

St Dominic

Domingo (Dominic) de Guzman was a contemporary of St Francis who embarked on what was in many ways a parallel mission. Spanish, rather than Italian, tall and red-headed rather than short and dark, and always a quiet and religious man, rather than a youthful libertine, he was in these ways unlike St Francis. However, their religious trajectories ran so closely together that they are often styled as spiritual brothers, and the orders they founded are considered to be, in a sense, twin orders.



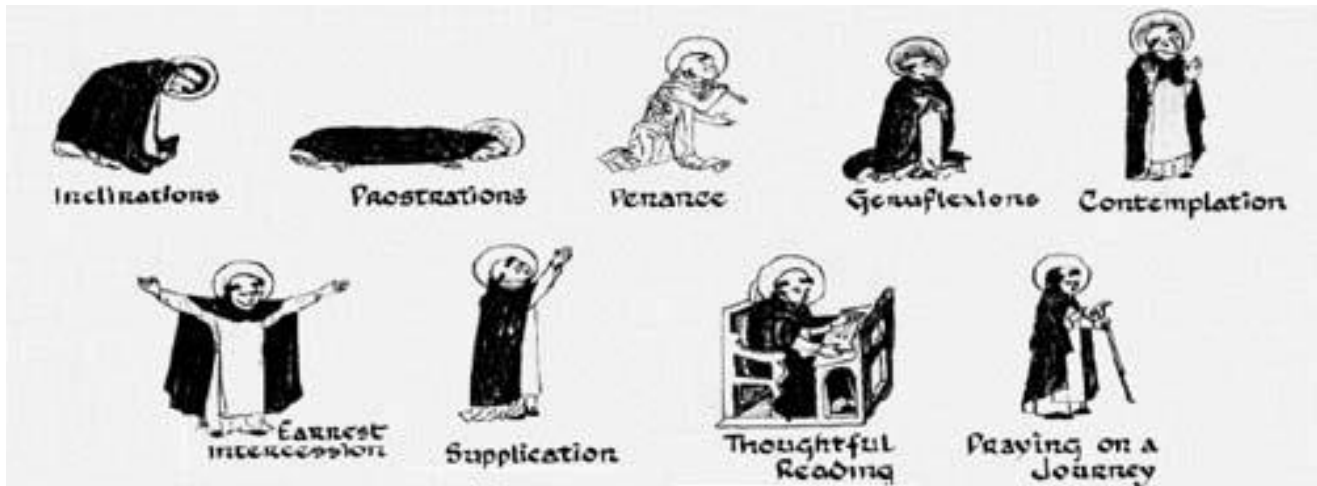
After having received a monastic education, Dominic began his religious career as a priest and an Augustinian canon, committed to the performance of the religious offices and the offering of divine worship to the people of Osma. Unlike, sadly, many clergy and monastics, he managed to combine a sincere and orthodox piety with a profound instinct for charity and an understanding of the circumstances of ordinary people. During his student days, a famine afflicted his local community, so he sold his clothes, books, and furniture in order to feed people. To put this into context, at the time personal copies of key theological and philosophical texts were the most expensive components of a student's education, the equivalent in cost to advanced scientific equipment today. Similarly, later in life the brothers of his order would be forced to physically prevent him from selling himself into slavery in order to redeem others in the same condition. His commitment to charity, then, can be described as profound, if not excessive.

He apparently rarely spoke, being given to an almost constant practice of prayer. He would often pray alone, late into the night, and be found asleep in church in the morning. When he did open his mouth, it was usually either to give directions about the formation of the brothers, preach, evangelise, or sing psalms. He was also extremely gentle, and prone to place the needs of others above his own to an almost comical degree; often giving his food to others even when he had recently endured a prolonged fast. It is notable that, at his canonisation, it was not chiefly miraculous events associated with Dominic that were held as evidence of his saintliness, but his extraordinary gentleness and selflessness in ordinary interactions with other people. One of the many abilities related in this regard was displayed in the admonition and discipline of the brethren, which was then a customary duty of religious superiors. Typically, a superior would hear a confession and recommend a form of penance appropriate for the action in question. The idea of this practice was to promote sincere contrition. Apparently, Dominic would often find a way to demonstrate to his brothers, via some example or analogy, and typically when they were alone together, what he already knew them to have done wrong, and seeing this, they would typically confess to him on the spot, and he would absolve them. The Brothers described this being an extremely effective form of spiritual formation; producing as it did spontaneous understanding of the nature of sin, and, thereby, true repentance.

We might wonder how Dominic came to develop such a pronouncedly holy character. Part of it seems to have been innate- unlike Francis he did not begin life as a tearaway, but is remembered as a pious and gentle child. Indeed, there is a story reflecting the fact that he was apparently always destined for a

particular kind of life; before he was born, his mother dreamt that a dog carrying a torch had leapt from her womb and set the world alight. Only later would she realise that *Domini Canes*, 'Hounds of the Lord', is a kind of play on the vernacular name of the order founded by Dominic- the Dominicans.

Innate gifts aside, Dominic led a life of profound prayer. He would pray not only in church, but also during the long periods of time he spent walking- he walked everywhere, refusing to use other forms of transportation, and his journeys took him across France and Spain. When alone in church at night he used particular bodily positions, which for him expressed and reinforced particular attitudes of prayer. These postures are now called Dominic's Nine Ways of Prayer, depicted below:



Find your favourite space for this time of prayerful reflection

light a candle and try to set aside words and images.

Slow down, breathe calmly, be comfortable and relax.

Set aside 10 minutes or more

Sense the presence of God in this stillness.

Prayer does not always require words- in fact, letting go of words can allow better words space to be spoken. Perhaps think about how the body can aid prayer; posture, gaze, breathing, and song.

'And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.' (Matt.6:7)

Our opening prayer

O God of the prophets, you opened the eyes of your servant Dominic to perceive a famine of the hearing of the word of the Lord and to satisfy that hunger with sound preaching. Make us attentive to the hungers of the world, and quick to respond in love to those who are perishing. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

(The Anglican Order of Preachers)

Verses from Romans

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Let's spend time and look at ourselves.

Do we talk much but say little

Does our behaviour represent and express Christ?

Do we allow ourselves enough silence to realise what it is we really need to say?

We listen to the Dominican Salve Regina sung by the Friars of the House of Studies in Washington DC



The Dominican Order hold the Blessed Virgin Mary in especial reverence, seeing her as a protector and patroness of the Order.

Let us pray in confidence using the words our Saviour gave us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil. Amen

The closing prayer of the Anglican Dominican Rosary

Lord Jesus Christ, having prayerfully contemplated the mysteries of your Father's will, so may we be sent in the power of your Holy Spirit to those who have not heard and to those who have not believed, that through us your kingdom might come. Amen

Br Samuel Eccleston AOP (Anglican Order of Preachers)

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Parish of Kirklees Valley, Bury, (All Saints, Elton & St James, Woolfold) - In the Diocese of Manchester

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