

EARLY DOMINICANS

TESTIMONY OF BROTHER PAUL OF VENICE (AUGUST 16).

(41) The eighth sworn witness was brother Paul of Venice of the Order of Preachers,⁹² who received the habit at Bologna fourteen years ago and made profession in the hands of Master Reginald. After his profession, when the blessed Dominic came to Bologna, the witness was very intimate with him and walked with him round the Marches of Treviso and was with him in eating and drinking, when he was staying anywhere and when he was travelling, in the Divine Office, by day and by night, for about two years. "In all this time, I never heard from him an idle word or a derogatory or flattering word or any damaging word." On the contrary, when he was travelling, he saw him either praying or preaching or giving his time to prayer or meditation. When he was travelling, he would tell his companions to go on ahead, saying, "Let us think about our Saviour." Wherever he was, he always spoke either about God or to God, and he encouraged the brethren to do the same, and put it in his Rule.⁹³ He was never seen to be angry or upset or worried by the toil of travelling, but was patient and happy in all adversities.

(42) He had a supreme love of poverty for himself and for his Order. When some of the people of Bologna wanted to give the brethren certain properties, he refused them, saying that he wanted his brethren to live off alms. And he put it in the Constitutions that properties should not be accepted in the Order.⁹⁴

When he left any town he used to take his shoes off and walk barefoot. He wore the cheapest of habits. "I sometimes saw the blessed Dominic seeking alms from door to door and receiving bread like any pauper. For example, at Dugliolo one day when he was begging for alms, someone offered him a whole loaf of bread, and the father knelt down and took it with great humility and devotion.

"When he was travelling, I never saw him lie in a bed, though he did sometimes lie on some bedding. Once when I visited the church of Porto Legnago⁹⁵ with him, the father had a place prepared for his companions to lie down, but he went into the church and spent the night there until Matins, and then he said Matins with the clergy. When he was travelling, he kept the Order's fasts, though he made his companions eat because of the labour of the journey. In the convent of St. Nicholas in Bologna I looked for a long time to see if he had any place of his own to lie down in, and I found that he had not; he slept

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either on the ground or on a wicker trellis or on a wooden board, and very often he spent the night in church. When he prayed he wept a great deal, because sometimes when I went to fetch him from prayer I saw his face wet with tears. Every day, even when he was travelling, he wanted to sing Mass, if he could find a convenient church for it.

(43) "He longed jealously for the salvation of believers and unbelievers alike. He sometimes said to me, 'When we have established our Order, we shall go to the Cumans and preach the faith of Christ to them and win them for the Lord.'

He wanted the Rule to be observed strictly by himself and by the others. He reprimanded offenders justly and so affectionately that no one was ever upset by his correction and punishment. He conformed to the community in his food and in the Office. When he spent the night in church, he was still always there with the rest to celebrate Matins. He used to encourage the brethren in choir, now on one side, now on the other, to sing well and excellently and to recite the psalms with devotion.

"He was patient, kind, compassionate, sober, loving, humble and chaste, and he was always a virgin. I never knew anyone to compare with him in holiness of life.

"When he was travelling, he preached to the people who joined his party and urged them on to follow the good.

(44) "I was present at Bologna when his body was moved, when such a delightful fragrance came from it that everyone prostrated themselves on the ground and gave thanks to God. The whole church was filled with the fragrance.

(45) "When I was coming to Bologna from Venice to give evidence about the life of the blessed Dominic, my usual kidney pains attacked me so severely that I thought I would not be able to give evidence at the time appointed. I went to the tomb of the blessed Dominic and when I had prayed about this, I was completely freed from the pain."

TESTIMONY OF BROTHER FRUGERIO OF PENNABILLI (AUGUST 17).

(46) The ninth sworn witness was brother Frugerio of Pennabilli of the Order of Preachers,⁹⁶ who had been in the Order for fourteen years and had made profession in the hands of Master Reginald and

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received the habit from him in the church of Mascarella, which was the first place in Bologna where the Order of Preachers was established. After his profession, with permission from Master Reginald, the witness went to visit his family, and when he returned to Bologna he found the blessed Dominic at the church of St. Nicholas, where the brethren had moved. He lived with him there for more than four months. He was also with him in the convent in Florence and in the convent in Rome, and also travelling to Rome and through various other towns, being with him in the Office, in eating and in talking, hearing his confession, in prayer and in discussing God with him, by day and by night.

The blessed Dominic was very devoted in his prayer, both when he was travelling and when he was in a convent, so much so that he, the witness, could not see that he ever slept in a bed, although one was sometimes prepared for him. But sometimes when he was tired, as a result of keeping vigil too long at night, he would go to sleep on the ground or on a piece of wood. When he was celebrating Mass he wept a good deal.

(47) When he was talking to the brethren he used to weep and he made them weep too.

"I never heard an idle or harmful word from him, whether of flattery or of detraction." He always spoke about God or with God, and he used to preach to anyone he met on the way when he was travelling, and he urged the brethren to do the same. This was why he wanted to put this in his Rule.⁹⁷ He was zealous for souls, not only those of Christians, but also Saracens and other unbelievers. As evidence of this, he proposed to go to the pagans and die there for the faith, once he had organised his brethren.

He treated himself roughly and observed the Order's fasts very strictly when he was travelling, and would not eat before the set time, even though he made his companions eat. He used a single tunic in winter and in summer. He exhorted the brethren to practise the poverty which he himself loved so much. He used a cheap tunic. He was quick to rebuke and correct any of the brethren who were wearing clothes that were at fault. This was why he directed that they should not accept properties, but should live off alms, and he put this in the Rule. He wanted the brethren to have cheap houses and cheap reading desks, so that they would display poverty in everything.

(48) He himself observed the Rule strictly and wanted it to be

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observed by the others. He convicted and corrected offenders with gentleness and kindness in such a way that no one was upset, even though the penances were sometimes very severe.

“He was never defiled by any mortal sin, as far as I could tell from his confession, which I heard. He was kind and patient in all trials, rejoicing in adversities, loving, compassionate, a comforter of the brethren and of others. He was adorned with all the virtues to such a degree that I never saw anyone like him.”

(49) I, Aldrovando, son of the late Tebaldo, notary by imperial authority, received these witnesses, on the instructions of Master Tancred, archdeacon of Bologna, Dom Thomas, prior of Santa Maria di Reno, and brother Palmiero of Campagnola, the judges appointed by the lord Pope, and I put them in official form and wrote them out in the year of our Lord 1233 in the sixth indiction, in the earlier part of August.

Miscellaneous Texts on St. Dominic

ST. DOMINIC AT OSMA

It was his very frequent practice to spend the night at his prayers, praying to his Father with his door shut.⁹⁸ During these prayers he sometimes felt such groaning in his heart that he began to bellow and make noises outwardly, unable to stop himself bursting out like this audibly. And he had a special prayer which he often made to God, that God would grant him true charity which would be effective in caring for and winning the salvation of men; he thought he would only really be a member of Christ's Body when he could spend himself utterly with all his strength in the winning of souls, just as the Saviour of us all, the Lord Jesus, gave himself up entirely for our salvation. (*Jordan of Saxony*)⁹⁹

THE BEGINNING OF THE PREACHING

In the year of the Incarnation 1206, the bishop of Osma, Diego by name, a great man deserving of high praise, went to the Roman curia with an intense desire to resign his see so that he could be free to go and preach the gospel of Christ to the pagans; but Pope Innocent refused the holy man's request and told him to return to his diocese instead. Now it so happened that when he was at Montpellier on his way home from the curia, he met there the venerable Arnaud, the abbot of Cîteaux, and brother Peter of Castelnau and brother Raoul, both of them Cistercian monks; these were the Pope's legates, but, depressed by their inability to make any significant headway in their preaching to the heretics, they were thinking of abandoning their mission.¹⁰⁰ Whenever they wanted to preach to the heretics, the heretics raised against them the objection of the appalling lives of the clergy.¹⁰¹ But if they were to try to reform the lives of the clergy, they would have to give up their preaching. In face of this dilemma, Bishop Diego gave them the sound advice that they should forget about everything else and devote themselves even more earnestly to preaching; and, to enable them to shut the mouths of their malicious

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enemies, they should proceed in humility, like their loving Master, "doing and teaching,"¹⁰² travelling on foot, without gold and silver, imitating in every way the pattern of the apostles. The legates were reluctant on their own authority to adopt such a novel policy, but said that if someone of suitable authority were to give them a lead in pursuing this way, they would gladly follow. Without hesitating, the God-filled bishop offered himself, and at once sent his retinue and his carriages back to his own town of Osma, and set off from Montpellier with only one companion,¹⁰³ together with two of the Cistercians, Peter and Raoul. The abbot of Cîteaux went back to Cîteaux because the General Chapter of their Order was soon to be held there, and because he intended, after the Chapter, to bring some of the abbots of the Order to help him in carrying out the job of preaching which had been laid upon him. (*Pierre de Vaux Cernai*)¹⁰⁴

When Diego, the bishop of Osma, arrived in the territory of the Albigeois with his episcopal horses and baggage-train, he was told that the district was infected with heresy; so he preached in one of the towns there against heresy. The heretics rose up to oppose him, and the strongest argument they could find to support their false beliefs was the pomp of the bishop's *équipe*. "How can you believe this man and his like?", they said to their followers; "They turn up with all this pomp and wealth, with their pack-animals and their riding-horses, and then they preach to you a Christ who was humble and poor. We, by contrast, preach in poverty and lowliness and austerity, we display in our deeds what we have told you about in our words." This embarrassed the bishop, so he sent away his horses and his *équipe* and abandoned his provisions and began to go round the district with the blessed Dominic in poverty and on foot, preaching. This was the reason why our Order was founded. I was told about this by the first brethren who were with the blessed Dominic in that country. (*Stephen of Bourbon*)¹⁰⁵

On one occasion a public debate was organised against the heretics. The local bishop proposed to go to it with an imposing entourage, but St. Dominic said to him, "No, my lord and father, that is not the way to go to meet such people. The heretics are to be convinced by an example of humility and other virtues far more readily than by any external display or verbal battles. So let us arm ourselves with devout prayers and set off showing signs of genuine humility and

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barefooted to combat Goliath." The bishop accepted what the man of God said, and he sent his equipage away and they set off barefooted.

The place they were going to was many miles away. On the way there they began to be uncertain of their route, so they asked the way of someone they thought was a Catholic, but in fact he was a heretic. "Certainly," he said, "Not only will I show you the way, I shall be delighted to escort you there myself." While he was taking them through a wood somewhere, he led them astray so viciously, through thorns and thistles, that their feet and legs became quite covered in blood. The man of God endured all this with the utmost patience; breaking out into a hymn of praise to God, he encouraged the others to praise God too and to be patient. "My friends," he said, "hope in the Lord. Victory will be ours, because even now our sins are being washed away in blood." The heretic saw their extraordinary and blissful patience, and he was pricked with compunction at the good words spoken by the man of God, so he admitted the poisonous way he had deceived them, and renounced his heresy.

When they reached the place of the debate, everything came to a satisfactory conclusion. (*Gerald de Frachet*)¹⁰⁶

TOULOUSE

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let all men know, now and in the time to come, that we, Fulk, humble servant, by the grace of God, of the see of Toulouse, hereby appoint as preachers in our diocese brother Dominic and his companions, to root out the evil of heresy, to drive away vice, to teach the rule of faith and to instruct men in sound morals. These men have made a religious commitment to travel on foot in evangelical poverty, preaching the word of gospel truth.

Now the labourer deserves his food¹⁰⁷ and it is not right to muzzle the treading ox,¹⁰⁸ and the preacher of the gospel ought to live by the gospel;¹⁰⁹ accordingly, since these men have come to preach, we desire that they should receive from the diocese their food and all else that is necessary for their support. With the consent of the Chapter of the church of St. Stephen¹¹⁰ and of the clergy of the diocese of Toulouse, we assign in perpetuity to these preachers and to any others who are moved by zeal for the Lord and a longing for the

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salvation of souls to attach themselves to this task of preaching in this manner, one half of the third of the tithes which is devoted to the furnishing and maintenance of the fabric of all the parish churches under our jurisdiction. This is to provide for their clothing and whatever else they may need when they are sick and when they want to rest for a time. We decree that whatever is left over at the end of the year is to revert to the parish churches for their furnishing, or is to be used for the poor, as the bishop sees fit. The law requires that a certain portion of all tithes ought always to be devoted to the poor, and it is evident that we are under a special obligation to devote part of the tithes to those who freely choose evangelical poverty for the sake of Christ, and who strive and labour to enrich everyone with the gifts of heaven by their example and teaching. In this way we can appropriately repay those from whom we reap temporal profit by sowing spiritual seed for them, by our own endeavour¹¹¹ and by that of others.¹¹² (*Fulk, Bishop of Toulouse*)¹¹³

It occurs to me incidentally to mention something about brother John of Navarre¹¹⁴ which I heard him relate himself. When the holy father Dominic was sending him to Paris, as has already been mentioned, with brother Laurence,¹¹⁵ John asked to be given some provisions or some money for the journey. The saint refused to give him any, urging them to go like disciples of Christ, not carrying gold or silver. "Trust in the Lord," he said, "for those who fear God lack nothing." John would not accept this; he absolutely refused to obey the saint's word. When the holy and loving father saw the wretched man's disobedience, he fell at his feet, weeping and howling for the miserable man who would not weep for himself. He told them to give him twelve *deniers* for the whole journey to Paris. (*Stephen Salagnac*)¹¹⁶

After the death of that renowned prince, Count Simon de Montfort, who died at Toulouse in the Lord's army the day after the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, 1217, when the blessed father Dominic dispersed the brethren, he sent Peter Selhan¹¹⁷ to Limoges, as I have often heard him relate—it was in his hands that I made my profession. He pleaded ignorance and lack of books, having only a few pages of homilies by St. Gregory. But St. Dominic said, "Go, my son, and go confidently. I will hold you before God twice every day.

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Do not doubt, you will win many for God and bring forth much fruit." A short time after that he arrived at Limoges and was received with kindness by the bishop¹¹⁸ and Chapter of Limoges, and was given a place to live; like one of the prophets of old, he was held in great honour in the land among the clergy and people and grew old there in great esteem. He was the first brother of the Order after St. Dominic. (*Stephen Salagnac*)¹¹⁹

Afterwards he often used to say to his friends that whenever he felt oppressed, in the convent or outside, he would invoke dom Dominic¹²⁰ and remind him of his promise, and then everything always turned out successfully. (*Bernard Gui*)¹²¹

ROME

I was told by Bartholomew de la Cluse, archdeacon of Mâcon and a canon of Chartres, that when St. Dominic was in Rome, almost every day, after attending his Office, he went round the walls of the city and other places where there were recluses¹²² and gave them advice for their salvation, like Tobias, who "visited all who were in captivity and gave them advice for their salvation."¹²³ Incidentally, he also told me that he had gone to confession to St. Dominic in Rome, and he had foretold many things that would happen to him because of his unwillingness to enter the Order; they did happen to him, he said. (*Stephen of Bourbon*)¹²⁴

BOLOGNA

One of the brethren told me this story about St. Dominic at Bologna. After spending the greater part of the night in prayer, he used to climb onto some wicker hurdles which were by this brother's bed. The brother heard him repeatedly groaning and roaring, and wondered what on earth it could be. However late he went to bed, he never found anyone there, and however early he got up he never found anyone there. So he asked another brother about it, and he told him that it was St. Dominic, who used to go there to rest a little, when it was nearly time for Matins. (*Stephen of Bourbon*)¹²⁵

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VARIOUS STORIES

Once when he was at prayer, after the brethren had already gone to bed, the devil came in the form of a friar and pretended to be praying at one of the altars. The saint was surprised that any brother should have stayed behind after the bell had gone, and signalled to him to go to bed. He bowed his head and went away. After Matins he warned the brethren that they were not to stay in church after the last bell. But that pretended brother did the same thing again a second and then a third time. So on the third night, while he was pretending to be praying, the saint came up to him and rebuked him. "What disobedience is this?", he said; "I have already told you repeatedly that no one is to stay behind, and this is the third time I have found you here." The devil laughed. "Now I have made you break the silence!" he cackled. The saint, perceiving his cunning, retorted, nothing abashed, "Wretch, don't let that make you too happy. It won't do you any good. I am above silence and can speak whenever I see fit." The devil retired in confusion. (*Gerald de Fracbet*)¹²⁶

St. Dominic once told brother Bertrand,¹²⁷ his companion, not to weep for his own sins, but for those of others; this was because he noticed that he was tormenting himself excessively for his sins. His words had such a powerful effect that thereafter Bertrand wept profusely for others, but was unable to weep for himself, even when he wanted to. (*Gerald de Fracbet*)¹²⁸

Truly the holy father was a Jacob in his preaching and an Israel in his contemplation, so that neither Leah nor Rachel was lacking to him in this way of life.¹²⁹ He used to travel round and send out his first brethren, even though he had only a few and they were indifferently educated and mostly young. Some religious of the Cistercian Order were amazed at this, and particularly at the confident way he sent such young friars out to preach. They set themselves to watch these young men, to see if they could find fault with anything they did or said. He put up with this for some time, but one day, filled with a holy boldness, he asked them, "Why do you spy on my disciples, you disciples of the Pharisees? I know, I know for certain, that my young men will go out and come back, will be sent out and will return; but your young men will be kept locked up and will still go out."¹³⁰ (*Stephen Salagnac*)¹³¹

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ST. DOMINIC'S DEATH

Meanwhile at Bologna, Master Dominic began to be seriously ill, as the end of his earthly pilgrimage drew near. He summoned twelve of the more sensible brethren to his sickbed and exhorted them to be fervent and to foster the religious life of the Order and to persevere in the way of holiness, and he advised them to avoid keeping dubious company with women, particularly young women, because they are a real temptation, all too liable to ensnare souls which are not yet completely purified. "Look at me," he said, "God's mercy has preserved me to this day in bodily virginity, but I confess that I have not escaped from the imperfection of being more excited by the conversation of young women than by being talked at by old women." (*Jordan of Saxony*)¹³²

It was in brother Moneta's¹³³ bed that St. Dominic was lying when he died, because he had no bed of his own; and he was wearing his tunic, because he had no second one of his own to give him a change from the one he had long been wearing. It was brother Moneta himself who told me this. (*Stephen Salagnac*)¹³⁴

THE TRANSLATION OF ST. DOMINIC

I want to give a faithful account of the translation of St. Dominic, the founder of the Order of Preachers, at which I was myself present.

In the year of Christ 1233, many of the brethren of the Order met at Bologna for the General Chapter, together with Master Jordan of fond memory, St. Dominic's successor. At that time miracles were becoming more and more common in the church where his holy body was buried ingloriously enough, and there was a flourishing devotion among the people. The archbishop of Ravenna and several other bishops were asked to come, including the lord William who was at that time bishop of Modena, but is now Cardinal Bishop of Sabina,¹³⁵ who was a doubting Thomas with regard to these miracles, but who afterwards, as I have been told, gave evidence that they were genuine.

These men were entrusted by Pope Gregory with the job of putting the remains of the holy body in a more fitting resting place; it had lain for about twelve years buried low in the ground, and the

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tomb had several times been exposed to the rain and the snow. So on the 23rd of May, which was the Tuesday after Pentecost,¹³⁶ to avoid having too many people present, the bishops and some of the brethren and some other devout people assembled at night to perform their appointed task. With iron tools they just managed to raise the huge stone which lay on top of the grave, and they found underneath it a very hard cement, which they could only remove with difficulty. They then found the wooden coffin, and when they opened the lid of it, they all smelled such a sweet scent that it was like an exhalation from a spice cabinet of paradise. This fragrance was unlike any other scent. It seemed to be "the smell of a good field which the Lord has blessed,"¹³⁷ to make it plain that Dominic, the preacher of the Lord's praise, had been the "good odour of Christ"¹³⁸ in the field of the church. And not without reason, because he excelled in the violet of humility, he was white with the lily of virginity, and patience blossomed in him like a rose in spring. He had trodden the grape of cheerful preaching in the saving chalice of his King. He had indeed been a chest of spices and had preserved untainted the balm of a good reputation and the purity of his conscience. And there was another remarkable thing too: this scent not only clung to the body itself and the things that were near it, but if the bones were touched by anybody's hand or by any cloths, the same scent clung to them too for quite a long time. In the morning people came thronging with great devotion, and the choir intoned, "Receive the joy of your glory"¹³⁹ with loud voices, and the liturgy was celebrated very happily. (*Basilobolomew of Trent*)¹⁴⁰