

# **Saint Dominic, Confessor**

## **Founder of the Friars Preachers - Died in A.D. 1221**

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SAINT DOMINIC was born in the year 1170 at Calaruega, then Calaroga, in Castile, Spain, of which village his father, Felix de Guzman, was royal warden. Practically nothing is known with certainty of Don Felix, though the Guzmans were a noble family, with illustrious connections; his wife was Blessed Joan of Aza, and the few authentic particulars recorded of Dominic's birth and childhood are mentioned in Butler's Lives of the Saints under the 2nd day of this month, August, which is her feast-day. When he was fourteen years old, he left the care of his uncle, who was the archpriest of Gumiel d'Izan, and was entered at the school of Palencia. For six years, he followed the arts course, and then for four he studied theology, being while still a student made a canon of the cathedral of Osma by his bishop, Martin de Bazan; the stipend of this benefice enabled him to carry out his theological studies to their conclusion, and in 1195, he was ordained priest.

After his ordination, Dominic went to Osma and took up his duties as a canon. The chapter lived a community life under the Rule of Saint Augustine with constitutions provided by Martin de Bazan, and their regularity of observance was such as to provide an admirable school for the young priest. His life there was, so far as is known, undistinguished by outward event, a gathering of strength and exercising of virtues for the labors that were to come; he seldom left the canons' house and spent much time in church, 'weeping for the sins of others, and reading and putting into practice the Conferences of Cassian'.

Blessed Jordan of Saxony learned from those who had known the holy canon during this time that he appeared. 'as a bright ray of sunshine, in his own humble estimation the least among his brethren, in holiness the first, shedding around himself the fragrance of quickening life, like the sweet smell of pinewoods on a hot summer's day. He went on from strength to strength, like the wide-spreading olive and the slender tall cypress... A special grace had been given him by God, of experiencing sorrow for sinners, for those in trouble of any kind, and the thought of their misery wrung his heart with a grief that expressed itself outwardly in tears... He especially asked God that true charity should help him in the effective salvation of souls, for he could not regard himself as a real member of the mystical body of Christ until his whole time should be spent in gaining men, as his Lord had spent Himself for them on the cross.' It is not surprising then that he was soon made sub-prior, and when Diego d'Azevedo became bishop of Osma about 1201, he succeeded him as prior of the chapter. He was then thirty-one years old, and had been leading this contemplative life for six or seven years; it at last came to an end, and Dominic began his work in the world in unexpected fashion in 1203.

In that year, Alfonso IX, King of Castile, chose the Bishop of Osma to go as ambassador to the Lord of the Marches to negotiate a match between the daughter of that prince and his son, Prince Ferdinand. Which 'Marches' were in question is not known. Some take it for a province in the north

of Germany or in Sweden; others for a territory of that name in Limousin in France. The bishop took Dominic with him. On their way, they passed through Languedoc, which was then filled with the heresy of the Albigenses. He in whose house they lodged at Toulouse professed it, and Saint Dominic, pierced to the heart with compassion for the man, spent the whole night in discussion with him, and with such effect that with the light of morning came the light of faith, and the man abjured his errors. It is generally supposed that from this moment Dominic knew what work God required of him. They proceeded on their journey, the treaty of marriage was concluded, and the ambassadors returned to Spain; then they were sent back with a suitable retinue to conduct the princess thither. They arrived at her father's house only to assist at her funeral, so they sent back their equipage into Spain, and went themselves to Rome to ask of Pope Innocent III leave to go to preach the Gospel to the infidels in the East. The Pope at once appreciated their zeal and virtue, but exhorted them rather to choose the neighboring harvest and to oppose a heresy which threatened the Church at home.

The bishop begged that he might be allowed to resign his episcopal see in Spain. This his Holiness would not consent to, but gave him leave to stay two years in Languedoc. On their return, they made a visit to Citeaux, whose monks were the officially appointed organizers and preachers against the Albigenses; here Don Diego received the Cistercian habit, and almost at once set out for his diocese with Saint Dominic and a band of missionaries. But at Montpellier, they met the Abbot of Citeaux, together with two monks, Peter of Castelnau and Raoul of Fontfroide, who had been in charge of the missions in Languedoc, and Diego and Dominic confirmed their observations of why all these efforts against the heresy were fruitless.

The Albigensian system was based on the dualism of two opposing principles, good and evil, and all matter was regarded as in itself evil; therefore the reality of the Incarnation was denied and all the sacraments rejected: human perfection, so far as it was attainable, required complete abstinence from procreation and the minimum of eating and drinking; suicide was, indeed, a most praiseworthy act. The rank and file of the Albigensians did not attempt any such austerity of life, but the inner circle of the 'Perfect' maintained an heroic standard of purity and asceticism, against which the rather easygoing observance of the Cistercian monks looked mediocre. In the circumstances, a reasonable use of material things was the wrong weapon for Christian orthodoxy to use: the good common people followed those who were obviously leading an heroic life for Christ – and these were not the Cistercian preachers. When they saw this, Saint Dominic and the Bishop of Osma invited these preachers to follow more closely the example of their opponents: to give up travelling with horses and retinues and staying at the best inns, with servants to wait on them. Then, when they had shown themselves worthy of being listened to, to use persuasion and peaceful discussion, rather than threats and over-bearingness.

The task was the more difficult and dangerous in that Albigensianism was a different religion rather than a heresy from Christianity, and in its more fanatical forms threatened human society as such. Dominic maintained that its spreading torrent could be stemmed, and God was pleased to make his preaching the instrument of His grace to open the ears and to soften the hearts of many. And the example he urged others to give he was the first to give himself: except out of consideration for others he rarely ate more than bread and soup, his wine was two-thirds water, he slept on the floor unless, tired out with walking and talking, he lay down by the side of the road.

The first conference of the missionaries with the heretics was held at Servian in 1206 and lasted eight days, during which several remarkable conversions were wrought. They preached after this,

for eight days at Beziers, where the far greater number shut their ears against the Catholic faith. Diego and Dominic proceeded thence to Carcassonne, Verfeuil, Fanjeaux, Pamiers, and Montreal, but nowhere did they have any startling success. At one public debate, the judges submitted Saint Dominic's statement of the Catholic faith to the ordeal by fire, and three times the written parchment was rejected unharmed by the flames. But the hold of the heresy, supported for their own reasons by the great lords, temporal and spiritual, was too strong, and neither right-living, exposition, nor miracles could move the people. The beginning of the mission was a failure, and the disappointed Diego returned to Osma, leaving his companion in France. But before he went, Saint Dominic had already taken that step which was the first in the definite foundation of his order, by which the tide of Albigensianism began to be stayed. He was greatly concerned by the activities of women in the propagation of Albigensianism (the 'ordinary woman' had more intellectual influence in the Middle Ages than she has now), and also by the fact that many Catholic girls of good family were, on the one hand, exposed to evil influences in their homes and, on the other, were sent to Albigensian convents to be educated.

On the feast of Saint Mary Magdalen, 1206, he had a sign from Heaven, and in consequence of it within six months he had founded at Prouille, near Fanjeaux, a monastery of our Lady to shelter nine nuns, all of whom were converts from the heresy. 'He put these servants of Christ under the protection of wonderful observance, of strict silence, and permanent enclosure. He gave them the spinning of wool as their manual work to occupy them in the intervals of their religious exercises. He entrusted the care of their souls to the brothers of his order established outside the cloister, keeping for himself, with the title of prior, the spiritual administration of the convent,' wrote Humbert de Romans. It would appear that a house of the "brothers" referred to was founded at the same time and place. Thus, Saint Dominic began to provide for a supply of trained and virtuous preachers, for a shelter for converted ladies, for the education of girls, and for a permanent house of prayer.

The murder of the Pope's legate, Peter of Castelnau, who was assassinated by a servant of the Count of Toulouse and another ruffian, on January 15, 1208, and other outrages committed by the heretics, let loose a crusade, with all the attendant horrors of civil war. The Albigensians were led by Raymund, Count of Toulouse, the Catholics by Simon de Montfort, *de iure* (by law) Earl of Leicester, who captured Fanjeaux in 1209, Lavaur in 1211, La Penne d'Agen in 1212. Beziers was sacked and the population decimated, and the victories of Montfort were everywhere accompanied by harsh and cruel severity.

In this, Saint Dominic had no share, and made use of no other arms to repulse injuries than those of meekness and patience. He never complained of insults or wrongs which he received, courageously encountered every danger wherever the good of souls called him, and sought only all the good in his power for those who hated and persecuted him. When a guide deliberately led him out of his way, through briery thickets and over rocks, Dominic smilingly thanked him for showing him a short cut; when he had escaped from assassins, he replied to a heretic who asked what he would do if he were caught, that, 'I would ask you to kill me slowly and painfully, a little at a time, and so earn a more glorious crown in Heaven.' All this was very different from the methods of the official converters.

When the army of the crusade approached, the saint redoubled his earnestness among the people, and saved many. When he went among the crusaders, the disorders, vices, and ignorance of the mysteries of faith and duties of a Christian life, which he found in many, who had joined that army merely for the sake of plunder, moved his compassion and zeal, and he labored among them with no

less diligence than among the Albigenses. The military power of the heretics, under Peter of Aragon, was finally crushed at the battle of Muret in 1213, a remarkable victory, which Simon de Montfort attributed to the prayers of Saint Dominic, on his knees in the church of Saint James. But to the sorrow of the saint, who was the more distressed at the Earl's excesses because they were personal friends of one another, the war was unjustly carried on for aggression and conquest till Montfort was killed in battle in 1218. Dominic himself had no illusions as to the efficacy or propriety of inducing Christian orthodoxy by military activity nor, as is sometimes alleged, had he anything to do with the establishment of inquisitions in concert with the civil power, which was done from the end of the twelfth century, in that part of France (the Midi) recently reclaimed from the heretics.

(Footnote: The Dominican order later received charge of the Inquisition with unwillingness. In 1243, they asked to be relieved of the commission, but Pope Innocent IV refused the petition. The provincial chapter of Cahors in the next year forbade the acceptance of any monies accruing from its work. The fifth master general, Blessed Humbert de Romans, instructed the friars to avoid its duties whenever possible. Only two of the inquisitors general of Spain were Dominicans: the notorious and somewhat maligned Torquemada was one of them.)

He never appears to have in any way concurred in the execution of any of those unhappy persons that then suffered. The authors of his life mention, that by his entreaties he saved the life of a young man who was going to the place where he was to be burnt, the saint assuring the judges that he would die in the Catholic faith; which was verified when, some years after, he became a Catholic and made a happy end in Saint Dominic's own order. The original historians mention no other arms to have been used by him against the heretics than those of instruction, patience, penance, fasting, tears, and prayer; and he rebuked his ex-troubadour supporter, Foulques, Bishop of Toulouse, when he went on a visitation accompanied by soldiers, servants, and sumpter-mules (pack-mules), with the words, 'The enemies of the Faith cannot be overcome like that. Arm yourself with prayer, rather than a sword; wear humility rather than fine clothes.'

Three times efforts were made to raise him to the episcopate, of Beziers in 1212, of Comminges in 1213, of Navarre in 1215: each time he refused firmly. He was called to another work.

Saint Dominic had now spent nearly ten years preaching in Languedoc, and as leader, though with no canonical status, of a small band of special preachers, whom he had given a headquarters at Prouille. All this time he had worn the habit of a regular canon of Saint Augustine, and followed that rule. But he earnestly desired to revive an apostolic spirit in the ministers of the altar, the want of which in many was a subject of great scandal to the people, and a great source of the overflowing of vice and heresy. This spirit is founded on a sincere contempt of the world and a perfect disinterestedness; for so long as the love of the world and attachment to its vanity, delights, and riches, keeps possession of a heart there can be no room for the Holy Ghost.

The fences by which this spirit had been formerly maintained in the clergy were then by custom easily broken through by many without scruple, and he designed to raise others that might be stronger. With this view, he projected an order of religious men, not like the monks who were contemplatives and not necessarily priests, but who to retirement and exercises of contemplation should join a close application to sacred studies and all the functions of a pastoral life, especially that of preaching. He wished to prescribe perpetual abstinence from flesh meat and severe poverty, that his friars should receive their subsistence from the alms of the faithful, and that they should be

organized in such a way that their activities could be extended under central control from one diocese to any part of the Church, forming an institution of a sort new in Christian history.

The principal aim of the saint was to multiply in the Church zealous preachers, whose spirit and example might be a means more easily to spread the light of faith and the fire of divine charity, and to assist the pastors in healing the wounds which the Church had received from false doctrine and ill-living. In order that he might have means at his disposal Foulques of Toulouse in 1214 gave him a benefice at Fanjeaux and extended his episcopal approval to the embryonic order in the following year. A few months later Dominic accompanied Foulques to the Fourth Lateran Council as his theologian.

Pope Innocent III, who had then governed the Church eighteen years, received the saint with great kindness and gave his approbation of the nunnery of Prouille. Moreover, he drew up a decree, which he inserted as the tenth canon of the council, to enforce the obligation of preaching, and the necessity of choosing for pastors men who are powerful in words and works, who will instruct and edify their flocks both by example and preaching, a neglect of which was the source of the ignorance, disorders, and heresies that then reigned in several provinces, and ordering that fit men be selected specially for this office of preaching. But to get approval for Dominic's great project was no easy matter: it contained too many innovations for permission to be given hurriedly, especially as that very Council had legislated against the multiplication of new religious orders. It is said that Innocent had decided to refuse but that, the night following, the Pope dreamed he saw the Lateran church in danger of falling, and that Saint Dominic stepped in and supported it with his shoulders. Be that as it may, the Pope at last gave a guarded approval of the new order by word of mouth, bidding the founder return to his brethren and select which of the already approved rules they would follow.

They met at Prouille in August, 1216 and after consultation with his sixteen colleagues, of whom eight were Frenchmen, seven Spaniards, and one Englishman, he made choice of the rule of Saint Augustine, the oldest and least detailed of the existing rules, written for priests by a priest, who was himself an eminent preacher. Saint Dominic added certain particular constitutions, some borrowed from the order of Premontre. Pope Innocent III died on July 18, 1216, and Honorius III was chosen in his place. This change retarded Saint Dominic's second journey to Rome; and in the meantime he finished his first friary at Toulouse, to which the bishop gave the church of Saint Roniain, and wherein the first community of Dominicans under the rule of Saint Augustine assembled and began community life under vows.

Saint Dominic arrived at Rome with a copy of his constitutions in October 1216. He found access to his Holiness difficult for some time, but eventually Honorius III confirmed his order and its constitutions by two bulls, dated 22nd and 23rd December, the same year: 'Considering that the religious of your order will be champions of the faith and a true light of the world, we confirm your order.' Instead of returning at once to Toulouse, Saint Dominic remained in Rome till after Easter, preaching with great effect. He pointed out to the Pope that many of the clerics attached to his court could not attend outside lectures and courses of instruction, and therefore a domestic master of sacred studies in his residence would be of great advantage. His Holiness thereupon created the office of Master of the Sacred Palace, who by his place is the Pope's personal canonist and theologian, assists at consistories, and nominates the Pope's preachers. Pope Honorius obliged Saint Dominic to take upon himself that charge, which has been ever since committed to one of his order.

The saint wrote at Rome a commentary on the epistles of Saint Paul, much commended by writers of that age, but now lost; he had learned what an inexhaustible treasure of piety and spiritual knowledge a Christian preacher will draw from the inspired writings of this apostle. It was during this time that he formed his friendships with Cardinal Ugolino, afterwards Pope Gregory IX, and Saint Francis of Assisi. The story goes that Dominic saw in a vision the sinful world threatened by the divine anger but saved by the intercession of our Lady, who pointed out to her Son two figures, in one of whom Saint Dominic recognized himself, but the other was a stranger. Next day while at prayer in a church he saw a ragged beggar come in, and recognized him at once as the man of his dream; going up to him therefore, he embraced him and said, 'You are my companion and must walk with me. For if we hold together no earthly power can withstand us.' This meeting of the two founders of the friars is commemorated twice a year, when on their respective feast-days the brethren of the two orders sing Mass in each other's churches, and afterwards sit at the same table 'to eat that bread which for seven centuries (and more) has never been wanting.'

The character of Saint Dominic is sometimes assumed to suffer by comparison with Saint Francis. The comparison is a meaningless one, for actually the two men complete and are complementary to one another, the one corrects and fills out the other: they meet on the common ground of the Faith, tenderness, and love.

On August 13, 1217, the Friars Preachers met under their leader at Prouille. He instructed them on their method of preaching and teaching and exhorted them to unremitting study, but in particular reminded them that their first business was their own sanctification, that they were to be the successors of the Apostles in establishing the kingdom of Christ.

He added instructions on humility, distrust of themselves and an entire confidence in God alone, by which they were to stand invincible under afflictions and persecutions, and courageously to carry on the war against the world and the powers of Hell. Then, on the feast of the Assumption, to the surprise of all, for heresy was again gaining ground in all the neighborhood, Saint Dominic broke up his band of friars and dispersed them in all directions. 'We must sow the seed,' he said, 'not hoard it. You shall no longer live together in this house.' Four were sent to Spain, seven to Paris, two returned to Toulouse, two remained at Prouille, and the founder himself in the following December went back to Rome. He wished that he might now resign his part in the nascent order and go into the East to evangelize the Cuman Tartars; but this was not to be.

On his arrival in Rome, the Pope gave him the church of Saint Sixtus (San Sisto Vecchio), and while making a foundation there the saint lectured on theology, both in the Palace and in the City, and preached in Saint Peter's with such eloquence as to draw the attention and admiration of the whole city. Theodoric relates that a certain gentlewoman named Gutadona, coming home one day from hearing his sermon, found her little child dead. In her grief, she took him in her arms out of the cradle, and carrying him to Saint Sixtus's, laid him at the feet of the saint. He was moved to compassion and, after saying a fervent prayer, made the sign of the cross on the child, and restored him to life. The Pope would have published this miracle in the pulpit, but the entreaties of Dominic prevented him. He likewise raised, whole and sound, a mason who had been crushed by the fall of a vault in building the convent of Saint Sixtus, and restored to health a religious man, whilst his brethren were reciting by his bedside the prayers appointed for one dying.

At this time a large number of nuns lived in Rome without keeping enclosure, and almost without regularity, some dispersed in small monasteries, others in the houses of their parents or friends.

Pope Innocent III had made several attempts to assemble all such nuns into one enclosed house, but had not been able, with all his authority, to compass it. Honorius III committed the management of this reformation to Saint Dominic. The saint desired that three cardinals should be nominated commissaries with him, and his Holiness appointed Ugolino, Dean of the Sacred College, Nicholas, Bishop of Tusculum, and Stephen of Fossa Nuova. Saint Dominic, in order to remove several difficulties, offered to leave to these nuns his own monastery of Saint Sixtus, which was built and then ready to receive them, and which Innocent III had formerly offered them; and he received for his friars a house of the Savelli, on the Aventine, with the church of Saint Sabina.

The monastery of Saint Mary, beyond the Tiber, was the principal and most obstinate of those that were to be thus reformed. The saint went there with the three cardinals, and exhorted the nuns with such force of reasoning and so much charity that he overcame their objections. The abbess first of all, then all the nuns, except one, agreed to obey, but no sooner were the commissaries gone than the parents, friends, and protectors of the nuns ran thither, and buzzed it in their ears that they would repent at leisure of so hasty a step, which could never be recalled; that their house was too ancient and noble, their conduct too virtuous and irreproachable, their privileges of too old a standing to be abrogated, and that no authority could submit them to rules to which they had never engaged themselves, and under which they would never have taken up that manner of life. Accordingly, the whole community changed their former mind and determined not to comply. Saint Dominic gave them some days to reflect, and prevented the Pope from having recourse to strong measures, which never gain the heart and are seldom expedient in duties, which must be voluntary; in the meantime, he fasted and prayed, recommending the matter to God. After some days he went again to Saint Mary's, said Mass there, and afterwards spoke to the nuns, reproaching them for their reluctance, saying, 'Can you then repent of a promise you have made to God? Can you refuse to give yourselves up to Him without reserve, and to serve Him with your whole hearts?'

His natural sweetness was hard for anyone to resist, and his exhortation was so strong and affecting that at the end of it, the abbess and all her nuns confirmed their readiness to comply in all things with the Pope's wishes. They moreover asked that the saint himself would be their director and give them his own rule; to which he agreed.

It is related that when, on Ash Wednesday in 1218, the abbess and some of her nuns went to their new monastery of Saint Sixtus, and were in the chapter house with Saint Dominic and the three cardinals, a messenger ran in to say that the young Napoleon, Cardinal Stephen's nephew, was thrown from his horse and killed. At this news, the saint endeavored first to alleviate Stephen's grief; then ordered the body of Napoleon to be brought into the house, and bid Brother Tancred make an altar ready that he might say Mass. When he had prepared himself, the cardinals with their attendants, the abbess with her nuns, the friars, and a great concourse of people went to the church. The Sacrifice being ended, Dominic, standing by the body, disposed the bruised limbs in their proper places, prayed, rose from his knees, and made the sign of the cross over the corpse; then, lifting up his hands to Heaven, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Napoleon, I say to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, arise.' That instant, in the sight of all, the young man arose sound and whole.

A foundation having been successfully made by Friar Matthew of France at the University of Paris, Saint Dominic sent some brethren to the University of Bologna, where, under the guidance of Blessed Reginald of Orleans, one of the most famous of Dominican establishments was set on foot. In 1218, he took a journey through Languedoc into Spain, and founded a friary at Segovia, and

another at Madrid, with a convent of nuns directed by his brother, Blessed Manes Guzman. He returned to Toulouse in April 1219, and from thence went to Paris, the first and only visit he made to that city. After two months, he left Paris, and having founded convents on his road at Avignon, Asti, and Bergamo, arrived at Bologna, about the end of summer in 1219, which city he made his ordinary residence to the end of his life. In 1220, Pope Honorius III officially confirmed Dominic's title and office as master general, and at Pentecost was held the first general chapter of the order, at Bologna, at which were drawn up the final constitutions which made the organization of the Friars Preachers 'the most perfect of all the monastic organizations produced by the Middle Ages'. (Hauck). In the same year, the Pope ordered the Dominicans to undertake a preaching crusade in Lombardy, in company with certain monks. Saint Dominic took the field, but the mission was abortive, although 100,000 heretics are said to have been reconciled.

Wherever the saint travelled, he preached; and he never ceased to pray for the conversion of infidels and sinners. It was his earnest desire, if it had been God's will, to shed his blood for Christ, and to travel among the barbarous nations of the earth to announce to them the good news of eternal life. Therefore did he make the ministry of the word the chief end of his institute: he would have all his religious to be applied to it, every one according to his capacity, and those who had particular talents for it never to discontinue the office of preaching, except in intervals allotted to retirement that they might preach to themselves in silence. The vocation of his friars is 'to hand on to others the fruits of contemplation', and for this high work he prepares the religious by long habits of virtue, especially of prayer, humility, self-denial, and obedience. It was a saying, which he frequently repeated to them, 'That a man who governs his passions is master of the world. We must either rule them, or be ruled by them. It is better to be the hammer than the anvil.' He taught his missionaries the art of preaching to the heart by animating them with charity.

Being once asked after preaching in what book he had studied his sermon, 'In no other,' said he, 'than in that of love.' Learning, study of the Bible, and teaching were from the beginning of first importance in the order: some of its chief achievements have been in intellectual work and the founder has been called 'the first minister of public instruction in modern Europe.'

But an eminent spirit of prayer and recollection has at all times been the characteristic of the Dominicans, as it was of Saint Dominic. A great figure in the order, Bartholomew de Martyribus, Archbishop of Braga, addresses himself to all pastors on this subject:

'Woe to you, ministers of the Lord, if the source of religion be dried up in your souls. This tender and sincere spirit of piety is the spring of living water, which gives fertility to all our virtues and sanctifies all our actions, which without it are dry and barren. This is the heavenly wine, which fortifies our hearts with a joy altogether divine. This is the balsam, which mollifies our passions. It is the tongue with which we speak to God, and without which our souls are dumb before Him. It is this that draws down upon us the heavenly dew that strengthens our hearts; it is the spiritual nourishment which enables us to labor with fruit in the vineyard of the Lord.'

Saint Dominic was inflexible in maintaining the severe discipline he had established. Coming back to Bologna in 1220, after seeing the poverty of Saint Francis at Crimean, he was so much offended to find the convent of his friars in that city being built in a stately manner not consistent with his idea of the austere poverty and penance, which he professed by his rule, that he would not allow the work to be continued. This was the discipline and strength that was behind the rapid spread of his order; by the second general chapter in 1221, it had some sixty friaries divided into eight provinces;



friars had already got to Poland, Scandinavia, and Palestine, and Brother Gilbert with twelve others had established monasteries in Canterbury, London, and Oxford. The Order of Preachers is still world-wide.

After the second general chapter, which was held at Bologna, Dominic visited Cardinal Ugolino at Venice. On his return, he was ill, and he was taken to a country place for the better air. But he knew he was dying. To his brethren he spoke of the beauty of chastity, and, having no temporal goods, made his last testament in these words: 'These, my much-loved ones, are the bequests which I leave to you as my sons: have charity among you; hold to humility; keep willing poverty.' He spoke more at length on this subject of poverty, and then at his request was carried back to Bologna that he might be buried 'under the feet of his brethren'. Gathered round him, they said the prayers for the dying; at the Subvenite, ('Come to his aid, O saints of God') Saint Dominic repeated those great words, and died.

It was the evening of 6th August, 1221; he was fifty-one years old; and he died in that poverty of which he had so lately spoken: 'in Brother Moneta's bed because he had none of his own; in Brother Moneta's habit, because he had not another to replace the one he had long been wearing.' It may be said of him after death what Blessed Jordan of Saxony wrote of him in life: 'Nothing disturbed the even temper of his soul except his quick sympathy with every sort of suffering. And as a man's face shows whether his heart is happy or not, it was easy to see from his friendly and joyous countenance that he was at peace inwardly. In spite of his unfailing gentleness and readiness to help, no one could ever despise his radiant nature, which won all who met him and made him attract people from the first.' When he signed the decree of canonization of his friend in 1234, Pope Gregory IX (Cardinal Ugolino) said that he no more doubted the sanctity of Dominic than he did that of Saint Peter or Saint Paul.

Saint Dominic, Pray for us.

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