



**DOMINICAN SISTERS OF CHARITY OF THE
PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

CELEBRATION:

*Eighth Centenary of the Birth into Heaven (Dies Natalis)
of St. Dominic Guzman*

*And of the 325th Anniversary of the Founding of the Congregation
by Marie Poussepin*

CONFERENCE:

Dominic Guzman: Apostle of Hope in times of Despair

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For more than two millennia, since the birth of the Church at Pentecost, God – through the outpouring of his Holy Spirit – has raised charisms, has entrusted the mission of announcing the Good News revealed in Jesus Christ, to an infinite number of servants, in a multitude of lifestyles, and in a diversity of gifts. But no charism, no style of life so closely resembled, nor cemented its origins and vocation to the example of those who were the first to be called to preach the truth, and to be witnesses of the truth itself – the Apostles – as did by divine will, **the Order of Preachers.**

“God impelled Saint Dominic to found an “Order of Preachers”, preaching being the mission that Jesus entrusted to the Apostles” (Address of the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the General Chapter of the Order of Preachers. August 4, 2016). Within the Church, there are many ways

and means of preaching the Good News of the Gospel, and many are the gifts that are raised up for the service of the brethren, for the benefit of the Church, for the glory of God and the salvation of mankind. However in response to the call to be witnesses to the truth revealed in Jesus Christ, the charism of the Order of Preachers has been and continues to be the original successors of the charism and mission of the Apostles. Since, following their example, they become witnesses to the truth through study and contemplation, and through preaching and life in common, they become apostles, heralds of truth and charity.

What we know about our Father St. Dominic is from the testimonies and voices of those who saw him, heard him and followed him. In spite of the fact that we have received only one or two texts in the handwriting of this holy man, we know him better from what others say about him than from what the saint may have written in his own writings. Thus, as I see it, what Jesus declared and which has come down to us in some lines of the Gospels, namely: "By their fruits you will know them" (Mt 7: 16ff), is also fulfilled in St. Dominic.

The life and work of St. Dominic that we know comes to us not only in the testimonies of the written word, but also through the living word expressed and communicated in good fruits that the good trees have borne from the first moments, which are none other than those who shared with Dominic the itinerant paths and the mission of preaching. If we decide to listen carefully to those voices that testified that a light had been born to illuminate the paths of the Church, perhaps we would realize that those voices were crying out that a Man of the Gospel, a new Apostle had been sent by God to preach, in the example of the first 12 apostles.

Dominic is presented by those who lived with him as a “man zealous for the salvation of his brothers and sisters, assiduous in prayer; animated by a great spirit of penance; a lover of poverty and common life; discreet, patient, peaceful, kind, merciful” (D’Amato OP. [S.f.] The Project of St. Dominic, p. 5).

According to the testimonies that portray and outline the profile of Saint Dominic Guzman, you and I will agree that the set of qualities and virtues with which Dominic’s biographers continually present the life and work of the Saint of Caleruega is more than enough to earn him the title of the Apostle.

Dominic, besides sharing with the first 12 Apostles, the qualities that are described above, the founder of the Order of Preachers shares an overflowing dedication to the practice of charity. Charity is the great driving force behind the work and proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the Good News of Jesus Christ. Charity is also the driving force behind the foundation of an order dedicated to preaching, like the Apostles, the truth of God, of Jesus Christ, of his life, work and of his message, throughout the world.

O Lumen Ecclesiae, Doctor Veritatis. These are the first lines of one of the hymns in honor of St. Dominic Guzman that usually accompanies the end of Compline (Night Prayer) in the chapels of the convents of nuns, sisters, brothers and laity. Light and truth, truth and light, the inseparable binomial that symbolizes and outlines the life and mission of Dominic Guzman, and with him, of every preacher. Charity is translated into light, and light becomes Truth, the Truth of God, of his love; in the same way, Truth is light for those who follow it, and this light irrevocable becomes the life of charity with the

brethren. In this way, and according to God's will, the preacher, following the example of Dominic Guzman, finds Truth in Charity and Charity leading him to Truth.

Dominic always professed an immeasurable love for the truth, and therein lies part of his originality and part of his project to revitalize the Church and to lead it back to God's project. Dominic, like the Apostles, chose love for God above all things, and decided to manifest that love by loving the truth, divine truth. That is why Dominic is an Apostle, because he loves God and that love makes him fall in love with the Truth, and that truth is itself love. Thus, it is understood that Dominic's project and his whole life is charity in truth, Truth in Charity. And this reality makes Dominic an Apostle.

Truth is therefore, in the Dominican tradition, person and message, cause and effect, being and mission. Truth is person, because it corresponds to Jesus Christ, to his being as Son of God, to his truth as Savior, and to his call to mission. The Person of Jesus Christ, and his self-revelation as the truth (Jn 14:6), is the foundation of the Project of Dominic Guzman, since, in a world of heresy and loss, in his preaching, the truth of what is true is glorified, becomes present, becomes evident and becomes accessible, saving the souls of those who walked in uncertainty, with the very strength of the one who is the truth. Jesus is the truth, and his message is true, therefore, love for the truth is love for Jesus and love for his message.

Truth is a cause, since it arouses restlessness and inflames knowledge, to the continuous search for truth, to the assiduous study of the objective, of the undeniable, the real; at the same time, truth is an effect. Study is a relationship of intimacy between the one who knows and that which is known; the effect of knowing is none other than the affection for that which

is penetrated in the intimate process of unveiling what is known. The intimacy of knowing is the love born from that which is known.

Finally, truth is **being**, since it determines a way of being in the world, a way of relating, a way of facing and a way of hoping. To know what truth is, to know who truth is, and is therefore to love the one who is known and to love his message. This determines a special way of understanding and recognizing oneself, of building identity, of discovering the mission. In the same way, truth in the Dominican tradition is the discovery of who I am and what I am to be. It is the same truth that leads to discovering what I want to be, what I want to dedicate my life to, and what my mission is.

For the Church, Dominic is a Doctor of the Truth, because, in addition to all the above, he is a man with the word of wisdom, following the apostle of the Gentiles in the first letter to the Corinthians. According to St. Paul, “the Word of Wisdom is the gift of knowing and making known the highest mysteries of the faith, of knowing and making known that which is ‘mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory...’ (1Cor. 2:7ff)” (D’Amato, p. 5). In this way, Dominic pursues the salvation of the souls of his brothers and sisters, not in just any way, but by leading them to contemplate the very face of God, to feel it, experience it, live it in Truth and for the Truth.

In addition to all the above, according to St. Catherine of Siena, in a spiritual ecstasy in which she conversed with God and whose dialogue was recorded in the treatise on providence, God revealed to her that: “Each Order shines by the brilliance of some particular virtue... although all the virtues receive the life of Charity.... Your father Dominic wanted his brothers to have no other thought than my honor and the salvation of souls, through the light of wisdom. And it is precisely from this light that he formed the main

aim of the Order, with a desire to remove the errors that were spread in his time. He took the office of the Word, my only-begotten Son. An apostle appeared in the world; with so much truth and light he sowed my word, dispelling the darkness and projecting the light. He was a beacon that I placed in the world..." (St. Catherine of Siena, THE DIALOGUE, Treatise on Divine Providence, n. 158).

Following the testimony of St. Catherine, we can describe a part of Dominic's life and work that he was chosen by God, and that, in response, the Spanish saint consecrated his life to the worship of Truth. Dominic, and with him all preachers, make the mission of Divine Truth their own, a truth loved, studied, contemplated, lived, preached and defended.

On the other hand, Dominic is a light for the Church not only because of his love and devotion in charity to the Truth, but also because he knew how to be a model of hope in the midst of his own brothers; and with them, even more so, in the midst of the preachers of our time. Dominic is a model of hope because he fixed his gaze on the light that does not die out, that does not extinguish, that does not diminish and that, therefore, always lights the path to follow: The Crucified One.

As we said before, one part of Dominic's mission, life and work is explained by the binomial of charity in Truth, Truth in Charity; the missing part is explained by the binomial of contemplation and giving. Dominic perfectly personifies the Samaritan woman who, meeting Jesus at Jacob's well, asks him for the water that quenches her thirst for ever. Dominic is a model of hope because like Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, he has chosen to contemplate the master.

Dominic's hope, which is the Dominican hope, is based on the certainty of always counting on the voice of God, regardless of place, date and time, which allows itself to be heard in contemplation and in communion with Him and which moves us to communicate the good news to our brothers and sisters.

Dominic is an Apostle because he has reserved for himself and his own the apostolic mission: prayer and the ministry of the word [preaching]; and he is an apostle of hope because he has made contemplation the driving force or vital impulse of the preacher's work. However, it is a contemplation not only in a vertical order, from the bottom to the top, but also in a horizontal order, sideways, in which Dominic encounters the face of his brothers and sisters. In this way Dominican hope is founded on contemplation, but in a contemplation that consists in fixing one's gaze on the faces of the brothers and sisters with whom one shares life, mission and bread; Dominican hope is thus translated into common life. In this way, the Dominican heritage teaches us that hope is to fix one's gaze always on God, but also that our brothers, sisters, are support, are pillars, are guides.

It is in common life that the Dominican finds the strength to detach himself radically from the goods of this world, thus ensuring an exclusive love for God and for his brothers and sisters. And it is precisely for this reason that common life and contemplation are the pillars of Dominican hope, which are at the same time the pillars of the hope of the Apostles. In contemplation the truth of God, and in common life Fraternal Charity. In contemplation, listening to the voice of God and fixing our gaze on his face; in common life, sharing what we contemplate.

From the above, a perennial conclusion: The Dominican Life Project is a project founded on hope, which lives on hope and preaches hope, in contemplation (Truth) and in common life (Charity and sharing of what is contemplated).

Many of you may object that contemplation and common life are not exclusive or original elements of the project of the Order of Preachers, and in this, you are right. However, its purpose, which is sought or intended through contemplation and common life are original within the project of the Order of Preachers and within the Church, namely: The salvation of our brothers and sisters.

Dominic Guzman builds his project of preaching, of love for the truth and in charity on the pillars of contemplation and common life because he seeks to fulfill God's will: "that everyone be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2: 4). Thus, St. Dominic, loving God above all things, loves what God loves and seeks what God seeks. This is precisely the reason why Dominic consecrates his life and his order to the salvation of souls. And with this vital purpose, he uses contemplation and life in common to seek the fulfillment of the Divine will: to love God, to love his neighbor, to bring his neighbor to God and to win his salvation.

Thus, the project of the Order of Preachers is a project consecrated to God and to the fulfillment of his will. This will is realized in the contemplation of the face of God, listening to his word in contemplation and in common life, in the search for our brothers and sisters seeking for their salvation in fraternal charity and in preaching as a gift of contemplation.

All these elements bring to light a supremely joyful reality for the preacher, and whether he spends more time in prayer, in the celebration of the liturgy, in study or in pastoral work, the Dominican is always seeking the salvation of his brethren, and with that, he loves what God loves and seeks what God seeks. And this is how hope materializes in the project of St. Dominic Guzman. In this way, Dominic is for the Church and for us, his preaching sons and daughters, an Apostle of Hope in times of despair.