

Fatima and the Dominican Charism



As Dominican Nuns living in Fatima we realize more and more the profound relationship between the Dominican charism and the Message of Fatima. This relationship is evidenced in two ways.

First, there are the more visible signs of that relationship. For instance, in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary on the left of the main altar there stands a statue of St. Dominic, Founder of the Order of Preachers. Over the main entrance to this same Basilica and welcoming every pilgrim to Fatima, is the great marble statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary sculpted by Fr. Thomas McGlynn, OP (1906 - 1977) who was a member of St. Joseph's Province (USA). In addition there are also memorial statues in honor Pope Pius XII and St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, both professed Dominicans. Finally, there is the living presence of all branches of the Dominican spiritual family: Friars, Nuns, Sisters and laity present in their convents and homes around the Shrine.

The second dimension in the relationship between Fatima and the Order of Preachers is that connection rooted in the fundamental purpose of the Dominican Order: to preach the Truth of the Gospel (evangelization) for the salvation of souls. Along side this, Mary's appeals for the prayer of the Holy Rosary form a strong link to the Order.

Evangelization and the Salvation of Souls

"If the Church has accepted the message of Fatima, it is above all because that message contains "a truth and a call" whose basic content is "the truth and the call of the Gospel" itself." (Bl. Pope John Paul II 13 May 1982 Fatima) In her book *The Message of Fatima*, Sr Lucia wrote: "The Message is the revelation of God present in the world in the midst of men and women, and in particular in each one of us. It is not something new... The Message is more a new light to shine in the midst of the darkness of atheism, so that this will not succeed in extinguishing the light of faith which still shines in the hearts of the elect so that they, by following this light, can encounter Christ Jesus... Thus, when the time, the year and the hour predestined by God came, He sent us His Heavenly Messenger, to this earth of which She was the Mistress, the Queen, the Mother and Patron in order to establish His altar in that place, and from there set out to evangelize the whole world..."



From the first apparition Our Lady asked the Little Shepherds if they were willing to "pray and sacrifice for poor sinners". They said Yes, and thus were blessed with a desire for the salvation of souls making of them fervent young missionaries to the whole world though they never left their own terra! Bl. Jacinta in particular, after seeing the vision of hell repeated often with tears: "Poor sinners! We have to pray and make many sacrifices for them!"

St. Dominic we know used to weep and pray: "Lord, what will become of poor sinners?" "The blessed Dominic had a great and burning thirst for the salvation of souls, for which he was an unequaled apostle. He gave himself to preaching with great fervor, and he exhorted and obliged his brothers to announce the Word of God by day and by night, in churches and in homes, in the fields and along the way in other words, in all places to speak only of God." (As quoted in the Letter to the Order, Advent 2008)

The Holy Rosary

Throughout the history of the Dominican Order, the Rosary has been preached as a method of prayer, an instrument of evangelization and a means of personal and family sanctification. In times of crisis itinerant Dominican preachers have responded with great zeal praying and preaching the Rosary. Among many other Popes, Bl. Pope John Paul II recognized this: "The history of the Rosary shows how this prayer was used in particular by the Dominicans at a difficult time for the Church due to the spread of heresy." (RVM No. 17)

For the Dominican, evangelization is closely associated with the Rosary since the Rosary is not only a compendium of the Gospel "it is a gospel in action: a popular evangelical program of faith, morals and Christian piety. It is, at the same time, a constant revelation of the Heart of Christ and of the Heart of His divine Mother. For the Rosary unceasingly proposes for the loving commemoration of souls the great accomplishments of Their love, which are the mysteries of the Redemption. Without a doubt this is the reason for Fatima, for Our Lady knows very well the theology of her Rosary and of her Heart." (Fr. Marceliano Llameras, OP) Simply stated: "The Rosary is the Gospel with Mary!"

In summary we can say that Fatima is like the lamp of a lighthouse shining its strong beam directly on its object. In Fatima that light is the "inextinguishable lamp" of the Immaculate Heart of Mary shining with splendour on the Gospel of Her Divine Son bringing grace, mercy and hope eternal for all. St. Dominic's "Marian devotion was inseparable from his apostolic zeal." The light of Mary shone through Dominic making him a true light of Christ in the Church – Lumen Ecclesiae!

The Soul and God

"It is far more our soul than our body which makes human beings of us. God has created nothing in his Likeness except the soul. God has created the soul not as just one other part of nature, but he has singled it out for Divine and noble purposes...When someone enquires after the size of the soul he should be told that Heaven and Earth cannot fill it, only God himself 'Who cannot be confined by all the Heavens of Heaven'... the soul is nobler than all material things taken together."

Meister Eckehart, OP Dominican Preacher of the 14th C.