

SEVEN AGES OF MAN

DOMINICAN DEVOTIONS

TRUE progress," concludes the unknown author of "Aguecheek," "is something superior to your puffing engines and clicking telegraphs, and is independent of them. It is the advancement of humanity in the knowledge of its frailty and dependence; the elevation of the mind above its own limited acquirements to the infinite source of knowledge; the cleansing of the heart of its selfishness and uncleanness; in fact, it is anything whatever that tends to assimilate man more closely to the Divine Exemplar of perfect manhood." The Church, as Mother of this progress, to help him attain union with God holds out to him, at each period of his progress along life's highway, a director or guide. These are her devotions, several of which are in the keeping of the Friar Preachers. It is remarkable that so many of the Church's devotions have been so intimately connected with one Order. True, devotion to the Sacred Heart and that to the Passion seem to have been more private affairs in the Dominican family. But the Blessed Imelda, the Angelic Warfare, the Holy Name, the Holy Rosary, and the Blessed Sacrament devotions have been synonymous with the name Dominican. Seven hundred years have by no means dimmed the lustre of this name in regard to these devotions. Time, instead, has added to its brightness by their widespread propagation and development. Seven hundred years have indeed shown it to be a star enlightening the world, and guiding men to Truth's shrine, there to learn the real meaning of progress.

Just as the Church follows man through life with the sacraments, receiving and cleansing him with Baptism, strengthening him with Confirmation, and sending him on his last journey fortified by Extreme Unction, so does the Order, in its devotions, go hand in hand with man through the various stages of his development. It takes the child, for instance, to the altar of Truth by means of the Blessed Imelda Sodality. This society was founded by Pere Rousset, O. P., at Prouille, in May, 1891. Two years later the Master General affiliated it to the Order. In 1896, Leo XIII approved it. While the late Pius X, in 1910, changed its headquarters to Rome and made the Master General the society's Supreme Moderator. In this way the "Pope of the Holy Eucharist" put into Dominican hands a wonderful antidote to the evils of the day and an ideal protection for the little ones against the dangers that surround their innocence.

The Blessed Imelda Sodality is in perfect harmony with the special attitude of the Church towards children to-day. The Church is to-day encouraging early and frequent Communion among them. Such a society, therefore, must greatly aid in the fulfillment of the Church's desires in this matter. This can be surmised from the society's name, which it takes from a young Dominican whose heart broke with joy upon receiving her First Holy Communion. In commemoration of this the "Confraternity of Fervent First Communion and Perseverance" seeks for the children a devout First Communion and the grace of per-

severance in the fervor of this great day. Moreover, it tends to instil in the little ones a love of their Eucharistic Lord. To promote this love both frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament and reception of Holy Communion are encouraged.



Blessed Imelda

It also appeals to the grown-ups to take an interest in those children who, through poverty or neglect, have neither fit clothing nor proper instruction for the reception of Holy Communion. Thus the corner stone of this devotion is Christ's tender call to the little ones: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not. For of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mark, x, 14).

As a kind of reinforcement to this society is the Saint Thomas Sodality, which seeks especially to take under its protection the youth. Rightly are its members said to be engaged in the "Angelic Warfare." It is a warfare to protect the angelic virtue—purity. The weapon used in this warfare is prayer. Every day—though it is not of obligation—the young soldiers strengthen

themselves for the fight with a few prayers, such as fifteen Hail Marys. Their insignia is a little knotted cord which they wear constantly around the waist. It is a reminder of the noble fight the sodality's patron made to maintain his virtue's integrity. He, as all remember, was imprisoned by his brothers in a cell in an endeavor to force him from realizing the desire to become a Dominican. They thought that if they could succeed in violating his virtue Thomas would give up this notion. So they admitted to his cell a woman of the street to lure him into sin. Thomas valiantly repudiated all her efforts; and finally the infuriated youth seized from the fire a flaming brand with which he drove her from the room. Then, the tradition tells us, angels came and girded him with a cord, which be-tokened the singular grace God had granted him as a reward for his fortitude. For we are told that henceforward he never suffered from temptations to impurity. That in virtue of this grace he retained his purity, his acknowledged sanctity attests. It is to hold intact the same virtue that the St. Thomas cord is worn.

The original is said to be still preserved in Chieri, Italy. The cords worn to-day are fashioned after this original one. Fr. Uberti, O. P., in 1580, by way of devotion to the Angelic Doctor, was the first to make



Saint Thomas Girded

these cords. Later, Fr. Francis Deurwerders, O. P., banded together all those who wore them. The Master General, Fr. Candidus, O. P., then approved the society which was extended by the Dominican Pope, Benedict XIII. To aid in its extension he granted indulgences to every one who, as a member of the Angelic Warfare, wore the blessed cord of St. Thomas. Regarding the graces accorded from the wearing of this cord, the rector of a Jesuit college at Vercelli, Italy, in 1644, is recorded as having said that: "Whole volumes could be filled with the favors that have flowed from the girdle of Saint Thomas, and I know of graces bestowed on persons of all ages and both sexes that could be attributed to his intercession." To it Saint Aloysius, that beautiful youth of purity, ascribed his own love of that Christ-like virtue.

Surely the warfare of which it is an emblem should be furthered among all, but especially among youths and those pledged to chastity.

If passionate youth light that fire-brand from the flame of Christ's Sacred Heart it will, besides warding off the devil, protect them from the siren call of the world by developing in their hearts a correct, Christian estimate of all things. While, as has already been said, devotion to the Sacred Heart has been more a private affair in the Dominican family, nevertheless the Order is recorded as having practised it from its earliest days, years before Blessed Margaret Mary received the command to inaugurate it as a general devotion. The Dominicans are said to have taken it up from the time Saint Catherine of Siena, in one of her visions, exchanged her heart with her Beloved's Sacred Heart. It was our Master General, Pere Jandel, too, says one Dominican writer, who submitted for the approval of Pius IX the vow made by the French nation to erect a basilica in honor of the Sacred Heart. It was in the Dominican Convent of Poitiers that the suggestion to make this vow was first proposed. What a different world this would be if

the pure love underlying this act of devotion would become the world's motive-power!

Undoubtedly one of the greatest aids to the development of this love of God is the Holy Name Society. The devotion for which it stands has been intimately connected with the Order during the seven hundred years of its existence. Thus, St. Dominic, on his journeys, chanted the "Jesu nostra redemptio" by way of devotion to the Holy Name. And the fact of Innocent VIII, in 1491, having granted through the Dominicans an indulgence of five years and five quarantines for adding "Jesus" to the Angelical Salutation in reciting the Rosary, very likely was due to St. Dominic's habit of adding the Holy Name to the Hail Mary. After the Second Council of Lyons, in 1274, Gregory X officially commanded the Dominicans, through the then Master General, John of Verceilles, to preach and propagate the Holy Name devotion. It did not take organized form, however, until 1432 when the first Holy Name Society was established in Portugal by Bishop Diaz, O. P. The society established by Fr. Diego, O. P., of Victoria, in the next century was affiliated to Bishop Diaz's confraternity by Pius IV on April 5, 1564. To establish canonically a Holy Name society the Master General of the Order must authorize its erection; furthermore, in every Dominican church and convent an altar is dedicated to the Holy Name, and the second Sunday of every month is devoted, by procession and special prayers, to the honoring of that Name. So that the Holy Name is essentially a Dominican devotion.

It is likewise a man's devotion. "The Name above all other names,"

the Christian principles of law and order, the cleanness of speech, the uprightness of life man, by his license, had heretofore derided, calumniated, and endeavored to banish are now, as a member of the Holy Name society, protected and upheld by him. This society, as all well know, stands for clean, reverend speech. But this is but the external manifestation of the internal man. The true Holy Name man, by reason of the principles and few simple regulations he follows, is of stalwart character, clinging to God's law, abiding in its righteousness, revering His Holy Name. His devotion to It is not limited to the regular meetings and Communion of the society. He, by his manly, God-fearing life, daily exerts his power—silent, perhaps, but nevertheless effective—for good over those with whom he comes in contact. He is in truth a lay-apostle. As a devotee of the Holy Name he is daily given splendid opportunities to show of what stuff he is made. Because it is so practical is it a man's devotion. And for the same reason it is that this



**Blessed Henry Suso
(The Holy Name)**

devotion is of such importance to-day. It is most opportune because it makes Christianity a real live power. And the world is sadly waking to the realization that what it needs badly and imperatively is practical Christianity.

The only way to have practical Christianity is to become united to its source—"Christ, the Son of the Living God." And what better way is there of approaching Him than that by which He came to us—His Immaculate Mother. Is she not the "gate of heaven"? Do we not look to her as the "refuge of sinners"? But these with all her other titles of glory are united in her most familiar one—"Queen of the Most Holy Rosary." For that title comprehends the whole mystery of the Incarnation. In meditating on the various phases of this august mystery, while reciting the Rosary, we see the "Virgin most faithful," the "Mother of God," the "Queen of angels." Under these different aspects she reveals to us the fruit of her womb—Christ Jesus. Indeed, in her Rosary she hastens, as she did to St. Elizabeth, to bring us Christ that He may purify our souls and make our wills one with His.

This devotion to the Mother of God has been distinctive of the Order of St. Dominic. In the age of chivalry St. Dominic was Our Lady's knight. She herself, as we firmly believe in accordance with a tradition confirmed by many Popes and especially Leo XIII, gave to him the sword which was to cut down heresy and open men's hearts to the knowledge and love of God. When, owing to the many troubles in the Church in the centuries immediately following, and general laxity of its members this Rosary devotion had practically disappeared, Our Lady again appeared to a Dominican, Alan de la Roche, and commanded him to revive this form of devotion to her. Since then the Rosary has gained a tremendous hold on the faithful, probably being the most popular devotion in the Church. So that to-day the Rosary Confraternity—permission to erect which must come from the Master-General of the Order—is found in practically every ordinary parish. Young and old, Pope and peasant, cling to the great treasure St. Dominic left for the benefit of mankind in the hands of his children. No doubt many learned to love this devotion through the good old custom of gathering the family every night to recite Mary's Psalter. It is the sword that St. Dominic used against an evil that threatened the home. And it is the same weapon we must wield to-day if we want to protect, conserve and spread the home's good influence.

Now that the world is sorrowing over the great war, meditation on the second part of the Most Holy Rosary would be beneficial, especially to those who have passed life's meridian and think they ought to go down to the grave in peace. By thus meditating on the Passion great fruit would come of their trials, even as it has in the case of the Dominican blessed. Devotion to the Passion has been one of their distinguishing characteristics. All the devoted children of St. Dominic know well how tenderly he loved this devotion. His great austerities could have had no other source. The Angelic Doctor attributed his great light to this greatest of books—the crucifix. St. Catherine of Siena had, we might say, a passion for the Passion. How signally favored by heaven she was for this is one of her greatest glories. The frightful penances Blessed Henry Suso inflicted on himself from this

same devotion. They were all epitomized in the nail-studded cross on which he slept. And right here in our own America, a Rose blossomed from this Tree of life. She daily carried through her garden by way of —



The Rosary Group

devotion to the Passion a cross. It was this same love of the Crucified which caused our great Lacordaire to suspend himself one Good Friday for three hours upon a cross that he might taste its suffering. Many more could be added to these did space permit; for it is no exaggera-

tion to say that it is an exception, when we do not read in the lives of our blessed that this was their special devotion.

Undoubtedly the best place for men to learn to bring the strengthening, consoling graces of the Passion into their lives is where St. Dominic did—before the Tabernacle. If they go there in their temptations and trials, their joys and sorrows, He, Who is crucified on that altar every day for them, will Himself teach them the truth of His words: "My yoke is sweet and My burden light." There will they, by partaking of the "Bread of Life," gain strength to continue in uprightness of heart and steadfastness of purpose. And by means of the beautiful Dominican custom of conducting every week Holy Hour devotions, they will foster Christ's Friendship. When, having persevered in His Friendship and having reached the last age of all—"sans teeth, sans eyes, sans everything"—they are about to start on the last, long journey, He will come and be with them on the way. Following Christ they will enter the kingdom of peace.

For the "work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isa. xxxii, 17, 18). The great, opportune means of attaining the righteousness which begets this peace are these Dominican devotions, all of which center about the tabernacle. It is significant that a Eucharistic devotion starts the child on life's journey and terminates the man's three score and ten. "All other forms of devotion," as said Leo XIII in his encyclical on the Holy Eucharist, "whatsoever they be, lead up to it, and in it find their point of rest." Surely, this is most worthy of our greatest efforts to foster and develop. God, to turn the Hebrews away from the flesh-pots of Egypt for which they longed, sent them food from heaven. We, too, must be drawn from carnal, worldly longings. "It is a lamentable thing," wrote Leo XIII in the same letter, "that so many are sunk in oblivion of the divine Majesty and of His favors, and in particular of the salvation wrought for us by Christ. Now a remedy must be found for this wickedness on the one hand, and this sloth on the other in general increase among the faithful of fervent devotion towards the Eucharistic Sacrifice, than which nothing can give greater honor, nothing be more pleasing to God."

To whom belongs the honor, on whom reposes the obligation of furthering this devotion of devotions except the Order to which the faithful owe so much they now enjoy with regard to the Blessed Eucharist. It was the Order's first cardinal, Hugh of St. Cher, who by his persevering defence of St. Juliana and with the assistance of the archdeacon James Pantaleone, later Urban IV, to whom we owe the feast of Corpus Christi. He, as Bishop of Liege, ordered its observance in his diocese; and in 1252, when he returned to that district as Papal Legate, he extended the feast's observance to twenty-seven other dioceses. In 1264, his former companion in the fight for it, as Urban IV, made Corpus Christi a feast for the universal Church. He also commissioned St. Thomas Aquinas to write the office for the feast. The rise of the Eucharistic novena now made preceding this feast is said

to be due to the same Dominican nun to whose efforts Leo XIII's encyclical on the Most Holy Eucharist (*Mirae Caritatis*, May 28, 1902) is attributed. It would not be at all surprising if we should learn she belonged to the Perpetual Adoration sisterhood. The first such sisterhood was founded by a Dominican, Fr. Anthony Le Quien, in 1630, and his rules for it approved by Innocent XII.

Moreover, the Forty Hours' Devotion, which was spread to the entire world by the Dominican, Pius V, was the natural outgrowth of another great Eucharistic movement on the part of his Order. This is the Confraternity of the Most Blessed Sacrament. It was founded at the Minerva by Fr. Dominic Stella, O. P. Paul III, on November 30,



Last Communion of Joan of Arc

1539, approved this new organization, which Paul IV raised to the dignity of an archconfraternity. The wish of Innocent XI that the confraternity—which wherever canonically erected was by that very fact affiliated with the archconfraternity and partook of its privileges—be established in every parish has, during the intervening centuries, come nearer and nearer its realization. That the confraternity might be in every parish he did away with the former legislation forbidding its erection in more than one parish in a city or within a locality of a radius of three miles. To-day, to aid still more in the spread of the Eucharistic devotion, each bishop has the authority to erect in every parish the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. God hasten the day

when by its influence we shall have converted this materialistic age into a Eucharistic age!

Then shall we be able to say that we have progressed. For by means of these fundamental devotions, all converging towards the Eucharist, we shall become more and more united with Him Who is the Ideal whence we all tend. A progress that has not this as its goal is no progress. It defeats its own end—the happiness of man. For the world's history seems to show that as the material progress of which we boast becomes more pronounced the more restless and unhappy are the people. Though God has been the source of this progress, they have lost sight of Him because they have veiled their eyes with the very matter He desires should manifest to them more clearly His Infinite and Adorable Self. They have felt the need of a God; and have made for their adoration a golden calf. Moses broke his ungrateful people's idol. Why do we not destroy ours? Instead of consecrating our hearts to Mammon, let us offer to God, who really has "led us out of the land of Egypt" into this promised land of twentieth-century greatness; look towards Him as the end to which we must progress; and to attain It cultivate the great devotions which the Friars Preachers hold out for man's advancement towards the "divine Exemplar of perfect manhood."

—**Brother Clement, O. P.**

A DOMINICAN'S PRAYER

Thou mighty lover of the Crucified,
 In poverty and pain to Christ allied,
 Thy children teach to spurn ambition's fame,
 And choose the Crimson Cross for His sweet Name.

Christ-like the Father's Will was ever thine,
 And quaffed, like Him, submission's myrrhic wine,
 Do thou our souls to Christ's sweet yoke subdue,
 In flame our hearts to suffer and to do.

The charity of Christ engulfed thy soul
 And urged thee on to seek the martyr's goal.
 Thy children grant in some degree to feel
 The mighty fire of apostolic zeal.

—**Brother Cyprian, O. P.**