrine to Mary on a hill overlooking the village of Prouille. Dominic took this to be a sign of God (a *Seignadou*) as it continued for two additional nights, which called him to found a monastery of nuns at Prouille. He soon converted nine women and opened the first "Dominican" convent five short months later, on December 27, 1206, under the patronage of Saint Mary Magdalene.

He ate and slept little, wore a hair shirt, and walked unshod between towns, attracting followers and converts along the way. He preferred living charity and humility to creating a wordstorm of fire and brimstone, characteristic traits of the Order of Preachers soon to come from his leadership and his holiness. His canonization process attested to the efficacy of his prayer. It is reported that in 1211, in the midst of fierce warfare between the Albigensians and papal forces, a boat carrying a group of English pilgrims overturned in the Garonne River. Dominic prostrated himself in prayer and demanded their safety in the name of Jesus Christ, which favor was granted. Lawrence, a rescued pilgrim, would be among Dominic's first followers.

He attracted other followers in Toulouse and Castres, and in 1215 Dominic made his way to the Lateran Council in Rome, where he may have encountered St. Francis of Assisi. Both Orders call their founders "Holy Father," and each has looked to the other for an example of simplicity. For hundreds of years Dominicans and Franciscans have shared the celebration of each other's founder: Dominicans invite a Franciscan to preach on the Feast of St. Dominic (August 8), while Franciscans invite a Dominican to preach on the Feast of St. Francis (October 4). Each Order was approved by Pope Innocent III, clearly with the belief that they would help hold the church together as the raucous thirteenth century lurched forward. Innocent III's foresight joined Dominic's vision. Heretofore only bishops had preached, or approved preaching, within their own dioceses. But Dominic's wandering band of apostolic

preachers could cross diocesan boundaries. Dominic wrote *Constitutions* to delimit the *Rule of St. Augustine*, which he chose for his Order. Friars would not be bound by stability to one house, and the monastic horarium would be adapted to suit their apostolic mission. By the summer of 1216 their number had grown to sixteen, and Bishop Folques of Toulouse, whom Dominic had accompanied to the Lateran Council, gave the Order charge of three churches.

When Pope Honorius III succeeded Innocent III in August 1216, Dominic traveled to Rome to obtain the papal bull confirming the establishment of the Order. He waited three months and received it December 22, 1216. The same day Honorius issued a second bull making the Order of Friars Preachers a papal order:

We, considering that the brethren of the Order will be the champions of the faith and true lights of the world, do confirm the Order in all its lands and possessions present and to come, and we take under our protection and government the Order itself, with all its goods and rights.

Pope Honorius III also appointed Dominic Master of the Sacred Palace—theological advisor to the Pope—a position thenceforth ordinarily held by a Dominican. Dominic returned to Toulouse in May 1217 and planned to send the Friars on preaching mission on the feast of the Assumption, August 15. He met their opposition simply and with prescience: the seed would molder if hoarded, he said, but it would grow and multiply if scattered. They went to Rome and to Spain, they preached in the south of France; with Dominic as first Master of the Order they undertook study—first in Paris and Bologna—as a critical part of their formation, and professors were among those to enter the Order.

The Order grew in numbers and in influence as friars and friaries multiplied and the success of Dominic's reforms spread. Pope Honorius III asked Dominic to reform the various independent convents of nuns in Rome, which task he substantially began by February, 1220. He closed convents, moving many of the nuns to San Sisto, a monastery given him by the Pope for his friars, and called a nun from Prouille to oversee the new community of nuns. Dominic moved with the friars to the men's convent adjacent to the Church of Santa Sabina all'Aventino, which had been given over to them by the Pope in 1218, and which was repurchased (from the Italian government) in 1929 to house the headquarters of the Masters of the Order to this day. Over time Santa Sabina was the monastic home of Dominican saints Hyacinth (1185–1257), Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274), and Pope Pius V (1504–1572), among others.

Dominic called the first General Chapter of the Order at Bologna near Pentecost 1220. There his concept of fiduciary control by the lay brothers was outvoted. No matter the topic, the fact that the founder and Master of the Order could be outvoted struck a high note in the development of democratic governance of religious orders. During the intervening year between the first and second General Chapters, Dominic preached throughout Italy. After the second General Chapter, also at Bologna, Dominic's health began to fail. He died on the Feast of the Transfiguration, August 6, 1221. He was fifty-one years old.

Dominic's vision did not end with his death, and reports of miracles attributed to his intercession led to such great numbers of pilgrims to his tomb that in May 1233 his body was transferred to a larger space. Within a year he was canonized.

Dominic was a preacher, not a writer, and there are only three examples of his writings left to history. Each bespeaks his own penances, and the letter to the Prioress and the Entire Community of Nuns at Madrid that follows characteristically urges penance and strict observance of the rule and constitutions. His spirituality is solidly planted in a foundation of prayer, community, study, and preaching, and his nine ways of prayer present an old-yet-new means of worship.

Phyllis Zagano

From *The Letters of St. Dominic*

Friar Dominic, Master of the Preachers, to the Beloved Prioress and the Entire Community of Nuns at Madrid: Health and Daily Progress,

Greatly do we rejoice and thank God because of your holy life and because He has freed you from the corruption of this world. Daughters, fight the ancient adversary insistently with fasting, for only he will be crowned who has striven according to the rules. If until the present you have not had a place in which to live your religious life, now you can no longer be excused, because by the grace of God you have buildings suitable enough for living the religious life. From now on I want silence to be kept in the forbidden places, the refectory, the dormitory, and the oratory, and your law to be observed in all other matters. Let none go out through the gate and no one enter except the bishop or some prelate for the

sake of preaching or making a visitation. Be not sparing of discipline and vigils. Be obedient to your prioress. Avoid talking idly to one another. Let not your time be wasted in conversation.

Since we cannot help you in temporalities, we do not want to give any friar the authority to receive postulants, but only the prioress with the council of her community. Moreover, we command our dear brother, i.e., Friar Mannes, who has worked so hard and has joined you to this blessed state, that he arrange and dispose everything as shall seem good to him, so you might live a most religious and most holy life. Furthermore, we give him power to visit and correct and to remove the prioress (if it be necessary) with the consent of the majority of the nuns; and we give him permission that he may grant dispensations in some matters, if it seems fit to him.

Farewell in Christ.

* * *

The Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic

Holy teachers like Augustine, Ambrose, Gregory, Hilary, Isidore, John Chrysostom, John Damascene, Bernard, and other saintly Greek and Latin doctors have discoursed on prayer at great length. They have encouraged and described it, pointed out its necessity and value, explained the method, the dispositions which are required, and the impediments which stand in its way. In learned books, the glorious and venerable doctor, Brother Thomas Aquinas, and Albert, of the Order of Preachers, as well as William in his treatise on the virtues, have considered admirably and in a holy, devout, and beautiful manner that form of prayer in which the soul makes use of the members of the body to raise itself more devoutly to God. In this way the soul, in moving the body, is moved by it. At times it becomes rapt in ecstasy as was Saint Paul, or is caught up in a rapture of the spirit like the prophet David. Saint Dominic often prayed in this way, and it is fitting that we say something of his method.

Certainly many saints of both the Old and New Testament are known to have prayed like this at times. Such a method serves to enkindle devotion by the alternate action of soul upon body and body upon soul. Prayer of this kind would cause Saint Dominic to be bathed in tears, and would arouse the fervor of his holy will to such intensity that his bodily members could not be restrained

from manifesting his devotion by certain signs. As a result, the spirit of the supplicant was sometimes raised up during its entreaties, petitions, and thanksgivings.

The following, then, are the special modes of prayer, besides those very devout and customary forms, which Saint Dominic used during the celebration of Mass and the praying of the psalmody. In choir or along the road, he was often seen lifted suddenly out of himself and raised up with God and the angels.

The First Way of Prayer

Saint Dominic's first way of prayer was to humble himself before the altar as if Christ, signified by the altar, were truly and personally present and not in symbol alone. He would say with Judith: "O Lord God, the prayer of the humble and the meek hath always pleased Thee [*Judith* 9:16]." *It was through humility that the Chanaanite woman and the prodigal son obtained what they desired; as for me, "I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof" [Matt 8:8] for "I have been humbled before you exceedingly, O Lord [Ps 118:107]."*

In this way our holy father, standing erect, bowed his head and humbly considering Christ, his Head, compared his lowliness with the excellence of Christ. He then gave himself completely in showing his veneration. The brethren were taught to do this whenever they passed before the humiliation of the Crucified One in order that Christ, so greatly humbled for us, might see us humbled before his majesty. And he commanded the friars to humble themselves in this way before the entire Trinity whenever they chanted solemnly: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit." In this manner of profoundly inclining his head, as shown in the drawing, Saint Dominic began his prayer.

The Second Way of Prayer

Saint Dominic used to pray by throwing himself outstretched upon the ground, lying on his face. He would feel great remorse in his heart and call to mind those words of the Gospel, saying sometimes in a voice loud enough to be heard: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner" [*Luke* 18:13]. With devotion and reverence he repeated that verse of David: "I am he that has sinned, I have done wickedly" [*II Kings* 24:17]. Then he would weep and groan vehemently and say: "I am not worthy to see the heights of heaven be-

cause of the greatness of my iniquity, for I have aroused thy anger and done what is evil in thy sight." From the psalm: "Deus auri-bus nostris audivimus" he said fervently and devoutly: "For our soul is cast down to the dust, our belly is flat on the earth!" [Ps 43:25]. To this he would add: "My soul is prostrate in the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word" [Ps 118:25].

Wishing to teach the brethren to pray reverently, he would sometimes say to them: *When those devout Magi entered the dwelling they found the child with Mary, his mother, and falling down they worshipped him. There is no doubt that we too have found the God-Man with Mary, his handmaid. "Come, let us adore and fall down in prostration before God, and let us weep before God, and let us weep before the Lord that made us" [Ps 94:6]. He would also exhort the young men, and say to them: "If you cannot weep for your own sins because you have none, remember that there are many sinners who can be disposed for mercy and charity. It was for these that the prophets lamented; and when Jesus saw them, he wept bitterly. The holy David also wept as he said: "I beheld the transgressors and began to grieve" [Ps 118:158].*

The Third Way of Prayer

At the end of the prayer which has just been described, Saint Dominic would rise from the ground and give himself the discipline with an iron chain, saying, "Thy discipline has corrected me unto the end" [Ps 17:36]. This is why the Order decreed, in memory of his example, that all the brethren should receive the discipline with wooden switches upon their shoulders as they were bowing down in worship and reciting and psalm "Miserere" or "De Profundis" after Compline on ferial days. This is performed for their own faults or for those of others whose alms they receive and rely upon. No matter how sinless he may be, no one is to desist from this holy example.

The Fourth Way of Prayer

After this Saint Dominic would remain before the altar or in the chapter room with his gaze fixed on the Crucified One, looking upon Him with perfect attention. He genuflected frequently, again and again. He would continue sometimes from after Compline until midnight, now rising, now kneeling again, like the apostle Saint James, or the leper of the gospel who said on bended knee: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" [Matt 8:2]. He was

like Saint Stephen who knelt and called out with a loud cry: "Lord, do not lay this sin against them" [Acts 7:60]. Thus there was formed in our holy father, Saint Dominic, a great confidence in God's mercy towards himself, all sinners, and for the perseverance of the younger brethren whom he sent forth to preach to souls. Sometimes he could not even restrain his voice, and the friars would hear him murmuring: "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord: O my God, be not thou silent to me: lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit" [Ps 27:1] and comparable phrases from the Sacred Scripture.

At other times, however, he spoke within himself and his voice could not be heard. He would remain in genuflection for a long while, rapt in spirit; on occasion, while in this position, it appeared from his face that his mind had penetrated heaven and soon he reflected an intense joy as he wiped away the flowing tears. He was in a stage of longing and anticipation like a thirsty man who has reached a spring, and like a traveler who is at last approaching his homeland. Then he would become more absorbed and ardent as moved in an agile manner but with great grace, now arising, now genuflecting. He was so accustomed to bend his knees to God in this way that when he traveled, in the inns after a weary journey, or along the wayside while his companions rested or slept, he would return to these genuflections, his own intimate and personal form of worship. This way of prayer he taught his brethren more by example than by words.

The Fifth Way of Prayer

When he was in the convent, our holy father Dominic would sometimes remain before the altar, standing erect without supporting himself or leaning upon anything. Often his hands would be extended before his breast in the manner of an open book; he would stand with great reverence and devotion as if reading in the very presence of God. Deep in prayer, he appeared to be meditating upon the words of God, and he seemed to repeat them to himself in a sweet voice. He regularly prayed in this way for it was Our Lord's manner as Saint Luke tells us: ". . . according to his custom he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to read" [Luke 4:16]. The psalmist also tells us that "Phinees stood up and prayed, and the slaughter ceased" [Ps 105:30].

He would sometimes join his hands, clasping them firmly together before eyes filled with tears and restrain himself. At other

times he would raise his hands to his shoulders as the priest does at Mass. He appeared then to be listening carefully as if to hear something spoken from the altar. If one had seen his great devotion as he stood erect and prayed, he would certainly have thought that he was observing a prophet, first speaking with an angel or with God himself, then listening, then silently thinking of those things which had been revealed to him.

On a journey he would secretly steal away at the time for prayer and, standing, would immediately raise his mind to heaven. One would then have heard him speaking sweetly and with supreme delight some loving words from his heart and from the riches of Holy Scripture which he seemed to draw from the fountains of the Savior. The friars were very much moved by the sight of their father and master praying in this manner. Thus, having become more fervent, they were instructed in the way of reverent and constant prayer: "Behold as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, as the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress . . ." [*Ps* 122:2].

The Sixth Way of Prayer

Our Holy Father, Saint Dominic, was also seen to pray standing erect with his hands and arms outstretched forcefully in the form of a cross. He prayed in this way when God, through his supplications, raised to life the boy Napoleon in the sacristy of the Church of Saint Sixtus in Rome, and when he was raised from the ground at the celebration of Mass, as the good and holy Sister Cecilia, who was present with many other people and saw him, narrates. He was like Elias who stretched himself out and lay upon the widow's son when he raised him to life.

In a similar manner he prayed near Toulouse when he delivered the group of English pilgrims from danger of drowning in the river. Our Lord prayed thus while hanging on the cross, that is, with his hands and arms extended and "with a loud cry and tears . . . he was heard because of his reverent submission" [*Heb* 5:7].

Nor did the holy man Dominic resort to this manner of praying unless he was inspired by God to know that something great and marvelous was to come about through the power of his prayer. Although he did not forbid the brethren to pray in this way, neither did he encourage them to do so. We do not know what he said when he stood with his hands and arms extended in the form of a cross and raised the boy to life. Perhaps it was those

words of Elias: "O Lord, my God, let the soul of this child, I beseech thee, return into his body" (III Kings 17:21). He certainly followed the prophet's exterior manner in his prayers on that occasion. The friars and sisters, however, as well as the nobles and cardinals, and all others present were so struck by this most unusual and astonishing way of prayer that they failed to remember the words he spoke. Afterwards, they did not feel free to ask Dominic about these matters because this holy and remarkable man inspired in them a great sense of awe and reverence by reason of the miracle.

In a grave and mature manner, he would slowly pronounce the words in the Psalter which mention this way of prayer. He used to say attentively: "O Lord, the God of my salvation: I have cried in the day and in the night before thee," as far as that verse "All the day I have cried to thee, O Lord: I stretched out my hands to thee" (*Ps* 87:2-10). Then he would add: "Hear, O Lord, my prayer, give ear to my supplication in thy truth . . ." He would continue the prayer to these words: "I stretched forth my hands to thee . . . Hear me speedily, O Lord" [*Ps* 142:1-7].

This example of our father's prayer would help devout souls to appreciate more easily his great zeal and wisdom in praying thus. This is true whether, in doing so, he wished to move God in some wonderful manner through his prayer or whether he felt through some interior inspiration that God was to move him to seek some singular grace for himself or his neighbor. He then shone with the spiritual insight of David, the ardor of Elias, the charity of Christ, and with a profound devotion.

The Seventh Way of Prayer

While praying he was often seen to reach towards heaven like an arrow which has been shot from a taut bow straight upwards into the sky. He would stand with hands outstretched above his head and joined together, or at times slightly separated as if about to receive something from heaven. One would believe that he was receiving an increase of grace and in this rapture of spirit was asking God for the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the Order he had founded.

He seemed to seek for himself and his brethren something of that transcendent joy which is found in living the beatitudes, praying that each would consider himself truly blessed in extreme poverty, in bitter mourning, in cruel persecutions, in a great hunger and thirst for justice, in anxious mercy towards all. His entreaty was that his children would find their delight in observing

the commandments and in the perfect practice of the evangelical counsels. Enraptured, the holy father then appeared to have entered into the Holy of Holies and the Third Heaven. After prayer of this kind he truly seemed to be a prophet, whether in correcting the faulty, in directing others, or in his preaching.

Our holy father did not remain at prayer of this type very long but gradually regained full possession of his faculties. He looked during that time like a person coming from a great distance or like a stranger in this world, as could easily be discerned from his countenance and manner. The brethren would then hear him praying aloud and saying as the prophet: “Hear, O Lord, the voice of my supplication which I pray to thee, when I lift up my hands to thy holy temple” [Ps 27:2].

Through his words and holy example he constantly taught the friars to pray in this way, often repeating those phrases from the psalms: “Behold, now bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord . . . in the nights lift up your hands to the holy places, and bless ye the Lord” (Ps 133:13), “I have cried to thee, O Lord, hear me; hearken to my voice when I cry to thee. Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight; the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice” (Ps 140:1-2). The drawing shows us this mode of prayer so that we may better understand it.

The Eighth Way of Prayer

Our father, Saint Dominic, had yet another manner of praying at once beautiful, devout, and pleasing, which he practiced after the canonical hours and the thanksgiving following meals. He was then zealous and filled with the spirit of devotion which he drew from the divine words which had been sung in the choir or refectory. Our father quickly withdrew to some solitary place, to his cell or elsewhere, and recollected himself in the presence of God. He would sit quietly, and after the sign of the cross, begin to read from a book opened before him. His spirit would then be sweetly aroused as if he heard Our Lord speaking, as we are told in the psalms: “I will hear what the Lord God will speak to me . . .” (Ps 84:9). As if disputing with a companion he would first appear somewhat impatient in his thought and words. At the next moment he would become a quiet listener, then again seem to discuss and contend. He seemed almost to laugh and weep at the same time, and then, attentively and submissively, would murmur to himself and strike his breast.

Should some curious person have desired to watch our holy father Dominic, he would have appeared to him like Moses who went into the desert, to Horeb, the sacred mountain of God, and there beheld the burning bush and heard the Lord speaking to him as he was bowed down in the divine presence. This holy custom of our father seems, as it were, to resemble the prophetic mountain of the Lord inasmuch as he quickly passed upwards from reading to prayer, from prayer to meditation, and from meditation to contemplation.

When he read alone in this solitary fashion, Dominic used to venerate the book, bow to it, and kiss it. This was especially true if he was reading the Gospels and when he had been reading the very words which had come from the mouth of Christ. At other times he would hide his face and cover it with his cappa, or bury his face in his hands and veil it slightly with the capuce. Then he would weep, all fervent and filled with holy desires. Following this, as if to render thanks to some person of great excellence for benefits received, he would reverently rise and incline his head for a short time. Wholly refreshed and in great interior peace, he then returned to his book.

The Ninth Way of Prayer

Our father, Saint Dominic, observed this mode of prayer while traveling from one country to another, especially when he passed through some deserted region. He then delighted in giving himself completely to meditation, disposing for contemplation, and he would say to his companion on the journey: *It is written in Osee* "I will lead her (my spouse) into the wilderness and I will speak to her ear" (*Osee* 2:14). Parting from his companion, he would go on ahead or, more frequently, follow at some distance. Thus withdrawn, he would walk and pray; in his meditation he was inflamed and the fire of charity was enkindled. While he prayed it appeared as if he were brushing dust or bothersome flies from his face when he repeatedly fortified himself with the Sign of the Cross.

The brethren thought that it was while praying in this way that the saint obtained his extensive penetration of Sacred Scripture and profound understanding of the divine words, the power to preach so fervently and courageously, and that intimate acquaintance with the Holy Spirit by which he came to know the hidden things of God.