

SAINT

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— *Saint Focus* —

ST. DOMINIC OF GUZMAN



Founder of the Order of Preachers, commonly known as the Dominican Order; born at Calaroga, in Old Castile, c. 1170; died 6 August, 1221. His parents, Felix Guzman and Joanna of Aza, undoubtedly belonged to the nobility of Spain, though probably neither was connected with the reigning house of Castile, as some of the saint's biographers assert.

Of Felix Guzman, personally, little is known, except that he was in every sense the worthy head of a family of saints. To nobility of blood Joanna of Aza added a nobility of soul which so enshrined her in the popular veneration that in 1828 she was

solemnly beatified by Leo XII. The example of such parents was not without its effect upon their children. Not only Saint Dominic but also his brothers, Antonio and Manes, were distinguished for their extraordinary sanctity. Antonio, the eldest, became a secular priest and, having distributed his patrimony to the poor, entered a hospital where he spent his life ministering to the sick. Manes, following in the footsteps of Dominic, became a Friar Preacher, and was beatified by Gregory XVI.

The birth and infancy of the saint were attended by many marvels forecasting his heroic sanctity and great achievements in the cause of religion. From his seventh to his fourteenth year he pursued his elementary studies under the tutelage of his maternal uncle, the archpriest of Gumiel d'Izan, not far distant from Calaroga.

In 1184 Saint Dominic entered the University of Palencia. Here he remained for ten years prosecuting his studies with such ardour and success that throughout the ephemeral existence of that institution he was held up to the admiration of its scholars as all that a student should be. Amid the frivolities and dissipations of a university city, the life of the future saint was characterized by seriousness of purpose and an austerity of manner which singled him out as one from whom great things might be expected in the future. But more than once he proved that under this austere exterior he carried a heart as tender as a woman's.

On one occasion he sold his books, annotated with his own hand, to relieve the starving poor of Palencia. His biographer and contemporary, Bartholomew of Trent, states that twice he tried to sell himself into slavery to obtain money for the liberation of those who were held in captivity by the Moors. These facts are worthy of mention in view of the cynical and saturnine

character which some non-Catholic writers have endeavoured to foist upon one of the most charitable of men. Concerning the date of his ordination his biographers are silent; nor is there anything from which that date can be inferred with any degree of certainty.

According to the deposition of Brother Stephen, Prior Provincial of Lombardy, given in the process of canonization, Dominic was still a student at Palencia when Don Martin de Bazan, the Bishop of Osma, called him to membership in the cathedral chapter for the purpose of assisting in its reform. In recognition of the part he had taken in converting its members into canons regular, Dominic was appointed sub-prior of the reformed chapter. On the accession of Don Diego d'Azevedo to the Bishopric of Osma in 1201, Dominic became superior of the chapter with the title of prior. As a canon of Osma, he spent nine years of his life, hidden in God and rapt in contemplation, scarcely passing beyond the confines of the chapter house.

In 1203 Alfonso IX, King of Castile, deputed the Bishop of Osma to demand from the Lord of the Marches, presumably a Danish prince, the hand of his daughter on behalf of the king's son, Prince Ferdinand. For his companion on this embassy Don Diego chose Saint Dominic. Passing through Toulouse in the pursuit of their mission, they beheld with amazement and sorrow the work of spiritual ruin wrought by the Albigensian heresy. It was in the contemplation of this scene that Dominic first conceived the idea of founding an order for the purpose of combating heresy and spreading the light of the Gospel by preaching to the ends of the then known world.

Their mission having ended successfully, Diego and Dominic were dispatched on a second embassy, accompanied by a splendid retinue, to escort the betrothed princess to Castile. This

mission, however, was brought to a sudden close by the death of the young woman in question. The two ecclesiastics were now free to go where they would, and they set out for Rome, arriving there towards the end of 1204. The purpose of this was to enable Diego to resign his bishopric that he might devote himself to the conversion of unbelievers in distant lands. Innocent III, however, refused to approve this project, and instead sent the bishop and his companion to Languedoc to join forces with the Cistercians, to whom he had entrusted the crusade against the Albigenses.

The scene that confronted them on their arrival in Languedoc was by no means an encouraging one. The Cistercians, on account of their worldly manner of living, had made little or no headway against the Albigenses. They had entered upon their work with considerable pomp, attended by a brilliant retinue, and well provided with the comforts of life. To this display of worldliness the leaders of the heretics opposed a rigid asceticism which commanded the respect and admiration of their followers. Diego and Dominic quickly saw that the failure of the Cistercian apostolate was due to the monks' indulgent habits, and finally prevailed upon them to adopt a more austere manner of life. The result was at once apparent in a greatly increased number of converts. Theological disputations played a prominent part in the propaganda of the heretics.

Dominic and his companion, therefore, lost no time in engaging their opponents in this kind of theological exposition. Whenever the opportunity offered, they accepted the gage of battle. The thorough training that the saint had received at Palencia now proved of inestimable value to him in his encounters with the heretics. Unable to refute his arguments or counteract the influence of his preaching, they visited their hatred upon him by means of repeated insults and threats of physical violence. With Prouille for his head-quarters, he laboured by turns

in Fanjeaux, Montpellier, Servian, Beziers, and Carcassonne. Early in his apostolate around Prouille the saint realized the necessity of an institution that would protect the women of that country from the influence of the heretics. Many of them had already embraced Albigensianism and were its most active propagandists. These women erected convents, to which the children of the Catholic nobility were often sent—for want of something better—to receive an education, and, in effect, if not on purpose, to be tainted with the spirit of heresy. It was needful, too, that women converted from heresy should be safeguarded against the evil influence of their own homes. To supply these deficiencies, Saint Dominic, with the permission of Foulques, Bishop of Toulouse, established a convent at Prouille in 1206. To this community, and afterwards to that of Saint Sixtus, at Rome, he gave the rule and constitutions which have ever since guided the nuns of the Second Order of Saint Dominic.

The year 1208 opens a new epoch in the eventful life of the founder. On 15 January of that year Pierre de Castelnau, one of the Cistercian legates, was assassinated. This abominable crime precipitated the crusade under Simon de Montfort, which led to the temporary subjugation of the heretics.

Saint Dominic participated in the stirring scenes that followed, but always on the side of mercy, wielding the arms of the spirit while others wrought death and desolation with the sword. Some historians assert that during the sack of Beziers, Dominic appeared in the streets of that city, cross in hand, interceding for the lives of the women and children, the aged and the infirm. This testimony, however, is based upon documents which Touron regards as certainly apocryphal.

The testimony of the most reliable historians tends to prove that the saint was neither in the city nor in its vicinity when Beziers was sacked by the crusaders. We find him generally dur-

ing this period following the Catholic army, reviving religion and reconciling heretics in the cities that had capitulated to, or had been taken by, the victorious de Montfort.

It was probably 1 September, 1209, that Saint Dominic first came in contact with Simon de Montfort and formed with him that intimate friendship which was to last till the death of the brave crusader under the walls of Toulouse (25 June, 1218). We find him by the side of de Montfort at the siege of Lavaur in 1211, and again in 1212, at the capture of La Penne d'Ajen. In the latter part of 1212 he was at Pamiers labouring, at the invitation of de Montfort, for the restoration of religion and morality. Lastly, just before the battle of Muret. 12 September, 1213, the saint is again found in the council that preceded the battle.

During the progress of the conflict, he knelt before the altar in the church of Saint-Jacques, praying for the triumph of the Catholic arms. So remarkable was the victory of the crusaders at Muret that Simon de Montfort regarded it as altogether miraculous, and piously attributed it to the prayers of Saint Dominic. In gratitude to God for this decisive victory, the crusader erected a chapel in the church of Saint-Jacques, which he dedicated, it is said, to Our Lady of the Rosary. It would appear, therefore, that the devotion of the Rosary, which tradition says was revealed to Saint Dominic, had come into general use about this time.

To this period, too, has been ascribed the foundation of the Inquisition by Saint Dominic, and his appointment as the first Inquisitor.

In the meantime, the saint's increasing reputation for heroic sanctity, apostolic zeal, and profound learning caused him to be much sought after as a candidate for various bishoprics. Three distinct efforts were made to miss him to the episcopate. In July,

1212, the chapter of Beziers chose him for their bishop. Again, the canons of Saint-Lizier wished him to succeed Garcias de l'Orte as Bishop of Comminges. Lastly, in 1215 an effort was made by Garcias de l'Orte himself, who had been transferred from—Comminges to Auch, to make him Bishop of Navarre. But Saint Dominic absolutely refused all episcopal honours, saying that he would rather take flight in the night, with nothing but his staff, than accept the episcopate.

From Muret Dominic returned to Carcassonne, where he resumed his preaching with unqualified success. It was not until 1214 that he returned to Toulouse. In the meantime the influence of his preaching and the eminent holiness of his life had drawn around him a little band of devoted disciples eager to follow wherever he might lead. Saint Dominic had never for a moment forgotten his purpose, formed eleven years before, of founding a religious order to combat heresy and propagate religious truth.

The time now seemed opportune for the realization of his plan. With the approval of Bishop Foulques of Toulouse, he began the organization of his little band of followers. That Dominic and his companions might possess a fixed source of revenue Foulques made him chaplain of Fanjeaux and in July, 1215, canonically established the community as a religious congregation of his diocese, whose mission was the propagation of true doctrine and good morals, and the extirpation of heresy.

Though the little community had proved amply the need of its mission and the efficiency of its service to the Church, it was far from satisfying the full purpose of its founder. It was at best but a diocesan congregation, and Saint Dominic had dreamed of a world-order that would carry its apostolate to the ends of the earth. But, unknown to the saint, events were shaping themselves for the realization of his hopes. In November, 1215, an

ecumenical council was to meet at Rome "to deliberate on the improvement of morals, the extinction of heresy, and the strengthening of the faith".

This was identically the mission Saint Dominic had determined on for his order. With the Bishop of Toulouse, he was present at the deliberations of this council. From the very first session it seemed that events conspired to bring his plans to a successful issue. The council bitterly arraigned the bishops for their neglect of preaching. In canon X they were directed to delegate capable men to preach the word of God to the people. Under these circumstances, it would reasonably appear that Dominic's request for confirmation of an order designed to carry out the mandates of the council would be joyfully granted. But while the council was anxious that these reforms should be put into effect as speedily as possible, it was at the same time opposed to the institution of any new religious orders, and had legislated to that effect in no uncertain terms. Moreover, preaching had always been looked upon as primarily a function of the episcopate. To bestow this office on an unknown and untried body of simple priests seemed too original and too bold in its conception to appeal to the conservative prelates who influenced the deliberations of the council. When, therefore, his petition for the approbation of his infant institute was refused, it could not have been wholly unexpected by Saint Dominic.

Returning to Languedoc at the close of the council in December, 1215, the founder gathered about him his little band of followers and informed them of the wish of the council that there should be no new rules for religious orders. Thereupon they adopted the ancient rule of Saint Augustine, which, on account of its generality, would easily lend itself to any form they might wish to give it. This done, Saint Dominic again appeared before the pope in the month of August, 1216, and again solicited the

confirmation of his order. This time he was received more favourably, and on 22 December, 1216, the Bull of confirmation was issued.

Saint Dominic spent the following Lent preaching in various churches in Rome, and before the pope and the papal court. It was at this time that he received the office and title of Master of the Sacred Palace, or Pope's Theologian, as it is more commonly called. This office has been held uninterruptedly by members of the order from the founder's time to the present day.

On 15 August, 1217, he gathered the brethren about him at Prouille to deliberate on the affairs of the order. He had determined upon the heroic plan of dispersing his little band of seventeen unformed followers over all Europe. The result proved the wisdom of an act which, to the eye of human prudence at least, seemed little short of suicidal. To facilitate the spread of the order, Honorius III, on 11 Feb., 1218, addressed a Bull to all archbishops, bishops, abbots, and priors, requesting their favour on behalf of the Order of Preachers. By another Bull, dated 3 Dec., 1218, Honorius III bestowed upon the order the church of Saint Sixtus in Rome. Here, amid the tombs of the Appian Way, was founded the first monastery of the order in Rome.

Shortly after taking possession of Saint Sixtus, at the invitation of Honorius, Saint Dominic began the somewhat difficult task of restoring the pristine observance of religious discipline among the various Roman communities of women. In a comparatively short time the work was accomplished, to the great satisfaction of the pope.

His own career at the University of Palencia, and the practical use to which he had put it in his encounters with the Albigenses, as well as his keen appreciation of the needs of the time,

convinced the saint that to ensure the highest efficiency of the work of the apostolate, his followers should be afforded the best educational advantages obtainable.

Having effected a foundation at the University of Paris, Saint Dominic next determined upon a settlement at the University of Bologna. Bertrand of Garrigua, who had been summoned from Paris, and John of Navarre, set out from Rome, with letters from Pope Honorius, to make the desired foundation. On their arrival at Bologna, the church of Santa Maria della Mascarella was placed at their disposal. So rapidly did the Roman community of Saint Sixtus grow that the need of more commodious quarters soon became urgent. Honorius, who seemed to delight in supplying every need of the order and furthering its interests to the utmost of his power, met the emergency by bestowing on Saint Dominic the basilica of Santa Sabina.

Towards the end of 1219, Dominic sent out letters to all the convents announcing the first general chapter of the order, to be held at Bologna on the feast of the following Pentecost. Shortly before, Honorius III, by a special Brief, had conferred upon the founder the title of Master General, which till then he had held only by tacit consent. At the very first session of the chapter in the following spring the saint startled his brethren by offering his resignation as master general. It is needless to say the resignation was not accepted and the founder remained at the head of the institute till the end of his life.

Soon after the close of the chapter of Bologna, Honorius III addressed letters to the abbeys and priories of San Vittorio, Sillia, Mansu, Floria, Vallombrosa, and Aquila, ordering that several of their religious be deputed to begin, under the leadership of Saint Dominic, a preaching crusade in Lombardy, where heresy had developed alarming proportions. For some reason or other the plans of the pope were never realized. The promised sup-

port failing, Dominic, with a little band of his own brethren, threw himself into the field, and, as the event proved, spent himself in an effort to bring back the heretics to their allegiance to the Church. It is said that 100,000 unbelievers were converted by the preaching and the miracles of the saint.

According to Lacordaire and others, it was during his preaching in Lombardy that the saint instituted the Militia of Jesus Christ, or the third order, as it is commonly called, consisting of men and women living in the world, to protect the rights and property of the Church. Towards the end of 1221 Saint Dominic returned to Rome for the sixth and last time. Here he received many new and valuable concessions for the order. In January, February, and March of 1221 three consecutive Bulls were issued commending the order to all the prelates of the Church-. The thirtieth of May, 1221, found him again at Bologna presiding over the second general chapter of the order. At the close of the chapter he set out for Venice to visit Cardinal Ugolino, to whom he was especially indebted for many substantial acts of kindness. He had scarcely returned to Bologna when a fatal illness attacked him. He died after three weeks of sickness, the many trials of which he bore with heroic patience. In a Bull dated at Spoleto, 13 July, 1234, Gregory IX made his cult obligatory throughout the Church.

The life of St. Dominic was one of tireless effort in the service of God. While he journeyed from place to place he prayed and preached almost uninterruptedly.—His penances were of such a nature as to cause the brethren, who accidentally discovered them. to fear the effect upon his life.

While his charity was boundless he never permitted it to interfere with the stern sense of duty that guided every action of his life. If he abominated heresy and laboured untiringly for its extirpation it was because he loved truth and loved the souls of

those among whom he laboured. He never failed to distinguish between sin and the sinner. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if this athlete of Christ, who had conquered himself before attempting the reformation of others, was more than once chosen to show forth the power of God.

The failure of the fire at Fanjeaux to consume the dissertation he had employed against the heretics, and which was thrice thrown into the flames; the raising to life of Napoleone Orsini; the appearance of the annals in the refectory of Saint Sixtus in response to his prayers, are but a few of the supernatural happenings by which God was pleased to attest the eminent holiness of His servant. We are not surprised, therefore, that, after signing the Bull of canonization on 13 July, 1234, Gregory IX declared that he no more doubted the saintliness of Saint Dominic than he did that of Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

