

«To speak only about God or to God»

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Prayer in the life of the Preachers

When, in the Dominican family, we are led to reflect on our life of prayer, we cannot but have in mind the figure of Dominic himself. It is therefore from his person and from his life that we can present some reflections about prayer in the life of the Preachers.

Dominic did not leave any instructions about prayer. He wrote nothing about this subject and, probably, never explained to his brethren how to pray. He gave the example. The first witnesses are clear and agree on this point: Dominic was a man who prayed a lot, who prayed incessantly, during the day but more so at night, up to the point in which he was frequently very tired during the day.

Nearly nothing is said about the contents of his prayers. Dominic himself left us nothing at all about the subject. The friars only recorded a few formulas. They noted above all his behaviour, his bearing and even his gestures. Here again, through direct teaching. He prayed; people saw him praying.

He prayed constantly. His prayer is in a way oriented, directed towards God and neighbour. His prayer consisted in creating in him, in his innermost heart, a space for the Kingdom: God and neighbour.

Thus, when Dominic prayed, when he looked at the Saviour and embraced him with love, he learned how to be in communion with God and at the same time how to become an apostle. His heart was profoundly united by his one and only project: to have in him «the same attitudes that are in Christ Jesus» (Phil 2, 5), to become, like the Christ, the servant of salvation, the servant of life for «those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.» (Lc 1, 79).

It is good for us that Dominic did not give us instructions about prayer, a method for prayer, advice for prayer. His discretion is in itself a lesson. He did not add anything specifically to the common prayer of the Church, of Christians and of the religious of his days. He himself was a man of the Church, «*in medio Ecclesiae*», in the very heart of the Church. His prayer and that of his brothers and sisters in the Order of Preachers have nothing in particular: Dominic did not want to add to the treasure of his Order anything other than the treasures of the prayer of the Church. So, if we want to reflect about prayer in the Dominican life, we have first of all to ask ourselves what Christian prayer is and live together a real Christian prayer. Then we can point out the graces that characterize Dominic's own prayer by highlighting the main traits of his personality.

A prayer founded on that of Christ

For believers, Christ is not only the model of prayer. He himself is **the** true and effective prayer. Through his life, he is **the** cult that is pleasing to God. The Church, God's people, through her prayer, associates herself to Christ's prayer. It is «through Him, with Him and in Him» that the multitude of believers approach God, offers itself and unites itself with Him in order to give Him honour and glory. In fact Christ is the one who knows how to say «Father». And, on their side, his disciples, brought together by the Spirit, can say «Our Father».

It is necessary that, on reading the Gospel, the believer learns from Jesus how to pray, how prayer is inscribed in the life of the disciple and of the apostle, what one should say, what one should do when following Christ.

Dominic wanted to be a man of the Gospel, an evangelical man, that is to say a man who welcomed the Good News of Christ in order to be a bearer of that Good News. Dominic really wanted to be «a member of the *Christ*» (*Libellus*)

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