

ground: some of the 'nobles' indeed coming from their ancestral castles, but many of them probably from no more than a small country property, which nevertheless makes them 'employers', the 'honesti' from their *botteghe*, shops or workshops, and the 'poor' from their labourers' cottages where there were no bookshelves. And while we take into account these differences, we realize with all the more joy that not only did they all find their place within the Dominican family, as they do now, but they also all achieved sanctity through the life and spirit to be found in that family, as they can, and please God they still do.



## ST DOMINIC AND THE LOVE OF THE BRETHREN

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**S**TORIES told to illustrate the different spirits prevailing in Religious Orders are legion. One, that must have many variations, jibes at the Order of St Dominic for being coldly intellectual. Whatever foundation in fact can be discovered for these diverting little legends, it must be admitted that the founder of the Order himself was anything but cold. There is an abundance of detail from eye-witness accounts which glows with warmth—a warmth which proves, if any proof were needed, that if an intense intellectual activity dries up the heart it need not necessarily do so. The Lessons for the Commemoration of St Dominic in Suriano, for example, must make surprising reading for those for whom the name of St Dominic conjures up visions of a heartless inquisitor or even an absent-minded if holy professor. The people who knew him and indeed had to live with him, tell us a very different story, a story that is not a vague eulogizing, but one that is alive with human interest: that relates little incidents from personal reminiscence. It is difficult to resist the charm of the man who emerges. A wise man, yes indeed, and a man wise to the ways of men: their weaknesses, their foibles, their capacity for great things if understood and handled wisely. A man of great tact and delicate sensibility who could get the best out of a man because he could elicit that loyalty which is in reality love. 'Never so long as he lived in the flesh', said one witness, 'did the Blessed Dominic raise bitterness in the heart of any of his brethren; he

never irritated them by word or deed; for in truth nothing bitter could flow from such a well-spring of charity. His heart was so large towards others that he provided for their bodily wants with the utmost tenderness; not contenting himself with giving them only the frugal diet that was customary, but often procuring other and better provisions, for fear lest the young should be discouraged, or the elder brethren, weakened by their long fasts, should yield to infirmity.

‘Thus condescending to the wants of all, even when he had to administer correction his severity was always mingled with compassion. When he laughed, as he sometimes did, his laughter proceeded from the same spirit of sweetness and simplicity. For he was above all things true and simple, and to such a character laughter is not unsuitable. In his prayers indeed he shed abundant tears, pouring out before God the needs of his Church. But if any of his brethren were troubled or tempted, he carried them in the secret of his heart, and with a fatherly compassion he comforted them with his words and supported them by his prayers. On the sick he lavished the tenderest affection, providing for their wants with the utmost solicitude. All therefore rejoiced at his prolonged presence among them, and his delightful conversation rendered all the privations of poverty supportable, and sweetened every hardship which they had to endure.’

Someone once talking about Fr Bede Jarrett said his visits to the priories were a joy, ‘like a ray of sunlight’. I think we can detect the same authentic note in the memories handed down from the contemporaries of St Dominic. They were delighted when he stayed longer; they used to set him on his way: trifling incidents, but so revealing. During the night he would go about the dormitory to see if they were all right, often, like a mother, covering them up.

In the small bag he carried over his shoulder, like Fr Vincent McNabb, he once brought a present for each of the nuns at St Sisto—a little cypress-spoon which he carried across the Alps from Spain. Thoughtfulness of this kind is a guarantee of a deep and universal charity. The aphorism ‘Charity begins at home’ is more of an advice than a statement of fact. We know that it is more difficult to show love to those who are constantly around us, we suffer from their faults, they irritate us, or we fear fresh inroads, further demands. They will impose on our kindness, soon

we shall have nothing we can call our own. We must leave a few protective barriers, some doors unopened. And perhaps too at the back of our minds is the realization that pretence is useless, they know us too well, we make no effort.

But the test still stands, and St Dominic survived that test. He was a joy to live with. He loved those he lived with, so it is no cause for surprise to find that his charity extended to all.

As with his brethren, so with others, his love was not mere sentiment, but showed itself in a thousand practical ways. As a youth he had sold his precious books—annotated in his own hand—to feed the poor. Later he gave up the life he had grown to love in the quiet and solitude of Osma. He became virtually a tramp, a man without means save the all-sufficing Providence of God. He lived on the roads of Europe, walking from one country to another, without home, without food except such as happened to come his way. He died in his fifty-first year, on the floor in Brother Moneta's tunic, with a chain round his body—a symbol, surely, of the chain that bound his heart to God and the whole world. In his great love he prayed that he might be as a stone in the mouth of hell. He prayed and scourged himself nightly for the souls in Purgatory. He wept for the souls in hell!

His Order was to exercise the supreme work of charity, the salvation of souls. This love, as it had been the seed, must be the fruit also. The gift it was to offer must be measured by men's need. It was to be dedicated to truth, but the dedication sprang from, and was fed by, love. It was to be a perfect instrument of Christ and his Church, informed, deeply learned in the ways of God and his designs for mankind; aflame with a fire of love that rose from a living knowledge, not vague emotion. A love that was rooted in and an expression of God's love, the very love wherewith he loves himself. As the great Dominican saint, Catherine of Siena, was later to express it so clearly:

'I require that you should love me with the same love with which I love you. This indeed you cannot do, because I loved you without being loved. All the love which you have for me you owe to me, so that it is not of grace that you love me, but because you ought to do so. While I love you of grace, and not because I owe you my love. Therefore to me in person you cannot repay the love which I require of you, and I have placed you in the midst of your fellows, that you may do to them that which you

cannot do to me, that is to say, that you may love them of free grace, without expecting any return, and what you do for them I count as done to me.'

There is no such thing as a fruitless apostolate, because love is never wasted—love feeds love, till it consumes the soul. If outward results are denied, if men reject our love, God never will. And so we see Dominic de Guzman with courage and gaiety spending himself completely for Christ in the person of his brethren.

'Blessed be the Redeemer of all who making provision for man's salvation didst give the world Saint Dominic.'



## REVIEWS

ÉCRITS AUTOBIOGRAPHIQUES. Introduction and Notes by Louis Bouyer. (Textes Newmaniens Vol. II, Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.).

It is surely something of a reproach to English Catholics, that in spite of the growing interest in Cardinal Newman both in this country and abroad, so few of his writings have been re-published here during the past forty years. In France this lack is now being made up by the 'Textes Newmaniens', which in course of time will publish all Newman's chief works, giving the English text, with a French translation, introduction and notes. The present volume is the second in the series, and the editors deserve both our congratulations and our gratitude for having begun so important a work with a fitting care and thoroughness. The first volume contained the Oxford University Sermons; the second and third will bring together all the autobiographical writings which were found in Newman's room at his death. In one respect these will be of particular interest. Though none can strictly be classified as 'hitherto unpublished', this is the first time they have appeared in their entirety and in their own right, and not as material in biographies. And if autobiography does not provide the most complete picture of a man, it does give an essential insight into character without which that picture cannot be drawn.

This volume has five main items: an 'Autobiography in Miniature'; two short memoirs, one of which was certainly, and the other probably, intended as a contribution to a Biographical Dictionary; the 'Autobiographical Memoir', which covers his life up to 1832; an account of his illness in Sicily in 1833; and lastly his Catholic Journal,