



Monialibus 47

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"Unfinished thinking"

Always quiet life in community, in the monastery??

But a certain sense, yes, because our days are well punctuated by our services and the common and personal times ... This is precious and indispensable for us to move forward together on the path that God opens before us.

However, in recent months, our days have experienced a certain overload due to the common work of all our communities: the revision of the Constitutions that regulate our life, our common walk following Christ. The release of the VDQ and CO documents put us all to work. In 2019, a commission made up of nuns and canonists was set up to study the LCM and draft a document for the communities. A number of amendments have been submitted to the vote of each community.

In all our communities we have worked intensively on these documents, LCM in hand. Changes to adopt, improvements to be found. An exercise that at the same time has also made us more familiar with what is the foundation of our life. For me, at first, this work had a tedious side, but as this peregrination together through the paragraphs, the depth and meaning of these texts became more apparent.

Apart from this exceptional work, chapter meetings are still part of our lives. As we ourselves are responsible for how we live our lives, it is normal and important to do everything possible to ensure that these meetings are constructive, that they are true and open to our future, to the path that the Lord traces before us. Our community life depends on the words, the proposals, the questions that we offer each other .

Is there a recipe for "success"?? Or at least help? What can be the secret?

Reading a book composed of our Pope Francis' answers to a journalist, passages struck me. Some passage talk to me a lot and I often come back to them in order to learn how to live and practice what he calls "*unfinished thinking*".

Here is the passage taken from this book:

"The truth opens to the one who opens himself to it. (..). When things and people reveal their essence, they give us the certainty of their truth, the trustworthy proof that invites us to believe in them.

Opening ourselves to this kind of certainty requires humility in our own thinking to leave room for this gentle encounter with the good, the true, the beautiful

I learned this way of thinking from Romano GUARDINI (...) He showed me the value of unfinished thinking.

It develops a thought, but then it only accompanies you to a certain point before taking a break to give you room to think.

This creates a space where you can meet the truth yourself.

Fruitful thinking should always be unfinished to make room for further development. »

—Pope Francis (in *Wage zu träumen! Mit Zuversicht aus der Krise*)

He also joins this to what Blessed Brother Pierre Claverie gives us as the secret of his mission of encounter and dialogue, especially in a non-Christian land: "I need the truth of the other".

Yes, we always need the truth of the other, of each of us, expressed in words and by being. Mutual acceptance is the key that teaches us to move forward better together on the path that God opens before us.

Thank you to the sisters who in this bulletin introduce us to saints who have a privileged place in their lives. Let us entrust ourselves to them so that they may help us to enter ever better into the heart of our life, which is "to have only one heart and one soul in Christ!"

Enjoy your discovery!

Sr Lioba, op
Monastery of Prouilhe, France
Original: French



“From solidarity to synodality throughout fraternity”

The contribution of Dominican life to universal fraternity

The great challenge of being brothers and sisters to each other Mexico, July 2022

“One only lives when he lives with others and lives out of love”

J. R. Flecha



Dear Sisters:

Receive greetings at this time when the General Chapter of Definitors of our Order is being held in Tultenango, Mexico. It is a moment of grace for the whole Dominican Family, in which we seek to be faithful to our preaching charism updated for the time and culture we are living in.

These three concepts of solidarity, fraternity and synodality are closely related to each other and make us see the need, today more than ever, to understand them, to look at them in the light of what our Father Saint Dominic has left to us in his life and ministry in our Order of Preachers: contemplative preaching and the proclamation of the Kingdom from through our life. I believe that it is, and should be, a contribution of our Order to these times of crisis of values. Our present culture is bewildered by the idea of freedom animated by individualism, tolerance, insecurity: in the ideas, in the social environment and in the behaviors; violence, postmodernism: expressed in pragmatism, lack of foundations and a universal vision; secularization, religious diversity, the abandonment of the Catholic religion by many people and so many other situations that affect the conscience of people.

I will try to give a brief definition of each of the concepts mentioned, and then, supported by Fr. Albert Nolan, OP and Fr. Ángel Melcón González, OP, we will approach the Gospel and what Jesus Christ preached about the need to practice fraternal charity based on solidarity and compassion. The presentation is completed and rounded off with the relation to synodality and Dominican life.

Solidarity is one of the most important and essential human values of all; it is what a person does when another person needs help. Solidarity is the collaboration that someone can provide, so that a task can be completed. It is especially that feeling that is perceived and that drives us to help others, without the intention of receiving something in return. It is common to see it in times of crisis in countries going through wars, famine, curfews, natural disasters, and other extreme conditions. It expresses the need to recognize, in the bonds that unite human beings and social groups among themselves, the room offered to freedom to take care of common growth, shared by all those who assume this commitment, and that translates into the positive contribution spent for the sake of others. There is solidarity when there is altruism, philanthropy, social love, Christian charity.

Fraternity refers to the recognition of all of us as brothers and sisters. It recalls the persistence of “cainism” in the world. For the Christian faith, fraternity is not based only on the identity of nature but has its deepest root in the paternity of God: one cannot be a brother or sister if there is no common origin. Paternity entails filiation and the awareness and exercise of filiality. Those who profess their faith in God must consequently profess their human fraternity. We are persons as long as we are brothers and sisters. Natural fraternity has been elevated by Christ to the supernatural order. The principle of solidarity is a direct requirement of human and Christian fraternity.

Synodality is and must be today the *modus vivendi et operandi of the Church*, it is a way of discerning what is good for the believing community in its pilgrimage through time and space, through history and cultures. Synodality is a characteristic of a pilgrim Church that advances in communion towards the Father, in fidelity to Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Ignatius of Antioch, in his letter to the community of Ephesus, says that the members of the Church are σύνδοιοι (synodoi), “companions on the way”, by virtue of the dignity of baptism and their friendship with Christ.

After having these three concepts somewhat clear, let us discover some thoughts of Albert Nolan on what Jesus Christ has told us about the Kingdom and solidarity.

Old Testament. The concept “solidarity”, although not a biblical word, expresses better than any other one of the fundamental concepts of the Bible, especially in the Old Testament: collectivity, people, corporate family. We know that, throughout the centuries and up to the present day, Jews have manifested an extraordinary sense of solidarity. It is edifying how they help each other, how they feel that they are brothers, especially in critical moments. The basic unit of the people was the family, which included all relatives. Blood ties were fundamental. The help or harm done to one member of the family was felt by all the others. This was normal and natural. Therefore, if a family member was insulted or killed, another member of the same family felt obliged to avenge the affront, something like in the mafias and cartels in many places. For us it is somewhat complicated to understand this mode of solidarity in our Western individualistic concept.

In Jesus’ time, life in common as a corporate place did not extend only to the family in the sense indicated, solidarity was also experienced in relation to friends, colleagues, members of the social group and co-religionists of a sect such as the Pharisees or scribes or Essenes. Individualism was unknown, apart from prayer. However, despite our individualism, we still retain an enormous dose of loyalty and prejudice in our different groups. It is true that it varies from person to person, but there are still a great many people in the Western world who base their identity on the loyalties and prejudices of race, nationality, language, culture, generation, political or sports preferences or religious denomination.

Solidarity and the Kingdom. It is true that the Kingdom of God announced by Jesus is based on the universal solidarity of the human race: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy’, but I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father’” (Mt 5:43-44). Nothing could be more revolutionary and radical. Hatred of the enemy is commanded in some ancient manuscripts. In the Old Testament, no text is found in which hatred of enemies is expressly commanded; the commandment to love one’s neighbor is always supposed to exclude one’s enemies. To love one’s neighbor as oneself constitutes the experience of group solidarity. Only the relative or the neighbor is to be treated as another “I”. Fraternity towards some always implies enmity towards others.

Inclusive love. Jesus broadens the concept of neighbor to the point of including enemies; he wanted solidarity in love to include all men. That natural contradiction existing between neighbor and enemy, or between intimates and strangers, must be forgotten and overcome in such a way that enemies become relatives and strangers become intimates. Jesus does not hesitate to declare openly the almost inconceivable consequences of such an attitude: “Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who slander you” (Lk 6:27-28). “If you love those who love you, what merit have you? Sinners also love those who love them” (Lk 6:32). “Let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God”; “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 Jn 4:7,11). “For just as the body is one, and has many members, but all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so also is Christ”; “God is Love: and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him”. “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he who does not love his brother whom he sees, cannot love God whom he does not see. And we have received this commandment from him: whoever loves God, let him also love his brother” (1 Cor 12:12, 20-21).

Group solidarity (loving those who love us) is not a virtue. This is what usually happens among thieves. What Jesus appeals to is an experience of solidarity with humanity, an experience that does not exclude; an experience that does not depend on reciprocity because it includes even those who hate you, persecute you or treat you badly. This is not identified with Christian fraternity. Christian fraternity is the reciprocal or mutual love of those who share the experience of living in solidarity with all humanity and, therefore, in solidarity with one another: “As for you, may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another, and in love for all, as our love for you is” (1 Thess 3:12. Cf. Gal 6:10). Jesus appealed, above all, to a loving solidarity that excludes no one at all.

Solidarity with humanity is the fundamental attitude that must precede any other kind of love or solidarity. What about love for one’s father, mother, wife, children, sisters and brothers, for one’s own life (cf. Lk 14:26)? It would seem that Jesus demands hatred, indifference, distance or non-preference to family and relatives. But this does not correspond to the way of thinking of the Lord and his contemporaries. If love means solidarity, hatred must

mean lack of solidarity. As we have said, what Jesus demands is that the solidarity of the family group be replaced by a more fundamental solidarity with all humanity. The foundation of love must be altered. They are not to be loved simply because they belong to one's own family, or to one's relatives, but because they too are persons and sons and daughters of God. They must be loved with an inclusive love, which would mean that they are more loved. Henceforth, they will be loved, not simply preferred. Family solidarity cannot be allowed to hinder this new solidarity that characterized the Kingdom (cf. Lk 18:29; 9:56-62).

Jesus and his family. In the process of replacing the artificial solidarity of the family with interpersonal solidarity, the unity of not a few families would unfortunately be broken (cf. Lk 12:51-53; Mt 10:34-36). The new universal solidarity must invalidate all the old group solidarities (cf. Mic 6:7). But what about Jesus himself, what about his relationship with his own family, especially with his mother? The Gospels leave no doubt that Jesus' relationship with most of his relatives was one of tension and strain. Mark relates how his relatives thought Jesus was not in his right mind and, because family solidarity demanded it, felt compelled to try to tie him up. Perhaps among them was his mother. She was among those who went to look for him in the house where he was "with the crowd sitting around him" (Mk 3:31-32). Perhaps at that time his mother did not understand. Later, Mary would come to understand (Jn 19:25-27). Some of the other members of the family, such as James and Judas, only believed in him after his resurrection (Mk 3:12; Jn 7:5).

Jesus had a real interest in not having the love he felt for his mother (or any other relative) interpreted as a merely biological love or simple family solidarity (Lk 11:27-28). Any especially intimate and mutual solidarity that might have existed between Jesus and his mother had to have been based on the living fulfillment of God's will (Mk 3:31-35; 9:37; Mt 10:40; 25:40-45). Jesus had set aside the usual family solidarity so that "those around him" would become his "brothers and sisters and mothers" (Mk 3:31-35), so that whoever welcomed one of them would welcome him (Mt 25:40-45).

Jesus' practice. Jesus preached universal solidarity (love your enemies), but did he practice it? It seems that Jesus, because of the many controversies he had, did not love the scribes and Pharisees. He had sided with the poor and oppressed and against the scribes and Pharisees, who belonged to the middle class. It could be stated that the vehemence that Jesus put in his attacks to the Pharisees was exaggerated by the evangelists, due to the existing hostilities between the primitive Church and the Pharisee party. But the question remains: did he really love the Pharisees or not?

If love is understood as solidarity, then love is not incompatible with indignation and anger. Quite the contrary: if one is authentically interested in people as persons and painfully aware of their sufferings, one must necessarily feel indignation and anger against anyone who causes suffering to oneself and others. Jesus felt angry, very angry at times, against those who ruined themselves and others. The most obvious proof that Jesus loved all human beings is that

same explicit indignation against the enemies of the human condition of the whole world, including his own.

If Jesus had refused to reason, discuss and mingle socially with the Pharisees, then, and only then, could he be accused of having excluded them from his treatment as if they were strangers. But we see in the gospels, abundant evidence of meals, conversations with them and continual efforts to convince them. In the end it was they who excluded him, but at no time did the opposite happen.

Individual-universal love. To love all men in general could mean as much as to love none in particular. Jesus treated each individual person who crossed his life or his thoughts in such a way that no one was ever excluded, but that everyone was loved for himself, not because of his lineage, race, nationality, class, family, relationships, achievements or any other circumstances, relationships, achievements or any other circumstances. In this concrete and personal sense Jesus loved all people and lived in solidarity with all humanity. And precisely because of this, Jesus took the side of the poor and oppressed, of those who possessed nothing worthy of praise except their human condition, of those who were excluded by others. Solidarity with the “nobodies” of this world, with those considered as insignificant¹, is the only concrete way to fully live solidarity with humanity.

Only Israel or also the pagans? Another difficulty of the gospel in this sense. Jesus limited his field of activity to Israel and instructed his disciples in the same sense: “Do not go to the land of the pagans or enter the province of Samaria; it is better for you to go to the lost sheep of Israel” (Mt 10:5-6). However, Matthew himself refers how Jesus did not hesitate² to help a Canaanite woman, that is, he was reluctant to work among the “Gentiles”: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24). And even more surprising is what he says later: “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs” (15:26), which means giving the “Gentiles” the food of Israel (Mk 7:27). Of course, what is important in the story is that Jesus, in the end, really helped that “Gentile” woman, just as he ended up helping the Roman centurion (Lk 7:3-5). But why did the woman have to insist so much to convince him? And why did the elders of the Jews have to go to him to plead on behalf of the Roman centurion?

Eschatological solidarity. The ambivalence of Jesus’ attitude towards the “Gentiles” is illuminated by the reflections of Joachim Jeremias (*Jesus’ Promise to the Nations*) where he establishes the fact that the Jewish hope for the future did not exclude the “Gentiles”. In the end, after the appropriate punishments had been imposed, the whole world, including the “Gentiles”, would be subjected to the mighty lordship of the true God. With this idea, the Jews, especially the scribes and Pharisees, were already embarked on a massive undertaking. Yet, also

¹ Translator’s note: The original expression in Spanish is “como un cero a la izquierda” (like a zero to the left) meaning someone is essentially useless or doesn’t add any value.

² Translator’s note: From the context it is understood that the translation should be “he hesitated” instead of “he did not hesitate”, but the original wording is respected.

surprisingly, Jesus apparently did not approve of this missionary effort: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who travel over sea and land to make one proselyte, and when you succeed, you make him twice as worthy of condemnation as yourselves” (Mt 23:15). It is that of “blind men and blind guides; and if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into a pit” (Mt 15:14). As Jesus saw it, the Jews themselves had to change before they could think of making proselytes. He was convinced that God wanted the Jews to bring about the great transformation that would bring salvation and solidarity to all people. He focused his attention on Israel for the sake of all men. It was not a question of group solidarity, but of what we might call a matter of strategy.

Surprise that transcends. At first, Jesus would have thought that explaining to the “Gentiles” what the Kingdom of God was would have required a long, drawn-out process, and that awakening enough faith in them to bring about a healing would take a very long time. In any case, Jesus believed that his particular vocation was to feed Israel first and not to deprive the Israelites of the possibility of realizing the great change to which God had destined them, by spending what little time was left in trying to convert the “Gentiles”. Hence Jesus’ enormous surprise when he discovers a Canaanite woman with such immense faith (Mt 15:28) and a Roman centurion with such great faith as he had not seen in Israel (Mt 8:10). Jesus had never expected this. Otherwise, he would not have hesitated to help them. The goal, then as now, was a kingdom in which all human beings could live together in solidarity.

Compassion as the foundation. To conclude this part, it should be mentioned that the foundation of this solidarity or love is compassion: that emotion that arises from the gut at the sight of a human being in need. The parable of the prodigal son (Lk 10:29-37) answers the question: who is my neighbor? The answer is not: each and every person, although it may be true. The answer is a parable told, which leads us to identify emotionally with a man in dire need. We sense his disappointment when those who are supposed to live in solidarity with him pass him by. We share his relief and joy when an enemy, moved by compassion, breaks the barriers of group solidarity and helps him in his need. If we allow the parable to move us and release in us those deep emotions we have been taught to repress, we will never again have to ask ourselves who our neighbor might be. Only compassion can teach a human being what solidarity with his neighbor is all about. The Kingdom of God is theirs.

Compassion. “Compassion (from the Latin *cumpassio*, semantic calque or translation of the Greek word συμπαθία (*sympatheia*), compound word συμπάσχω, literally “to suffer together”, “to deal with emotions”, sympathy) is a human feeling that manifests itself from contact with and understanding of the suffering of another being”. “More intense than empathy, compassion is the perception and rapport in the suffering of another, and the desire and action to alleviate, reduce or completely eliminate such a painful situation. The feeling of sadness that comes from seeing someone suffer and that impels us to relieve their pain or suffering, to remedy it or to avoid it”.

Jesus Christ always showed great compassion for his contemporaries. Let us look at some quotations from St. Matthew: “And when he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (9:36). “And when he came ashore, he saw many people, he had compassion on them and healed the sick” (14:14). “Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said to them, ‘I pity these people, for they have been staying with me for three days now and have nothing to eat’” (15:32). “Should you not also have had compassion for your companion, just as I had compassion for you?” (18:33). And in St. Luke: “When he saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep’” (7:13).

Dominic. For Fr. Ángel Melcón, Saint Dominic shone and was exemplary in many and powerful virtues: cheerful, joyful, preacher, equanimous, affable, intrepid, loyal, wise, kind, discreet, just, prayerful, accessible, etc. But perhaps, among all of them, the way he knew how to be sensitive, tender and compassionate stands out. It is probably the most characteristic feature of his personality, his capacity for compassion and mercy. His tenderness and sensitivity translated first and foremost into a warm and humane treatment of everyone. His compassion is not sentimental or romantic; it is not overbearing, the kind that pities in order to humiliate or gives in order to dominate; it does not result in a merely passive and inoperative feeling; it is not a superficial and sterile emotion.

His compassion means going out of himself and putting himself in the place of the other, spontaneously tuning in to his need and pain or also to his joy. His compassion will end in generosity and risky commitment, which is aimed at resolving the needs of others. It means real commitment to rebuild relationships between human beings. Dominic is an extremely sensitive man, that is why he is able to sympathize with his neighbor. His emotional sensitivity, the emotion in his heart, which compels him, leads him to respond with concrete and effective gestures. This compassion can be expressed in his life in various dimensions: with the poor, with heretics, with his friars, with the nuns, in short, with everyone he meets:

a) With the poor: In Palencia, he sells his books, scarce and with personal annotations and starts what could be called a dispensary; he takes pity on a captive and is ready to sell himself to rescue him.

b) With heretics: In Toulouse, he takes pity on an innkeeper and is ready to argue with him all night; of another heretic who with him discovers his error and bursts into tears begging for mercy.

c) With his friars: In Bologna, he is sensitive to the faults and errors of his friars and treats them with compassion, but with firmness; he was a great consoler of his friars whom he encourages in preaching and trusts them, but he also admonishes them and sends them very soon on an evangelizing mission.

d) With women: especially with the nuns: At Prouilhe: with his big heart he receives and welcomes young people that their parents had left in the hands of heretics because of poverty or

faults they had committed; in Rome, he takes pity on a woman who, going in haste to listen to a preaching of Dominic, leaves her son at home alone and, returning, finds him dead, takes him to the saint and begs him to do something, and he resurrects him; in Rome too, he gives to each of the nuns some little spoons made of cypress wood that he brings from Madrid.

e) **With everyone:** God had granted him the singular grace of weeping, and he constantly made this special plea to God: that he be granted true charity to work effectively to bring salvation, through the word of the Gospel, to everyone. His compassion is “*misericordia veritatis*”, mercy of truth.

Solidarity, fraternity and synodality have as their foundation the compassion that both Jesus Christ and Dominic practiced, and today in the Order they should be an expression of identity, unity, witness and prophetic sign for our today’s world: individualistic, skeptical, indifferent and eager for autonomy, which is losing sight of precious values on its horizon.

Fr. Fernando García Fernández, OP
Promoter of the Nuns
Original: Spanish



Celebration of St. Dominic's feast in 2022

"Today is the joyful feast of Dominic! "

With this exuberant acclamation sung in the liturgy, we begin the feast of Dominic of Guzman. We celebrate the fruitful figure of a man who lived more than 800 years ago, but who continues to be a reference to the lived Gospel. Dominic is a fountain whose traces extend to the present, with the strength of what is true, of what enlightens.

From Dominic's root a leafy tree emerges, full of tonalities in the same key of the Kingdom's wisdom. The Order is not reduced to a set of saints collected on shelves or of traditions to be preserved, not even to a charism to be preserved.

The Order is the weft of names and faces that continue to give body to Dominic's courage, to an endearing compassion, to a declared commitment to humanity that presumes concrete choices, defined criteria.

The Order, sustained by its past, constitutes a specific way of preparing the future, marked by the sacred bond of mutual listening and the word made bread, service, closeness that prioritizes life.

I find the Order awakened in those who allow dialogue to harmonize the threads of the past with the fabric of the present, creating a warm and credible fabric.

I find the Order alert in those who sow on the margins of the Amazon or sugar cane workers, in those who are capable of the necessary versatility required to expound theology in a classroom or go up a river to celebrate in the simplest communities.

I find the Order in the couples who seek the way to experience the faith in a community of prayer and formation, who try ways to share it, to make it accessible to the present categories; because they have discovered the treasure that lights up their nights and strengthens their confidence.

I find the Order in the contemplative nun who, during a complicated meeting, illuminates her silence in the most opportune word, capable of diluting tensions and unblocking paths; in the elderly woman who shines light, in the physical descent of daily life that preaches hope; in the communities capable of welcoming and dismissing with discreet and generous elegance, incorporating the surplus of their income to the sisters' bag.

I find the Order fertile in the young people who, with their studies ended and their horizons open, enter Dominic's adventure with their feet bare of doubt, but their hearts full of passion for justice that kisses peace.

I find the Order resplendent in those who clothe their responsibilities with simplicity, honesty, and good work, in those who still discover in their heritage the vibration of what seduces.

I find the Order alive, from a light look of predictable eloquences or innocent magnifications, aware of its darker links and its successes always united to the promotion of the Samaritans of history, to the process of dignifying humanity.

From research to the most rudimentary mission, from teaching to the soup plate, I recognize the same heartbeat that nurtures complementary realities, a single pulpit that stands as compassionate wisdom, from the Philippines, Korea and Vietnam to Cuba, Nicaragua and Texas; from South Africa to Canada, like an immense embrace of cultures.

I find Dominic's trail in the dawn that begins, I inhabit his riverbed with the desire to get on the right side of his itinerancy.



Sister Miria Gómez OP
Holy Trinity Monastery
Orihuela - Alicante – Spain
Original: Spanish

*Let us be bold,
let us be one,
let us be compassionate!*

—Timothy Radcliffe, OP



Musica Sacra OP

"The solemn celebration of the liturgy is the heart of our life, which finds in it the main root of its unity." (LCM 75)

Imagine my surprise and confusion that day in November 2020 when the Master of the Order appointed me for a six-year term on the *Sub-Commission Musica sacra OP*! What was it all about?

As you probably know, among the bodies of the Curia of the Order, there is an International Liturgical Commission of the Order of Preachers (CLIOP) which has worked enormously since the end of the Second Vatican Council to recast the missal, the lectionary and the Proper of the Order, and to work on the liturgical calendar that continues to evolve with the new saints and blessededs registered in the martyrology. For each of them, it is necessary to find the appropriate prayers and readings and then receive the agreement of the Congregation for Divine Worship before being able to publish the texts. In addition to this substantive work, it was necessary to proceed to the *aggiornamento* of many other rites, such as that of the religious profession or the anointing of the sick... Currently, it is the preparation of the martyrology and a new *Liber benedictionum* and *precum* that is on the agenda as well as the creation of a mini-site hosted on the website of the Order where all these resources are available. Have you ever visited it? <http://liturgia.op.org/>

In their previous mandate, the members of CLIOP noticed that these fundamental projects took so much time and energy that they almost never had the opportunity to address the question of singing and liturgical music that nevertheless gives flesh and life to the texts. They therefore suggested the creation of another commission to develop this dimension. Brother Gérard Timoner III, at the beginning of his mandate as Master of the Order, acceded to their request and created a *Sub-Commission Musica sacra OP* to make it clear that this commission, although completely autonomous, must work in constant contact with the CLIOP. Today there are four of us in the subcommittee. There are two brothers: Thomas Möller (Germany) who is the President, Lukasz Misko (Institute of Liturgy OP of Krakow), an apostolic sister, Sr. Ragnhild Bjelland (Oslo, Norway) and myself as a nun. As you can see, this is a fine example of brother-sister parity. We are accompanied by Brother Mark Padrez who is the Vicar of the Master and the Socius for fraternal life and formation and who is present as much as he can at our meetings.

Our work, of course, started slowly because of Covid which meant that for a year we limited ourselves to video-conferences, and also because this commission is brand new and everything is to be invented. In addition, we must face the challenge of being able to offer resources that help us all pray together, while on the one hand each Province has developed in its own language a liturgy of its own and on the other hand the present liturgy of the Order must be lived in continuity with its very rich tradition passed since Humbert de Romans. As you can see, the

challenge is immense. We were all the more happy at the end of June to be able to meet all or, almost all, of the two commissions in Santa Sabina and to have a first morning of work with the Master of the Order who, after hearing us, expressed his expectations.

Then, to come to Santa Sabina is to discover the life of the brothers around the Master of the Order, to share their prayer in the ancient basilica, their delicious Italian meals, to admire the way in which everyone puts himself at the service of others in the small details of everyday life and in the evening, with a drink, to admire from the terrace the wonderful view of Rome while trying to follow the conversation in several languages at the time... There was even, despite the oppressive heat, an evening in a trattoria in Trastevere and the Master of the Order had been able to free himself to be with us. But the most precious moments for me were to come in the morning to the room of St. Dominic and there, with great emotion, to thank him for the Order, for having planted us *in medio Ecclesiae*, for our wonderful vocation as a nun and to pray to him so that the monasteries of the Order may continue to bear many beautiful fruits of holiness.

Concretely, here are some of the projects we have been working on. The Master of the Order requested a database of musical resources (digital and possibly print) including various Mass ordinaries as well as songs in the official languages of the Order (Latin, English, Spanish, French), which could be used at General Chapters and other international meetings of the Dominican Family.

We are also beginning to gather the material for another database for the singing of Vespers of the solemnities, feasts, and feasts specific to the Order. At the same time, a "play-list" has been created on the Youtube channel where every month we will offer an example of sacred music or liturgical singing by asking convents or monasteries around the world to contribute. The playlist is called *Subcommisio musica sacra* and we were particularly happy in March to be able to show the Dominican family around the world singing for peace in Ukraine. Another major project unfortunately has had to be interrupted but we remain hopeful that one day we will be able to resume it.

Finally, confirmed and supported by the beautiful apostolic letter *Desiderio desideravi* that the Pope published precisely during the meeting of our commissions in Rome, we have the somewhat ambitious project of being able to offer, in the not too distant future, liturgical formation workshops at the international level of the Order. They would present the fundamental liturgical principles of our Dominican life and give concrete examples of good practices existing in the various Provinces... For we are aware that the liturgy is also a place of preaching, and that a beautiful liturgy in a province arouses vocations. Doesn't the pope speak of "formation *in* the liturgy and formation *through* the liturgy"? But everything remains to be built.

In the meantime, we seek to post on the Website of the Order the proposals that already exist here and there to be formed and to experience liturgical singing in a Dominican environment. For example, do you know about the *Extraordinary Music Workshop* which took place in English in



Santa Sabina, June 29, 2022: the two commissions of the Liturgy with the Master of the Order (the nun is the smallest)

Krakow from 15 to 21 August? The secret of their success for several years: combining a beautiful liturgical life with singing workshops, conferences, but also pilgrimage, Eucharistic adoration or even a flamenco evening, all around brothers and renowned composers and choir directors.

Sister Marie op
Monastère de Langeac (France)
Original: French



“Trust in Him!”

The spiritual path I have traveled has made me think that life is a continuous exercise in virtues, but how, where, and when can one become aware of this?



I found the answer in suffering, illness, and loss of a loved one, or simply in my doubts or uncertainties. A part of my being constantly reminded me, trust in Him!, believe in Him!, God exists. Inviting me to come closer, to dialogue with Him in prayer, to ask Him constantly for His help.

It was then that I recognized that He is my Father, that He has always cared for me, loved me more than I could ever imagine. That everything good that has happened to me is because He allowed it, and that all the negative was a consequence of my own failures; lifting me up, encouraging me to trust Him more, that with my own strength alone I would not get far, that soon I would feel tired and fall into despair.

Thus, I comprehended and understood what path I had to follow to live a true life that would influence others for good, and the decisions I was going to make at every moment of my life. Of course, it was not easy, but at the same time I understood that nothing is impossible for God who can do everything out of nothing.

To do so, He showed me a path to follow step by step, which is similar to that of a child in its mother's womb or a newborn with its own process: to be born, to grow, to reproduce and to die. A path that I see as steps in the life that I am going through.

First step. My Aspirancy. It helped me to discover that physically, I appeared to have a knowledge that was more exterior than interior. In other words, more visible than spiritual. Judging more objectively, it seemed that everything was wrong, and that many things should be changed because they do not go with my feelings, acts and the present moment. Once again the Lord gave me brothers and sisters who helped me to differentiate, distinguish, examine, analyze, observe, and stop for a moment to question myself: what for, why, for whom am I here? What should I leave, change, or improve?

Second step. The Postulancy. It was an answer with more clarity and determination in which I experienced or recognized more my falls and risings, where I made my own, the words of Simon Peter: “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinner” and the desire was born in me to meditate or

internalize the words of Jesus: “Have no fear; from now on you will be catching men!” (Lk 5:10), inviting me to take the next step.

Third step. Novitiate. In this stage I already have the idea of the type of mold that I am called to fill “New wine in new wineskins”; but I find that there is a constant struggle between the old man (habits, ways of thinking) that seeks to relax, and the new man, pushing me to seek the truth, which makes me capable of loving generously, often asking myself in my prayer: Lord, how did you listen, without false judgments?; forgive, without resentment?; give, without expecting anything in return? The journey begins with... “Trust in Him”, he invites me to grow in his word that heals, that gives life, keeping and ruminating in my heart to be able to practice it; even if often, selfish desires still proliferate; he invites me to go from an “I, but I, and I” to a “we”. Reminding me of his words: “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).



When I think I am alone, he shows me with his fatherly gesture how much he loves me, through the members that shape his Church; speaking to me through a song of my sisters in Christ, an exhortation of his ministers, a simple smile of a child, or tears of joy and gratitude to God from a mother, brother, from a sharing of pain, sadness in a simple silence; from a fraternal embrace or from the infinite beauty of his creation. Reminding me again: “and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20)

Therefore, to wear the habit is to bring to my memory my constant *Fiat*: “Here I am, Lord, to do your will”. When I wear the tunic, I ask Him to clothe me with Him. When I gird myself, I ask Him to give me a chaste heart. The meditation of the Holy Rosary helps me to achieve the holy virtues after the example of Mary. Through the scapular I ask Him for the strength to carry my daily cross. To wear the habit of the Order is a challenge, a challenge of a new life in Christ: to bring it to life first in me, in order to give it to others.



Sister Maria Jesús de la Santa Cruz OP
Saint Dominic Monastery
Cochabamba Bolivia
Original: Spanish



Sharing the Joy of Saying Yes

Hail Mary!

It is a great joy to be able to share that with the grace of God on March 25 of this year I was able to say yes until death to our beloved Lord, in my Monastery of St. Dominic in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and also to thank Sister Lioba, member of the International Commission, for this invitation.

As I am the first vocation of my monastery, each of the stages of my formation were a unique experience, not only for me, but also for my community since my sisters are from different monasteries, with their respective richness in terms of liturgy and rites, in the stages of formation and as a community, and we are gradually creating our own traditions. And thanks to that I was able to actively participate in the preparations for my profession.

On this special day we enjoyed the company and help of the sisters of our Federation, who as always have accompanied us since the beginning of the foundation, and on this occasion we were accompanied by: Mother Alejandra Gómez O.P. Federal President and Sister Violeta Quispe Rojas O.P. of the Monastery of Santa Catalina de Lima; Mother Rosa Luz Manrique Diaz O.P. Flor de María Callohuanca Aceituno O.P. and Sr. Gema Llamoca Aguilar O.P. from the Monastery of Santa Catalina de Arequipa. In spite of the restrictions due to the pandemic they made a great sacrifice to accompany us and their presence gave a special touch to my profession. The affection and fraternity with which they helped us in the arrangements for the celebration was very edifying.



The Holy Eucharist was celebrated by Mons. Jorge Saldia O.P. and concelebrated by our brothers of the Vice-Province of Bolivia. In his homily, Monsignor told me that there is nothing more beautiful than to place ourselves in the hands of God, since it is God who directs our lives and I answered him in my heart: “It is terrible to fall into God’s hands..., but even more terrible to fall out of them”. That phrase accompanied me and sustained me throughout my formation, since it is not easy to die to self-love and to smooth out everything that is left over in myself, but in spite of everything, I cannot imagine my life out of God's hands.

But our Lord, as a loving Father, not only corrects, but also knows how to pamper his little daughters, and I was able to experience one of those beautiful details on the day of my Solemn Profession, seeing the affection and enthusiasm not only of my community, but also of my sisters of the federation and the Dominican family of the Vice-Province of Bolivia. Words are not enough to thank God for so much love and for allowing me to be part of this great family of Dominic of Guzman.

A question I was asked after my Profession was: What did you like the most about the ceremony? It's truly a very difficult question, because every moment was very special and meaningful, but what troubled my heart was to say, "until death" and in our case it is until death that unites us. That is why, when I smelled a special fragrance at the moment when I was prostrated on the ground and covered with flowers, as a symbol of renunciation to the world, I asked Him for the grace that, when the time comes to present myself before Him, I can also give off that exquisite fragrance that I felt on the day of my Consecration.



Among the beautiful details that I received for my profession was a greeting card in which the affection of this great family to which I belong is expressed. And the visit of Mother Rosa Elvira Cáceres Marroquín O.P. and Sister Asunción Anahua Cama O.P., from the Monastery of Santa Catalina in Arequipa, who for various reasons could not attend my Profession, but thanks to that, we were able to enjoy their company for a week.

I will not deny that I am afraid of the challenge of being the first Bolivian nun. Edwin Salas O.P. told me: "You are part of the history of the Vice-Province of Bolivia and you have the mission to pray for the Order and our country". I only hope that with the grace of God and prayers of you, my sisters, I can live my contemplative vocation to the full.

Sister María Esther de la Agonía de Jesús y María Soliz Diaz O.P.

Monastery of Santo Domingo

Cochabamba-Bolivia

Original: Spanish



50 Years of Presence of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary in Mendoza, Argentina

Synthesis of the history prior to the arrival of the Community in Mendoza

Our Monastery was founded in Forcall, Castellón, Spain on July 25, 1888, in the building of a former Dominican convent of the XVII century, whose eight friars died martyrs in the religious persecution of 1835/36 called “disentailment of Mendizábal”. Although the town wished to recover the presence of the friars and asked the Queen Regent and the Order to do so, it was impossible to reopen the convent for lack of religious, since many had died in the persecution, so the building was closed and then sold. In 1886, the fervent celebration of the 2nd Centenary of the arrival in Forcall of the relics of St. Victor, Roman soldier, encouraged the town to recover the Dominican presence in the town and as it was impossible again to recover the presence of the friars, it was thought to ask for a foundation of Dominican nuns. A wealthy lady bought the old building and the town received 8 nuns from the Corpus Christi Monastery of Villareal to start the foundation of a monastery of the Order.

During the Spanish Civil War of 1936, 78 years after its foundation and on the same day, the nuns had to leave the monastery in a hurry to save their lives. The church was burned and used as a theater and dance hall. The chaplain of the nuns who helped them to leave was shot a year later in 1937. In 1939, the Community was reunited in the monastery and resumed its regular life. In 1966, due to the collapse of part of the church’s roof and the inconvenience and high cost of repairing it, the superiors of the Federation of the Immaculate Conception decided to transfer the Community to another monastery of the Federation. This is how they were received into the Monastery of Játiva, where they lived for 4 years. There they saw the possibility of occupying a monastery built by the Jesuits for some Carmelite nuns (who never went) in Gandía. The monastery was granted to the Dominicans. They had already built the choir stalls, but due to a change of authorities in the Order everything came to nothing. At that time the Federation received a request for a foundation of nuns from the friars of the Dominican convent of Mendoza, and that is how a transfer to South America was proposed to the Community. The was something totally unusual in those times in which one entered a monastery to die there. The Monastery of Santa Catalina of Buenos Aires committed itself to build them a monastery and to furnish it and to support the Community until it could stand on its own. The Community accepted the offer in pure faith and abandonment to God and trusting the vision of the superiors. That is how they arrived in Buenos Aires in 1970 after a fifteen-day boat trip, where they were received and lodged for



a year and a half by the nuns of Santa Catalina until the construction of the monastery in Mendoza was finished.

Significant events lived by the Community in Mendoza, during these 50 years

June 24, 1972. A memorable date for the Community in which we remember the first Mass that was celebrated in the Monastery of the Borbollón. On this day the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Birth of St. John the Baptist and in the Order we remember the anniversary of the birth of our Father St. Dominic of Guzman. The Mass was celebrated by Fray Andrés Torres O.P. in the infirmary of the monastery because the chapel was not yet finished.

July 2, 1972. Solemn consecration of the altar, blessing of the church, establishing the cloister began the Dominican contemplative life in Mendoza. Our monastery was the first contemplative monastery to be founded in the whole region, so the three bishops of Cuyo attended: Bishop Maresma (Mendoza), Bishop Sansierra (San Juan), Bishop Laise (San Luis); the Governor of the Province of Mendoza, the Ambassador of Spain, the Consul of Spain in Mendoza, the Father Provincial of the Dominicans in Argentina, the Prior of the Convent of Mendoza, numerous friars, religious and lay faithful, and members of the Spanish community of our city.



This monastery was built mainly with the help of the Monastery of Santa Catalina of Buenos Aires, that donated all its goods to finance the work, as already mentioned. The bishop entrusted especially to the Community to pray for the vocations. When the nuns arrived, there was only one seminarian in the diocese. The following year, after their arrival, the number of seminarians increased to forty.

The monastery was visited from the beginning by pastors, priests, nuns, and lay people. Great figures of the Church passed through it; the Pope's Legate to the National Marian Congress of 1980, the Apostolic Nuncio in Argentina, numerous cardinals, bishops, and priests from the country and abroad. The Community collaborated with this great event of the Church in Argentina making 80 albs.

Since its foundation, the Monastery of El Borbollón became a center of evangelization for the whole area. It was the only Catholic church in the area. The Dominican priests, assisted by Dominican Sisters of Apostolic Life and lay people, began to prepare the children for First Communion and Confirmation. In time, local catechists were trained. The nuns supported the work in various ways, especially by praying and providing the chapel and the retreat house for the needs of evangelization. The local people became aware of the importance of prayer, reception of the Sacraments and attendance at Sunday Mass. This cell of the Church has remained alive and active to this day.

The primitive enclave of the monastery presented serious inconveniences for the normal development of the contemplative life, so that after living 16 years in the Borbollón, the major superiors and the archbishop advised a change of place within the same province of Mendoza. Thus, on July 25, 1988, on the 100th anniversary of its foundation in Spain, the new monastery in Villa Nueva was blessed and inaugurated and the church and altar were solemnly consecrated. In preparation for this event, two lectures were given in the monastery, one on contemplative life and the other on the history of the Dominican Order; and in another, the choir of the UNC, directed by Master Felipe Vallesi and Sister Cecilia López, from *Mater Dei*, offered in our church a concert of polyphonic sacred music of the XVII century and Gregorian chant, with which they planned to present themselves in the Competition of Arezzo, Italy. This monastery was built with the help of the people of Mendoza, of several monasteries and convents of the world, but above all with the help of the Monastery of Santa Catalina of Córdoba, who also supported us economically for many years, when the binding work we were living on at that time became unprofitable.



In 1992 the superiors of the Federation of Dominican Nuns of the Immaculate Conception of Aragon to which we belonged asked the Community to host the Common Novitiate of the Federation in Latin America and thus our Community became a formation house. Later, the common novitiates of Chile and Argentina were unified into one and the formation house in Mendoza was maintained. In fact, nuns from Argentina, Chile, Peru, Ecuador and one from Spain have passed through our community.

In 2019 a new Federation of Argentinean nuns was constituted, called “Mary, Mother of Grace” and in the first constitutive assembly of the Federation held in Mendoza, our monastery was chosen again as the common formation house of the new Federation.

On July 2, 2022, the Community celebrated 50 years of its presence in Mendoza with a solemn Mass presided over by the Father Provincial, accompanied by five friars, a diocesan priest and numerous lay faithful of the Dominican family and those who accompanied us from the very first moment. On July 23, this event will be celebrated again with the presence of our



Archbishop and his Auxiliary Bishop, with the clergy and the people of Mendoza in general. Mons. Colombo will not be in Mendoza on the 2nd because he must attend the beatification of the martyrs of Zenta. A plenary indulgence will be granted to those who participate in the Mass on the 23rd.

Sister Mónica Ma. Moyano O.P.
Monastery of Mendoza, Argentine
Original: Spanish



*100th Anniversary of the
Monastery of the Mother of God
in West Springfield, Massachusetts, USA*

Having recently celebrated two other major jubilees—the 800th anniversary of the nuns, and the 800th anniversary of the whole Dominican Order—it seemed appropriate to focus this year’s celebration of our monastery’s 100th anniversary with a novena of Masses in thanksgiving to God for all the blessings he has bestowed on us through the years. The plan is as follows:

Day 1 (August 31, 2022) Mass will be in thanksgiving for all our deceased sisters, who have faithfully handed down to us the particular spirit of



our community, along with the beautiful monastery and grounds we now enjoy. We are grateful for their many sacrifices and good example, along with their love for the Liturgy, private prayer, and community life.

Day 2 (September 1) Mass will be in thanksgiving for the Bishops and priests of the diocese who have supported our life of prayer, especially Bishop Thomas Mary O’Leary, who accepted us into the diocese back in 1922, and made possible the purchase of our property in West Springfield in 1925. When we were not able to have a Dominican chaplain, diocesan priests have been generous in saying Mass for us, and at present Franciscan friars from the nearby St. Stanislaus parish serve as our confessors.

Day 3 (September 2) Mass will be in thanksgiving for the many kindnesses extended to us over the years by the religious sisters in the diocese, beginning with the Good Shepherd Sisters, who gave hospitality to our founding sisters until our first house was ready to move into. In more recent years the Sisters of Saint Joseph, the Sisters of Providence and the Daughters of the Heart of Mary have all helped us provide extra care to our elderly sisters, either by working in our infirmary or by welcoming our sisters into their nursing facilities.

Day 4 (September 3) Mass will be in thanksgiving for our relatives, friends and benefactors. Our current bishop, Most Reverend William Byrne, will be the main celebrant and we expect many other priests, relatives and friends to attend, including members of our monastery’s chapter of the Lay Fraternities of Saint Dominic. Mass will be at the special time of 10:30 a.m., followed by a luncheon in our parlor.



Day 5 (September 4) Mass will be in thanksgiving for the great privilege of Eucharistic adoration on our chapel. This devotion goes back to the very beginning of our foundation, for Bishop O’Leary had greatly desired to have perpetual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in his diocese. When he asked our foundresses to add perpetual adoration to the perpetual praise of Mary through the rosary, they were overjoyed and gladly agreed. Because of their small number, the Sisters at first had to be content with daily exposition as often as possible. In like manner today, we content ourselves to have adoration during most of the daytime hours, but if our numbers increase, we will happily extend this precious time spent before our Eucharistic Lord.

Day 6 (September 5) Mass will be in thanksgiving for our deceased relatives, friends and benefactors, as this is the day the whole Order observes the anniversary of deceased friends and benefactors.

Day 7 (September 6) Mass will be in thanksgiving for our Dominican vocation, and for the friendship and support of the whole Dominican family. As our Constitutions remind us, it is God who makes us “dwell together in unity” (LCM 1.V). Our vocation is first of all his gift to us, and each sister he calls to our community, indeed each member of the whole Dominican family, is likewise his gift to us. Through our sincere charity for one another, may God prosper the holy preaching of the Gospel!

Day 8 (September 7) Mass will be in thanksgiving for the innumerable graces God has granted to the Church and the world through our life of intercessory prayer. We had a glimpse of the importance of our presence in the diocese when Covid struck and sadly, for the first time ever, we had to close our chapel to the public. Thankfully, after six weeks our prioress was able to get permission from our bishop to reopen our chapel for adoration and Mass, with the proper precautions of course, such as masks, sanitizer, and markings to keep social distancing. As it was more complicated for parishes to reopen, for some time we were the only church building in the area open for Mass and private prayer, and people responded accordingly by coming in goodly numbers. It is not only our prayers, but the prayers of the many who come to our chapel which surely brings down many blessings upon the Church and the world.

Day 9 (September 8) Mass will be in thanksgiving for our Lady’s on-going maternal care for us. It was on September 8, 1922, that our foundress, Mother Mary Hyacinth, and her companion, Mother Mary of the Crown, both from the Sisters of the Perpetual Rosary in Catonsville, Maryland, met with Bishop Thomas Mary O’Leary, Ordinary of the Diocese of Springfield, to petition his acceptance of them in his diocese. They were delighted when he responded, “Come, come to Springfield in the name of God and Mary. This will be our gift to Our Lady on the feast of her birth.” Henceforth we have considered this house to be especially Our Lady’s monastery, dedicated to her Rosary and the adoration of her Son. As we begin a new century of serving the Lord in this diocese, we pray that she may continue to bless and guide us with her motherly love and protection.



Submitted by Sr. Mary of the Immaculate Heart, O.P.
Monastery of the Mother of God
West Springfield, Massachusetts, USA
Original: English



Anointed to Proclaim the Gospel of Peace

During the Dominican Jubilee from Epiphany 2021 to Epiphany 2022, intentions were proposed to us for the whole Order as a true call of the prophet: “Enlarge your tents Israel” (Is 54:2) since for each day of the calendar a particular intention was assigned. Afterwards, the Master of the Order asked us to pray the litany to our Dominican Saints and Blessed Dominicans at the end of the Rosary, to ask for the gift of peace for the world and especially for Ukraine. At this “extended table” in favor of this noble cause, the beautiful image of Psalm 127 came to my mind: Like olive shoots around your table Lord, so are the children of the Church, the children of Dominic of Guzman.



In this way we were widening our tents, our hearts in the likeness of Our Father St. Dominic in whom – as the witnesses of canonization say – “everyone belonged and because he loved all he was loved by all”, and so we lived it and so we did it for the whole Dominican Family through our prayer as contemplative nuns. From among so many offshoots of that beautiful Dominican trunk I wanted to share some brushstrokes of Our Father St. Dominic as a man of peace. Our Father and Founder announced the Gospel of peace, let us also remember Blessed Reginald of Orleans to whom Mary Most Holy appeared visibly saying to him: I anoint your feet with holy oil in preparation for the Gospel of peace (Eph 6:15) and she anointed his limbs. This seems to me emblematic for every son and daughter of Dominic. Our Father St. Dominic was “a friend of the propagation of faith and peace”.

God wanted to save the world through the insanity of preaching, so our holy patriarch wanted to win the world for Christ by building up the Church with the testimony of his life, with love made mercy for his brothers; his willing desire was the salvation of souls. Dominic proclaims and lives the Gospel of peace, the only true Gospel because “the Kingdom of God is justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17-19), for him too: love, truth, and grace. In Languedoc precisely this was his testimony in the middle of the war zone, he preached the Gospel without participating in the conflict, nor did he preach the crusade convened by Pope Innocent III against the Cathar heresy, nor did he support that proposal, much less was he a friend of violent or repressive methods as was used at that time. A true friend of peace! Precisely because he was a true lover of poverty “without bag for the journey and without sandals” (Lk 10; Mt 7:15) with the only richness of Christ's poverty. The precious fruits of the diffusion of the forces of faith and truth in the proclamation of the

Kingdom were peace and justice. This was his sowing impregnated with charity in such an adverse environment. Let us remember the trial by fire when his writings came out of the flames intact... a convincing miracle, being thus defeated by the power of God the forces of hatred, lies and error, because he carried an authentic doctrine. As Psalm 84 beautifully expresses “God announces peace to his people and to his friends and to those who are converted from the heart” proof of this is the birth of Prouilhe... “the Holy Preaching”.



Peace is God’s wonderful gift to mankind. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, offers it to us and at the same time invites us to commit ourselves to it. We are challenged by the current reality of our world, so burdened, tormented, aggressive and violent. From our own Dominican contemplative life, the question instinctively arises: what can we bring to the Church today to survive this challenge? Certainly, we condemn violence and acts of violence, but the road we must travel is much deeper, it is towards our inner self, towards peace in our heart “rend your hearts” (Jo 2:13). I think that concord, reconciliation, responsibility, seeking the good of all, not excluding anyone, respecting differences, understanding those who think differently, without disqualifying and promoting what unites, are very appropriate attitudes. We must be fully aware that if we do not deliver peace, we deliver fears, ambitions, and selfish interests—a preacher pointed out. In our communities we can hurt or harm each other with our words, our looks, or gestures, or this can happen simply in our hearts. In our community life, to live peace is not only to have no conflicts or fights, it’s not only the absence of clashes, but a community harmony that springs from the heart of each one, peace that only union with Jesus can give. Let us not allow lovelessness to reign in our hearts, but let it always grow in love and unity, being coherent with our faith. Jesus is the model from whom we must learn everything: meekness, humility, mercy, compassion, silence, forgiveness.

Peace springs from a new, renewed heart, which can always respond with love because it is already Christ who lives in us; we must live in Christ. For he who serves Christ is pleasing to God and acceptable to men, therefore let us work for peace and for our mutual edification, as the Apostle exhorts us.



Sister María Dolores Colombres OP
Saint Catherine of Siena Monastery
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Original: Spanish



First Filipino Saint, A Dominican



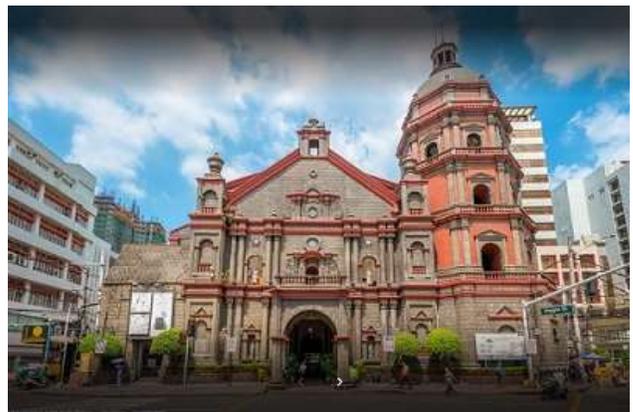
Introduction

Firstly, in behalf of the community of Lourdes Monastery, where Providence has gracefully brought me, I would like to express my profound gratitude to those involved in the continuance of the publication of this *Monialibus* which is so rich and truly informative in its contents; so useful for us Dominican Contemplative Nuns around the world.



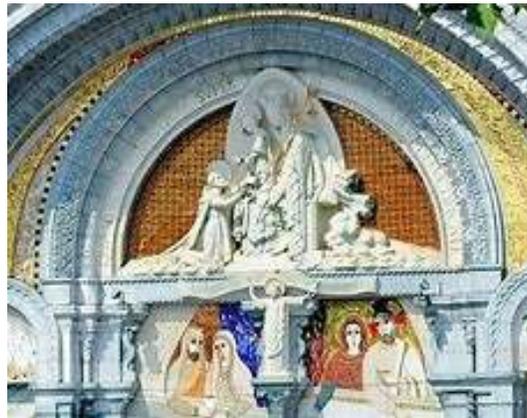
With great joy and deep interest, I humbly respond to the invitation of Sr. Lioba in the previous issue of *Monialibus* 46, April 2022, of which she wrote, and I quote : " Perhaps one of you or the other would like to share with us the story of a saint or a blessed person whom she knows more particularly? " So, with thankful heart, here I am to share with you the life of St Lorenzo Ruiz, my " kababayan " (compatriot). It must be a noble pride of our Dominican Brothers and Sisters particularly in the Philippines that St. Lorenzo Ruiz who was the first Filipino raised to the altar of sanctity is a Dominican, a beautiful fruit of our holy and happy Dominican Family.

I lived in Manila for many years where Lorenzo Ruiz was born. This prompted me to have courage to share with you about him and his family background and to satisfy my desire, in one way or another, to make him well known, and encourage us to increase our faith in the Lord and our Blessed Mother and be grateful and faithful of our Dominican vocation. The Church where he was baptized and later he served as an altar boy or sacristan in Binondo,



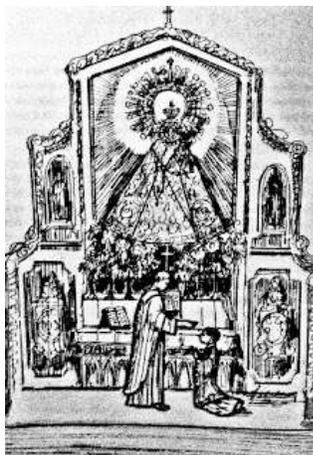
became my favorite place in the city. This Church is known as the Minor Basilica and National Shrine of St Lorenzo Ruiz, but it was formerly known as Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish. This has been reconstructed several times due to wars and various natural disasters like typhoons, fires, earthquakes, etc. During the war, everything including the archives of the parish were destroyed. But, before the war, it was considered one of the most beautiful churches in the country. The present church was renovated between 1946 and 1947. It is interesting and a joy to know that this Church was founded by our Dominican Priests in 1596. Oh, what a marvelous accomplishment of our Dominican Order in the life of our dear first Filipino Dominican Saint! Even more interesting to know is that he had been educated by our Dominican brothers.

Personally, I am especially drawn closer to this Saint, daily praying to him faithfully, due to his great devotion to our Blessed Mother and Her Rosary. This is depicted beautifully and fittingly in his picture with a Rosary in his hands. His life epitomizes the life of Filipinos known in Asian countries and even worldwide as fervent devotees of the Blessed Mother and Her Rosary. This is our precious heritage which we received from our dear Father St Dominic.



St Lorenzo Ruiz' Early Life

Lorenzo was born around the year 1600 in Binondo, Manila, to a devout Catholic Chinese father and a Filipina mother. Needless to say, he learned the Chinese language from his father, while he



learned Tagalog from his mother. The family lived an ordinary, united and happy life. Raised to devout parents, he was naturally attracted to Church activities. As a young boy, he served as a Sacristan or a server in the Church with the Dominican priests guiding him. While studying under the care of the Dominicans, he earned the title of a Calligrapher in their parish, because of his extraordinary skill in penmanship. Having his residence near the Church, and interested in serving the Church services, he joined the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. Eventually, he became an active member of this Religious Association.

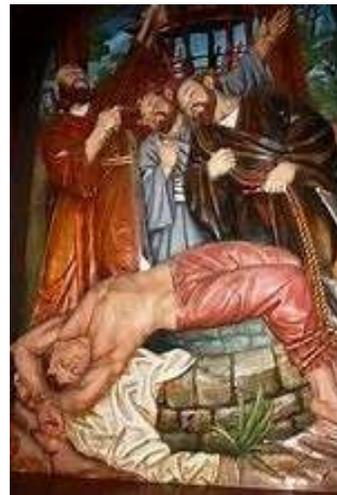
Later, he married to a native woman of his town. They had three children, two sons and one daughter. Lorenzo worked as a clerk in his parish, the source of livelihood to support his simple family. Not much detail about his family life was recorded. In his daily job, he was unfortunately involved in a terrible tragedy that led to his persecution which is considered as a gift of martyrdom, a special grace that is given only to a few.

His Martyrdom

While in his duty as a clerk for Binondo Church, Lorenzo was wrongly accused of killing a Spaniard. To save his life, he sought asylum onboard a ship with the help of Dominican priests. There was no detail of this alleged crime other than a journal entry by a couple of Dominican priests, that Lorenzo joined the group to escape from possible arrest.

He and his friends left for Okinawa with the support of the Dominican Fathers. On arriving in Japan, the group was arrested by Japanese Officials for the crime of being Christians and they were ordered to give up their Christian faith. Later, they were put into prison. After two years of imprisonment, they were transferred to Nagasaki to face their ordeal. On September 27, 1636, they were taken to Nishizaka Hill where they were tortured. Lorenzo was hung upside down with one hand left free so that he may have the chance to be freed by making a signal of his desire to recant and to obtain freedom from persecution. Despite his terrible suffering, he remained resolute in his faith. He was then put to death from eventual blood loss and suffocation. His body was cremated and the ashes thrown into the sea.

According to the record of his death, his last words were, " I am a Catholic and wholeheartedly do accept death for God. Had I a thousand lives, I shall offer all these to Him. Do with me as you please."



His Beatification and Canonization

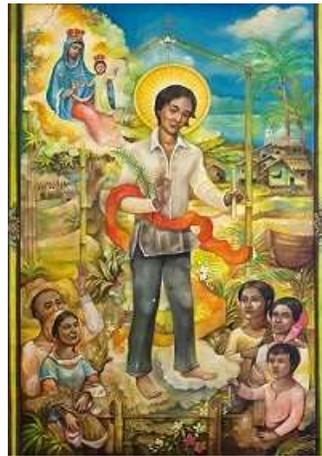
Lorenzo was beatified during Pope John Paul II's papal visit to the Philippines in 1981. I was overwhelmed to attend this beatification ceremony with the opportunity to be near the altar where the Holy Mass was celebrated. I was so delighted to have seen and been near to Mother



Teresa of Calcutta who attended the celebration. This might be an insignificant event for others but it was a great blessing for me which I will never forget in my consecrated life. It was said that his beatification ceremony was the first to happen outside the Vatican in history. I tried to verify this fact and I found it true in the archive of the Philippines.

Our first Filipino Saint was canonized by the same pope, Pope John Paul II at the Vatican, on October 18, 1987, among the 16 Martyrs of Japan, making him the first Filipino Saint. His canonization was supported by a miracle in October 1983 in the life of Cecilia Alegria Policarpio of Calinog, Iloilo. Cecilia was cured of brain atrophy (hydrocephalus) when she was two years old. Her family, relatives and friends prayed to Lorenzo for the grace of healing. Cecilia was diagnosed with this disease at an early age, and cured after she was prayed through Lorenzo's intercession.

St Lorenzo's feast is celebrated in our Catholic calendar on September 28.



My Personal Reflection

In the life of St Lorenzo Ruiz , I am so much touched by his last words before his death: " ...Had I a thousand lives, I shall offer all these to Him..."



Who among us, Dominicans in particular, is aware of the gravity of the meaning of this phrase? Through silence and prayer, I reflected that we can be part of our Dominican Saints especially with the holiness of St Lorenzo Ruiz in our sincere daily struggle to cooperate with His grace and be able to say in our hearts with St Lorenzo Ruiz, "Had I a thousand lives, I shall offer all these to Him." Yes, we are invited by the Lord, "Be holy (or perfect) for I am holy." This is a very noble invitation not only to us Religious but to all Christians as well, to be true followers of Christ. If the Lord is inviting us to this perfection, He is always ready to provide us the help that we need. All we have to do is to cooperate with His grace and He will be the One to do the job in us. After all, we are aware that we can do nothing good without His support. One minute with pure intention to spend it in doing His will, one thought in thinking it for His glory and the salvation of souls, one word in saying it for His joy, one act in doing it with love for the good of our neighbor, then, mix them together with love and prayer. This is a recipe so simple to do, day after day. We do not need great effort or high intelligence or much time to consume. Sincerely and humbly we beg the Lord to have mercy on us sinners and to guide us by His Holy Spirit in all our ways, to be perfect in charity and in being merciful to those who need our loving care. Our Father Saint Dominic and all our Dominican Saints who are now in Heaven awaiting for us to join them one day, have attained this goal.

We pray daily to be charitable and merciful with each other in our dear particular community where God has sent us. I believe this is a simple, humble, yet an excellent step toward this goal. We might say that it is easy to say this...but again, as I have already said, we beg for God's mercy and Mary's motherly care. Nothing is impossible with Him especially if it is for His Glory and the salvation of our soul and the souls of our neighbors.



Sr. Mary Paul
Lourdes Monastery, France
Original: English

Saint Catherine of Siena, Peace Maker

In this year when all of humanity and especially the Church is suffering, distressed and worried because of the war between Russia and Ukraine, I believe it is appropriate as nuns to turn our eyes in search of example and intercession to the great peacemaker, our sister and mother St. Catherine of Siena.

Why do we do so? The whole life of the humble tertiary of Fontebranda is a hymn to peace, both among peoples and among individuals and families. Thus, we see her, on a personal level, sowing peace when she was unjustly attacked and slandered by her detractors and even by the very people to whom she did good (think of Tecca, Palmerina and Andrea, sick people whom she cared for with abnegation and heroic charity and who mistreated and slandered her horribly, to which she always responded by returning good for evil).

Also noteworthy is her pacifying work among men, to quote an example among many others; the case of Nanni, a man of the world who thought only of hatred and revenge. Blessed Raymond of Capua, confessor and biographer of the saint, tells us: “Nanni had particular resentments and knew how to satisfy them by taking revenge on his enemies in secret. Many murders had already been committed in this treacherous manner. Although mediators had often been sought for reconciliation, he always answered with hypocrisy that he was a total stranger to such quarrels and that it was not up to him to establish peace. Finally, an appointment was arranged with the mantellata (not very convinced), and while he was waiting for Catherine's arrival in the company of Blessed Raymond, the latter, to entertain him while she came, began to speak to him of reconciliation, but he said: “Look, you are a priest and a religious and this good lady enjoys a great reputation of sanctity. I am not going to lie now: I want to speak to you frankly, and I tell you that I do not want to do anything of what you wish. It is true that I prevent peace, but I do not want this to be known. If I were to give my consent, all discord would be settled; but I refuse, and it is useless for you to talk to me about it. You will never achieve anything. It is enough to tell you plainly what I have always kept silent to others. Don't bother me anymore. When Catalina enters, who had just come from helping with another reconciliation, she greeted the man with heavenly charity and asked him the reason for his visit. Nanni repeated what he had told Raymond, Catalina spoke to him and, seeing his resistance, began to pray fervently. After a few moments, Nanni said: “For your sake, I will not refuse everything. I have four enemies: I will sacrifice the one you want”. Saying this, he got up to leave; but suddenly he exclaimed: “My God, what consolation I feel in my soul for this single word of peace that I have just said”. Then he added: “Lord, my God, what power is this that holds me back and triumphs over me? I cannot leave; I cannot deny anything. Who works in me with such power? Yes, I confess it,” he said, shedding tears, “I am defeated”. Kneeling down, he said between sobs: “Holy maiden: here I am ready to do whatever you command me for peace”. Nanni confessed to Raymond who put him at peace with God and Catherine reconciled him with all his enemies (from the Legend (Life) of Catherine written by Blessed Raymond - Part 2 - Chapter VII). This is one example among many in her life.



We could also mention all her pacifying work among the Italian cities and of these with the Holy Father before whom they had revolted and had been punished with interdict. For this she spared no letters, exhortations to kings and prelates and above all prayers and sacrifices. We could mention the case when Gregory XI sent her to restore peace in Florence between the shepherd and the sheep and where she almost lost her life. A seditious man went so far as to rush upon her, sword in hand to kill her, as he would have succeeded if God had not intervened in a prodigious way - the attacker left in amazement at Catherine's courage and her eagerness for martyrdom. Despite all kinds of threats and dangers, she did not want to withdraw until Urban VI, successor of Gregory XI, signed peace with the Florentines (something she herself strongly urged him to do) (*Legend - Part III - Chapter I*). The Pope's messenger entered Florence on horseback, carrying in his hand an olive branch and soon the whole city heard: "The olive branch has just arrived: it is peace". The people were filled with joy.

We can also mention the hard struggle she fought before her death, mainly with prayer and the sacrifice of her life for the Church. These were cruel pains she suffered in her soul and body, but also with her exhortations, for the end of the schism that was tearing the Church apart and to pacify the mutinous Roman people who wanted to attempt murder the Supreme Pontiff. Finally, her sacrifice was accepted, the popular sedition was calmed until it was completely pacified and peace was restored to the Church (*Legend - Part III - Chapter II*).

It may strike us that Catherine, being such a lover of peace, nevertheless preached and advised a Crusade against the infidels. This is a tribute to the time in which she lived, in which the Church undertook this type of holy war, and we should not judge it with current criteria, so different from those of her time. In any case, the only thing she sought by this means was to restore peace among Christians, making the men of war, who could not be without battle, unite to fight for a holy cause, thus being able to expiate their sins (as the Church of her time proposed) and thus extinguish the discord among Christians (and Christian civilization would be protected against the threatening Turks). Nowadays this is very difficult to understand with the current ecumenical perspective of the Church.



Given these episodes from her life that we have quoted as example, we ask ourselves: where did this great love of peace come from in our saint? What was its source? Reflecting on it, we think that it may be due to the following things: in the first place, her profound union with God, "the peaceful Sea" as she liked to call Him; the calmness of her soul in which the passions were fully appeased and submitted to God; her intense Eucharistic life (a reason we call this Sacrament "Communion", since it is the cause of it). Also, the action of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, mainly that of Wisdom, which Christian Tradition (including St. Thomas) relates to the beatitude of those who work for peace. Her perfect abandonment to Providence, which she practiced so much and recommended to her disciples, and which is a source of profound peace, may also have influenced her. Let us note that her biographers describe her as always cheerful and smiling, a sign of a heart at peace,

and that would also explain her mysterious magnetism to attract souls to God and therefore to peace (as we have seen in the case of Nanni and so many others).

As nuns, let us ask our wonderful “Mamma” to inspire in us that deep love of peace and to make us spread it in this world so wounded and convulsed by hatred, violence, and war and to intercede for peace in the countries in conflict.



Sister María Gabriela de Jesús O.P.
Monastery of St. Catherine of Siena
Buenos Aires (Argentina)
Federation Mary Mother of Grace
Original: Español





In Honor of Margaret of God

*Sister Margaret Ebner,
risen in Love,
in the Life that does not die,
because it is God Himself.*

*

*Holocaust for peace,
your life was a sacrament
from the beginning to the end
for the Church and for your people.*

*

*The Divine Child
was source of great tenderness
For Him was your love
the purest joy.*

*

*Meditating on the Liturgy
with your Mother, the Church
was your Mystic, listening,
and its fruit, obedience.*

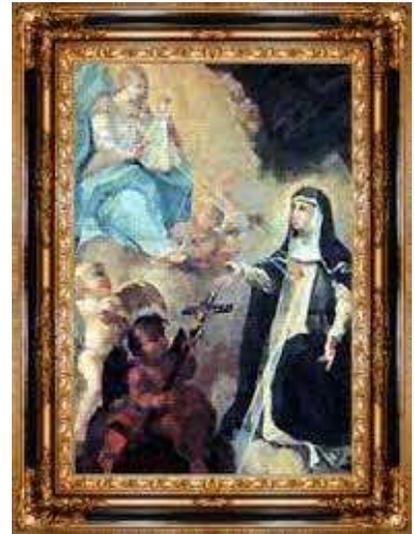
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*For peace you were a lamb.
On the Cross, you were crucified,
humiliated to the ground.
Crowned with virtues.*

*

*With the mystics of the Rhine
your memory endures,
which will never end
in the glory of Heaven.*

*



Sister María Gabriela de Jesús O.P.
Monastery of St. Catherine of Siena.
Buenos Aires (Argentina)
Federation Mary Mother of Grace
Original: Spanish



St. Margaret of Hungary – Daughter of St. Dominic

Although St. Margaret of Hungary, a Dominican nun of the 13th Century, was canonized in 1943, and we Nuns of the Order have since then proudly owned her as one of our own, very little is popularly known about her. In summary: During the Tartar invasion of Hungary in 1241-1242, Margaret's parents, the king and queen of Hungary, vowed to dedicate to God the child which the queen was carrying if it was a girl, if God would deliver their kingdom from the Tartar depredations. The kingdom was delivered, the child was a girl and when she was three years old she was given to the Dominican monastery in Veszprem. There she was formed to be a nun. Her parents built a new monastery for her on the Isle of the Hares in the middle of the Danube between Buda and Pest. She and a number of professed nuns moved there when Margaret was

about ten years old. In 1254, during the course of the General Chapter of the Order of Preachers which was being held in Buda, Margaret made her solemn profession in the hands of Humbert of Romans, Master of the Order. A few years after that Margaret received the Consecration of Virgins from Philip, Archbishop of Esztergom, so that her father could not give her away in a diplomatic marriage. She lived a life in the monastery that was characterized mainly by her gruesome penances and her obstinate lack of personal hygiene. She died in 1270, at the age of twenty-eight, and, amid a shower of miracles, was immediately acclaimed a saint.

Forming devotion to someone who is mainly characterized by gruesome penances and the refusal to bathe is a rather difficult task. When Simon Tugwell, O.P. compiled his contribution to the Paulist Press series on spirituality, a number of us nuns were surprised and delighted to see that he had included a translation of a few of the testimonies from St. Margaret's canonization process, which was conducted in 1276. Unfortunately, they did not round out our picture of her as a human being and a saint. However, when I read Tugwell's translation I was captivated. I wanted to read the whole thing to find out how nuns of the Order really lived in the early days. The only problem was getting hold of a copy of the Latin original. So I added it to my bucket list of Latin originals that I wanted. The search continued for years until Google Books came to my attention and I could buy a POD copy of the canonization process. Fortunately, I was not disappointed. Margaret of Hungary's personality comes through on every page of the nuns' testimonies and their daily life is there in all the nitty-gritty details: mucking out the privies, boiling crayfish for dinner on an open hearth, etc. The personalities of the witnesses themselves come through vividly. I felt as if my sisters were talking to me, through a translator to be sure, since they were speaking Hungarian while interpreters conveyed their meaning to the inquisitors, with an assiduous scribe taking it all down in Latin.

Margaret's Life in More Detail

In translating the canonization process, I was surprised by a number of things that threw light on aspects of St. Margaret's life. The first was that she was by no means the only daughter of King Bela IV and Maria Lascaris, daughter of the emperor of Nicaea. In fact she was the eighth daughter, named after another Margaret who had died during the flight from the Tartars. The story, as it has been handed down in popular hagiography, makes the vowing of their daughter an act of amazing generosity on the part of the parents. But an eighth daughter, even if one of the other seven had died, was in that day and age a highly expendable commodity. Not only that, but offering a child to a monastery was, in general, a popular way to deal with a younger child that might be difficult to place or provide for otherwise. In fact, in a good number of the testimonies, the witnesses say that they were given to the monastery when they were four, five, six or seven years old. There appears to have been no such thing as choice on the part of the child.



That may be one of the more remarkable things about St. Margaret: she had a choice and she chose resoundingly for God and the monastery. We know from all the testimonies that she took to life in the monastery as a duck takes to water. But the definitive moment of choice came when she was in her teens, sometime after her solemn profession at the age of twelve. Her parents decided that they wanted her to leave the cloister and enter into a diplomatic marriage with the king of Bohemia. They even went so far as to obtain for her from the Pope a dispensation from her vows. Such behavior on the part of her parents is almost incomprehensible. It was their choice to dedicate her to God to begin with and they had gone to all the trouble and expense to build a new monastery for her. But apparently they had already married off their other daughters and Margaret was the only coin left in their purse. This was her moment of choice and the witnesses make it clear that, for perhaps the one time in her life, she did something royally: she threw a fit. Screaming and crying, she threatened to cut her nose and lips off, literally deface herself, rather than be unfaithful to her true and only spouse, Jesus Christ. Her spiritual director talked to her and she repeated more calmly her resolution of fidelity to Christ. Her parents had to back down and give one of their grand-daughters to the king of Bohemia to seal the desired alliance of the two kingdoms. So that they couldn't try it again, she sought and received the Consecration of Virgins from the Archbishop of Esztergom. The thinking at the time was, that the Pope might in very exceptional circumstances dispense from a solemn vow, but that no one could dispense from the Consecration of Virgins. Margaret got her hard-won peace.

The other surprising, and in many ways moving, thing that I learned from the witnesses was that Margaret's nurse, a member of her mother's court named Olympias, who was a young widow with a daughter close to Margaret's age, was ordered by the queen to accompany Margaret into the monastery. She herself tells the story to those holding the inquest: "on the fourth day I put on the clothing of a nun." Not long after her own novitiate, she became mistress of all the novices, including Margaret, and from that time until Margaret's death she was known as Margaret's mistress, even though Margaret had long since ceased to be a novice. Dame Olympias is referred to over and over by the other witnesses as Sr. Margaret's mistress and she refers to herself as such. She had no qualms about reproaching Margaret for her behavior, once accusing her of groveling in the dirt like a pig. According to the witnesses who saw this, Margaret took it with good humor, but one can only wonder if Olympias' possessive attitude was really a trial to her. In any case, it is a very human example of the complexity of relationships that is possible in a monastic community. Olympias' own daughter Elizabeth also became a nun and she gives her testimony concerning Margaret with no apparent jealousy toward her.



With regard to Margaret, the witnesses show a rather ambivalent attitude. All but one, ironically a niece of Margaret's, willingly attested to her sanctity. They were in awe of her extreme penances, which were a standard sign of sanctity in those days, but they were almost uniformly disgusted by her lack of hygiene, which led to lice, among other things. To Margaret, all this was simply another form of penance. She was very attached to a louse-ridden hair shirt that she wore almost constantly. To quote Olympias again: "I was always trying to get that shirt away from her." However, the sisters deeply appreciated many of her other qualities and first of all, her devotion to prayer, both the common prayer of the Divine Office and daily Mass, which she never missed, and especially private prayer. She seems to have worked out a schedule peculiar to herself which consisted of giving her mornings entirely to prayer up until the main meal, unless kitchen service or some other obedience demanded her presence elsewhere. If her parents or elder brother came to visit at that time, she refused to see them, unless the prioress demanded it. She was also known to pray during the night instead of going to bed.

The witnesses also approve Margaret for not standing on her dignity or claiming any of the privileges that would normally have accrued to her as a royal princess. The very first witness, Dame Catherine, tells how Margaret, when still quite a young child, came running to her and some of the senior nuns one day, crying her heart out. When they asked her what was wrong, she sobbed that one of the sisters had insulted her by calling her the king's daughter! Whether it was then or later that someone gently explained to her that she was the king's daughter, when she did realize the truth, she made every effort to move to the opposite extreme. She started, again at an early age, by insisting on doing everything that the other sisters did, including sweeping the corridors and cleaning the privies, at a time when that did *not* mean pouring something blue into a porcelain bowl, swishing it with a brush and flushing! As she grew older, she insisted on taking her regular week's turn helping in the kitchen and serving in the refectory. If a sister was indisposed during her scheduled week, Margaret would volunteer to substitute for her. The witnesses emphasize over and over that she never shrank from even the drudge work that ordinarily the servants would have done. As one of these, Agnes, testified: "She was more humble than us servants." Whatever her parents or brother gave her as a gift, she promptly gave away. Gold and jewels were turned over to the prioress to be given to some poor church for the adornment of its altars. Special food presented to her in the refectory was passed to the sister next to her. If she received new clothing, she would immediately approach any sister whose habit looked worse for wear and offer to trade with her. The sister in charge of making and mending the habits says that she was constantly asking her to patch her habit rather than give her a new one.

One of the things that most impressed the witnesses was her compassion for the sick and suffering and her devotion to serving them in whatever way she could, never shrinking from even the most noisome tasks, and going to great lengths to see that they were comfortable and comforted in their pain, whether physical or emotional. She would go to the kitchen in the middle of the night to get food or drink for a sick sister. If she heard someone moaning or crying

in the dormitory, she would go to them and ask them what was wrong and what she could do for them. If she knew that someone was mourning the loss of a parent or other near relative, she would sit and mourn with them. Joined to this warm-hearted, sympathetic caring was a genuine, wholly unfeigned humility. She could not even be surprised into a harsh or angry word. One of the witnesses tells of Sr. Chinga who, when Margaret asked her to help carry a large basin of water outside to be emptied, was so annoyed at the request that she “accidentally” spilled the water all over Margaret. Margaret only laughed and said: “Good Sister, why did you do that?” When the inquisitors asked the witness how she knew this, she replied: “Because I was there.” On the whole, Margaret seems to have had a lively sense of humor and to have laughed easily, as several sisters bear witness.

If in our modern eyes Margaret seems a formidable character, she was certainly not to her sisters, and once I got to know her better, she was no longer formidable to me. She might have been rather annoying to live with, but no less lovable for all that!

St. Margaret as a Daughter of St. Dominic

At first glance, St. Margaret might not seem to be terribly “Dominican.” Granted, she spent her entire life in a monastery of Dominican nuns, one which was carefully supervised by Dominican friars, and she had a friar as her spiritual director from the beginning. But she seemingly did not engage at all in either preaching or study, the two most characteristic marks of any good Dominican. Nevertheless, after a close look at the testimonies of the witnesses, one can readily discern the features of her father-founder, St. Dominic.

To begin with, St. Dominic was known for his athletic, full-body prayer, so much so that a lovely booklet survives from the 13th century, illustrated with miniatures of St. Dominic at prayer: *The Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic*. Margaret could certainly be said to have had the same prayer style. The witnesses testify to *venias*, prostrations, genuflections, standing in various postures, self-flagellation, tears, all of which are pictured in the *Nine Ways*. The same source confirms that St. Dominic’s prayer was rooted in and saturated with the psalms he recited every day in the Office. This could also be said of Margaret who was as faithfully devoted to the Office as St. Dominic and never missed singing it with the community unless she was ill. In addition, she frequently read the entire psalter during the many hours she spent in private prayer. Dominic and Margaret both spent entire nights in prayer.

St. Dominic was also very devoted to the Mass, and he celebrated a sung Mass daily as far as possible, although this was not the common custom of the time, frequently shedding tears during the Canon of the Mass. The witnesses testify that Margaret showed extreme reverence at Mass, especially on each of the fifteen times in the year when the sisters were permitted to receive Communion. She shed copious tears on those occasions and fasted a whole day in advance. In general she was devoted to fasting, and seemed scarcely to eat at all. The same was said of St. Dominic in his canonization process. The witnesses also state that he seldom, if ever, slept in a

bed, but rather on the floor or in the church in front of the altar. The witnesses for Margaret's canonization also aver that she usually slept on the floor, if she slept at all.

All the sources agree that St. Dominic had a great love of poverty, always wearing cheap, poor quality clothing, although he liked it clean! He did everything he could to relieve the needs of the poor, including selling his books while a student in Palencia because there was a famine in the locale. Another time, in the south of France, he offered to sell himself into slavery to provide a living for a heretic who was dependent on the Cathars for his livelihood. St. Margaret's sisters testify that any time she saw a poor person through the window that looked onto the monastery church, she would run and beg the prioress to give that person something, even the clothes off Margaret's back. She always wore ragged, patched clothing and never kept anything good for herself.

St. Dominic had no fear of martyrdom and openly rejoiced at the possibility. Witnesses testify that if, on his journeys, he suspected a trap, he would keep walking fearlessly and start to sing. Among his favorite hymns were *Ave Maris Stella* and *Veni Creator Spiritus*. The witnesses for Margaret testify that she many times expressed an eagerness for martyrdom, a desire to suffer and die for the love of God. She also said that if the Tartars came, she would mutilate her face in order to preserve her virginity. We might think this rather naïve, but it is nonetheless praiseworthy on her part.

Both Dominic and Margaret had a tender devotion to the Virgin Mary. Bl. Cecilia Caesarini, in the memoir dictated in her old age, relates visions that St. Dominic had of the Virgin protecting his fledgling Order and succoring the brethren. Many of the witnesses for Margaret testify that she would fast on the vigil of each of the feasts of Our Lady that were celebrated in the mid-13th century, and would say as many as a thousand *Ave Marias* at a time. Her spiritual director testified that "she pronounced the name of the Glorious Virgin with great humility." The monastery built for her by her parents and where she lived out her life was dedicated to the same Glorious Virgin.

One of the most appealing characteristics of St. Dominic was his compassion for the sufferings of others and his ability to console them. The friars who knew him all testify to this, especially his kindness to the young in the Order and his ability to soothe their trials and allay their temptations. They testify also that when he corrected any brother for some infraction of the rule, he did it in a manner so calm and kindly that no brother was ever angry or upset by a correction. St. Margaret's sisters in the monastery recount over and over not only her devotion to serving the sick in the infirmary, but also her staying up at night to be attentive to the needs of nuns in the dormitory. If she heard anyone moaning or in distress, she would go to them immediately, ask what was wrong and bring them anything, even food and drink (contrary to the rule) in the middle of the night. More than one young sister testifies that when she was beset with temptation, Margaret could read her thoughts and would confront her with them, but in a manner

so kindly and humble that the sister was immediately repentant and delivered from any regret for being a nun.

Margaret of Hungary was the daughter of a king of the House of Arpad and a Byzantine princess. We have no description of her physical appearance, apart from how worn out and haggard she was at the end of her life from all her penances, austerities and weeping. We have no way of knowing which of her parents she resembled. Was she fair-skinned and somewhat broad of face like her Hungarian ancestors, or did she have olive skin and a Grecian nose? What we do know was that she bore to a remarkable degree the spiritual physiognomy of her father in faith, St. Dominic.

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The Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic

The Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order issued by Humbert of Romans in 1259

Sr. Mary Martin Jacobs, O.P.

Monastery of Summit, USA

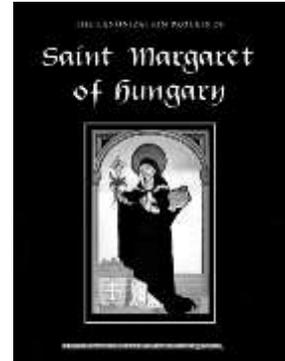
Original: English



Publication:

The Canonization Process of St. Margaret of Hungary

The Canonization Process of St. Margaret of Hungary is a fascinating work revealing the life of this 13th century Dominican nun. The testimonies of the nuns of her monastery and of the friars associated with her, in addition to any lay person who wished to testify to miracles wrought through her intercession were collected in a formal process in 1278. The sisters who lived with her present vivid, colorful details of her life in the monastery. Also, the testimonies of St. Margaret's miracles are a remarkable view into life in the 1200s. Sr. Mary Martin Jacobs, O.P. of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary in Summit, NJ has recently translated the work from Latin.



A copy of *The Canonization Process of St. Margaret of Hungary* can be purchased at the Summit Dominicans website: <https://summitdominicans.org/dns-publications>.

For international orders, please contact us at giftshop@summitdominicans.org



We invite all the sisters who wrote books or articles or some other publications to let us know for our next Monialibus. Thank you!

