

Christ; because 'he was falling at the doors of the gate'. He was falling means he was abasing himself in humility. At the doors of the gate means at the beginning of the faith by which we are saved. You can only begin at the beginning of faith, as it says in the Canticle, 'You will come and pass through from the beginning of faith' (Cant. IV. 8, LXX). One day we are going to come face to face; as St John writes, 'Beloved, we are God's sons, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is' (I John iii, 2). When will that be? When all this has passed away. And now listen to St Paul; 'We see now by a mirror in a riddle, but then it will be face to face' (I Cor. xiii, 12). Before we can see the Word face to face as the angels see him, we still need the doors of the gate at which the Lord fell down, humbling himself to the death.

Now what is this about spittle dribbling down his beard? Spittle as though to say baby-talk, because babies dribble. Wasn't it after all baby-talk to say 'Eat my flesh and drink my blood'? But behind these babyish words was hidden strength, which is what the beard stands for.

So now I think you have understood the title of this psalm. If I went on straight away to explain the psalm itself, I am afraid that what you have heard about the title would slip from your minds. But tomorrow is Sunday; so let us put it off till tomorrow, when I owe you another sermon, and you can have the pleasure then of hearing the text of the psalm explained to you.

(Concluded)



COMMENT

THE DOMINICAN SISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

being an adaptation of the leaflet issued by the Mother House at Sens

THE congregation of the Dominican Sisters of the Eucharist, contemplatives of the Conventual Third Order, came into being on Christmas night, 1920, in the city of Sens, under the shadow of the ancient primatial cathedral of Gaul and Germany. That night the first Sisters of the Congregation, led by their foundress and in the presence of the priest

whom they look upon as their founder, celebrated their own birthday as well as that of our Blessed Lord. Shortly afterwards they learned that a new shoot had appeared on St Dominic's orange tree at Santa Sabina, the first new shoot since the one that appeared when Lacordaire re-established the Order in France in 1850. This at least was an encouraging presage, and indeed the three foundations, at Sens, at Servoz (in the Haute-Savoie) and at Nice, have begun to fulfil the initial hopes of providing centres of study and contemplation: a life dominated by the reading of God's holy Word and by the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The first convent was that of Sens, the cradle of the Congregation and the Noviciate. This fine building has been called 'a real masterpiece of modern architecture'. The first stone was laid on 22nd August, 1930, by Mgr Chesnelong, Archbishop of Sens. The consecration of the conventual church, with its double altar in the nave and the two other altars in the crypt, followed on 7th January, 1933. This was a great occasion for the Sisters, and the Order was well represented: most of the priors and the Provincial of the Province of France were present, as well as a large group of Students from Le Saulchoir, while the chant was executed by the Benedictines of Saint-Wandrille, who had become close friends of the new foundation.

A few years later the second convent was opened, at Servoz in the Haute-Savoie. The convent is magnificently situated opposite Mont Blanc, and commanding a view over the broad valley of the Arve, with its glacier water flowing far below. A house of recollection, study and prayer, it is dedicated to Our Lady of the Hills.

The third foundation is the recent convent at Nice, built on the hill called Ventabrun, a thousand feet above the town and overlooking the wonderful bay. The house stands in an olive grove, reminiscent of Gethsemani, and is dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows.

It was on the 10th May, 1921, that Pope Benedict XV issued his apostolic letter authorizing the new congregation. This was followed by a rescript addressed on the 18th June, 1923, to the Archbishop of Sens, authorizing the canonical erection of the Convent of the Nativity at Sens. And on 22nd September of the same year the Congregation was officially affiliated to the Dominican Order by the Master General.

These three convents express by their very architectural plan the ideals of the life of the Congregation. The plan is not that of an abbey, or of a usual Dominican priory, where the church so often forms one side of the cloister garth. The idea here is that the church is in the centre, and is flanked on either side by the monastic buildings, including the sisters' cells, the two sides meeting behind the altar, where the spacious library looks down through large arched windows on to the nuns' choir and the massive high altar. This novel plan was not inspired by a desire to produce something specially new or something specially beautiful, but its novelty and its beauty are derived from the idea of having the tabernacle as the centre of the whole life of the convent, and the rows of cells, each with its little oratory looking into the church, united in the library looking on to the choir and high altar: in this way the double Dominican ideal of prayer and study is realised in the very stones of the building. The life of the community is thus centred on Christ, both by the study of him in the Bible and Theology in cell and library, and in the adoration of him, present all the while, in the private oratories and the choir. Both prayer and study are conducted in his Eucharistic Presence. The study of Theology has been a characteristic of the Congregation from the beginning, and this was indeed something of an innovation, as Father Gillet, Master General of the Order, wrote to the Father founder: 'I hope', he wrote, 'that your work, possessing already the approval of the highest authority, will mark the beginning of a general reform, which will extend to all convents aiming at a genuine development of contemplative life.'

The life of the Dominican Sisters of the Eucharist is made up of several main elements, the chief of which is the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The poverty of the Sisters necessitates a certain measure of manual work, then there is the office in choir and the usual daily tasks, and the rule prescribes a special period for the study of Theology, as well as a single recreation, which is necessary to community life. When these things are done, they turn once more to silent converse with their Divine Master. Their life, their work and their study are thus penetrated with the spirit of prayer, silent prayer punctuated by the solemn chanting of the Divine Office in choir, fully sung on feast-days. It is also the practice of the communities to sing the *Veni Creator*

every day before Conventual Mass, and at the end of Mass to sing two antiphons, one for the Pope and one for the Order of St Dominic.

But the life of the Sisters also has its directly apostolic aspect. Their constant formation through the discipline of prayer and study makes them ready and properly equipped, when obedience demands it, to offer spiritual help to people who come to make private retreats at the convent, and indeed there are many who have found much consolation in the atmosphere of prayer and recollection, which for a few days they have been able to share with the Sisters.

At Servoz, in the Alps, the Sisters have many such visitors, including sometimes especially priests and religious who are in need of a rest, and who can find, together with the mountain air, spiritual refreshment in that quiet retreat. The guest house at Servoz also sometimes accommodates whole families and groups of children.

The house at Sens (105 rue Victor-Guichard) was severely damaged during the war, but the restoration is now (1957) almost complete, and visitors for private retreats are accommodated there once more.

The Congregation has had several requests for foundations in England, but the superiors have ruled that none shall be made until at least three English vocations have spent at least three years at the Mother House at Sens: a figure, however, which has never yet been reached.

The present article has been prepared on the basis of the French leaflet issued at Sens, to make more widely known a new and special aspect of Dominican life, and one which surely fulfils in a particularly Dominican way the ideal of the Order expressed in the motto *Contemplata aliis tradere*: 'to share with others the fruits of the contemplative life'. SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DEAR FATHER EDITOR,

I was astonished at the peremptory style of your editorial in the June number, concerning my comment on the subject of the