



Tomb of St. Dominic, Bologna

DOMINUS ET DOMINICUS

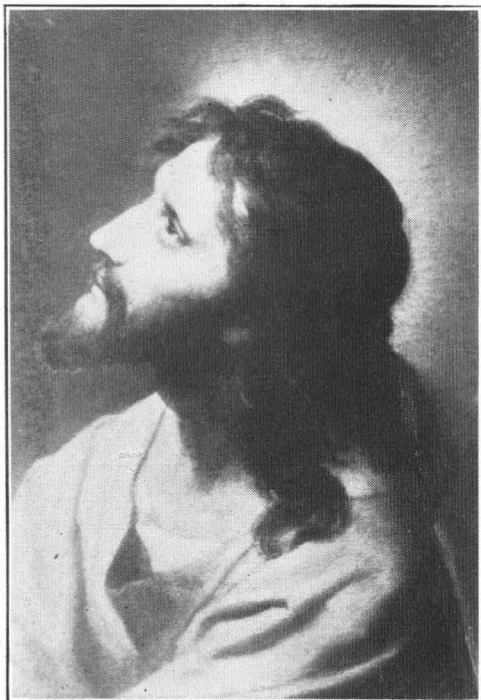
(THE LORD JESUS AND THE LORDLIKE DOMINIC)

THE legion of its saints, its centuried years reveal the likeness of its founder. Behold who leads his liliated band of apostolic love and martyr-dyed, still wears a Bethlehem, eight-pointed star upon his brow. "Who art thou?" we ask, and he confesses, "I am not the Christ." Yet what striking resemblance he bears. The chestnut hair, the twain cleft beard, the sanguine tinge trace a similitude which gains perfection in the supernatural splendor of the eyes, the slightly inclined head, and the straight line of the nose and forehead deemed in Grecian art a mark of the highest manhood. Nicephorus Callistus, the historian, has left a beautiful description of the Christ; Blessed Cecilia, of our sainted Father. Unconsciously they wrote a similitude. Art has even drawn a closer one. Compare the Dominic of Titian, of Sassoferrato and of Bozzani with the Christ of Hofmann, Plockhorst, Dore and the schools in general. The latter delineate the Lord Jesus; the former the Lord-like Guzman.

Now, if such similarity be moulded in the temple's clay, what of the spirit breathing there. For souls are greatly affected by the fibre of their dwellings. In Christ we find the perfect poise of character. Nor in Dominic was there violent struggle for control, but calmness and full possession of mind ruled in unchallenged sway. "Nothing ever disturbed his tranquillity," wrote Blessed Jordan, "but compassion for others." Had not Isaias called the Messiah, "Prince of Peace," and Scripture says at the tomb of Lazarus "Jesus wept." Then surely he, too, could grieve for fellow men who from his death bed would openly confess: "I have preserved my virginity unstained until this day." Perfection had made a like challenge: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" But no one dared, for that same meek Lamb had said: "Learn of Me because I am humble." So, likewise, the disciple clothed in Lamb's wool had to be lowly in his heart. In the very dust, therefore, he remained before his God, not wallowing in sin, but growing there in beauty like the "Flower of the field." And as flowers breathe in perfume so did Dominic breathe in prayer until the hills of Languedoc were the scene of nightly communings, as in olden Galilee. Once coming forth from God he brought with him the Rosary, set in decades by the "Pater Noster," which in a like manner Christ had given to His own. Its words were dear to the apostle, and lingering over them, his love at length found union with the Godhead as nature does in the Eternal Son.

Then looking downward from that glory he saw his life on earth lying in Messianic design before the Feet of God. It had a hidden life of Nazareth, a public ministry with its training of disciples, and the expansion of the Order after he sent them forth. Calarnega had been his birthplace, and a star shone for his Epiphany. Then grace and learning grew so rapidly in the child, that had the scribes still sat in the Temple, they might have wondered at the youth. Early manhood found him in Osma devoted solely to his God and preparing in solitude for the apostolate.

That new life dawned when the good Bishop Diego chose him for companion on a royal mission northward. Together they climbed the Pyrenees and from their Nebo the Finger of God pointed out the land



Jesus—Hofmann

of promise. It was a veritable Galilee of sunshine and natural beauty, and very needy, too. For in the night the enemy had sown tares among the wheat. Both had grown, the weeds choking the grain. Error had even crept its lichen over the strong castle walls, cementing thus their pride. But the might of Jericho had fallen at the trumpet's peal, so now before the preacher's voice the aeries of sin must tumble.

A fruitful apostolate, however, was conditioned. "Do not possess gold, silver nor script; two coats, shoes nor a staff," were divine stipulations. The bishop's equipage, therefore, was sent back to Spain and the disciple, on looking about, found not where to rest his head. Though deprived of temporal aid, and among a

people who would not receive him, he did not falter, but going forth went about doing good. Feet that seemed never to weary brought from town to town and through the fair country the Gospel of peace. Often they lingered near Prouille, the Capharnaum of his love, or came over the hills from Montpellier, Servian, Beziers or Carcassonne. Occasionally they went down to Rome as Jesus had gone to Jerusalem. But their pursuit was only the Father's business and the quest of immortal souls. For thrice when his colleagues would have made him bishop, he threatened to escape in the night even as his Lord had fled when enthusiasm would have crowned Him king.

Not only the clergy loved him, but the simple people, too. He broke for them unto multiplication the bread of eternal Truth and purposely let crumbs fall from the table of the children that the whelps might have their share. They ate and many were replenished. Once after a sermon several women fell at his feet. It was the coming of Magdalene. In

tears they besought him to guide their love gone astray. So he made them a Bethany at Prouille where his solicitude for their welfare led to frequent sojourns. Then they would sit around him listening, having chosen the better part.

These women, according to the infamous practice of the heretics, had been seduced in youth. Such proselytizing closely resembled that among false Jewish sects in Christ-days. It met with the woes and the millstone. For Dominic, like his Master, truly loved little ones, as later miracles would show. The touching scene of Jairus' daughter would be repeated, when he would restore the dead child brought him by its mother; and the young Napoleon Orsini would be raised to life through the very words used at Naim: "Young man (in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ), I say unto thee, arise."



Dominic—Bozzani

The heretics, of course, when reproved for corrupting the innocent were enraged against the saint; but who could sufficiently condemn their vices. The Pharisees had feigned liberality and righteousness of life—natural virtues. These seducers pretended consummate holiness and ascetic poverty. The apostle, though, knew well the interior of their souls. He determined to purge and cleanse them; they must poison no more. Christ had silenced the wily emissaries of deceit by refuting them in open discussion. When they would not bow, He thundered heaven's wrath upon them. Saint Dominic, imitating His example, met the leaders of corruption in public disputes lasting for days. Fearlessly he penetrated into their very castle halls, and there rebuked their errors. The Might of God, which had clothed Our Saviour when teaching in the synagogues or in the houses of the Pharisees, seemed to have fallen upon him like an Elisian mantle. For his enemies, though often threatening his life, somehow could not injure him. Once even an ambush was laid, but when he passed they dared not touch his person. The Jews had often thought to destroy their Christ and at Nazareth had pushed Him to the very edge of the precipice. Then mysteriously, the Gospel adds: "But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way." A like

dauntless courage and overpowering personality is sometimes given to creatures that by the boldness of their ministry a people might be saved. But if that time of grace and mercy be spurned, the sword of righteousness must fall. Languedoc despised its apostle and destruction came as to the Jews. Dominic had predicted it in words that wail like Christ's lamentation over Jerusalem. All was verily fulfilled. The summons went forth from Rome; the Crusaders poured in; havoc followed. And before the war was over Dominic's mission to southern France had ended.

He was now to found canonically his Order. This was neither an after-thought nor a development, but a life work purposely intended. Its concept had come to the saint when he first beheld conditions in Languedoc. In this it resembled the founding of the Church. For as Christ from the beginning of His ministry chose Apostles for His work, so our Father sought disciples for the Order. But similar discouragements came. When Bishop Diego left for Spain, the mission band dispersed. Well could Dominic have asked the few who still remained: "Will you also go away?" Even after many years of preaching he had not many more than the Twelve. These had diocesan approval but Dominic desired universal approbation. It brought the crisis to his life. The Fourth Lateran Council had just forbidden the founding of new Orders. In face of its decree how could he hope for a confirmation from the Supreme Pontiff. It is ever so in big movements; at the critical moment all appears lost. Just when the Church seemed to need Christ most, He was crucified. But great souls always look to the Resurrection. Nor was Dominic deceived. Inspired from on high the Pontiff at length published the decree and on the twenty-third of December, twelve hundred and sixteen, a new branch sprouted from the Vine of Christ.

But how could Dominic's little band encompass the whole world? It was the same folly as sending out a few fishermen. Every one advised keeping the flock together, but never did Dominic seem so determined. "My Lords and Fathers," he said, "do not oppose me for I know very well what I am about." Heaven must have told him the seed would fructify, if sown. For he placed the alternative of submission or withdrawal. All obeyed. And as the seed of the Divine Sower has grown until birds rest in its branches, so the seed of Guzman, like the one dropped in the cloister of Santa Sabina, hangs heavy to-day with golden fruit.

Christ, however, did not wait to reap the harvest; His Divinity foreknew success. To Dominic, though, was granted the grace to see the hundredfold. And when his dying hour beheld it, he prayed almost the same words spoken in the Cenaculum: "Holy Father, since I have joyfully accomplished Thy Will, and since I have kept and preserved those whom Thou hast entrusted to me, I commend them to Thee; do Thou keep and preserve them." Then he left us, but we are not orphans. The "O spem miram" still lingers with us giving wondrous hope like the unfailling promise of the Saviour from the Olivet of long ago.

—Brother Hyacinth, O. P.