

SAINTS OF SEVEN CENTURIES



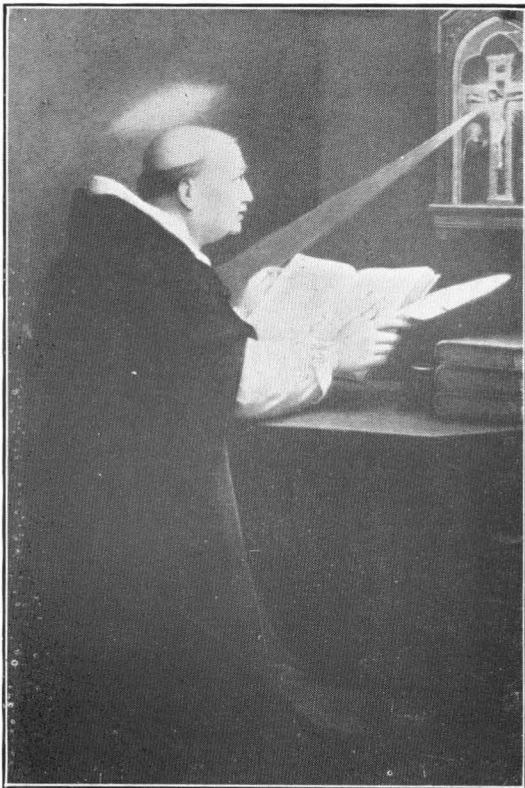
Saint Dominic—Crevelli
Metropolitan Museum of Arts, N. Y.

TWO great ends present themselves to every religious Order. The first is the glory of God, the second the salvation of souls. That an order is so constituted as to accomplish the former is proclaimed to the world when the Church gives its formal approbation to the Rule and Constitutions of that Order. One criterion of the work it does toward the fulfillment of the second end—the salvation of souls—is its success in the making of saints. And in this respect, so singularly blest have been the Friars Preachers, that their Order has been called the "Order of Saints." Our gaze for a short time is to be focused on some of these saints. But in a survey, be it ever so brief, of the illustrious children of God in whom the Dominican Order takes special and pardonable pride on its seven hundredth birthday, the difficulty lies not in where to begin, but in setting bounds to our field of vision.

Martyrdom, for example, has ever been esteemed by the Church as a mark of heroic sanctity. Shall we herein contemplate those white-robed sons of Dominic who won the palm of the saints at the cost of their lives? When the Cistercians, in the early days of the Dominican Order, appealed to the Pope to mitigate the austerities of the Friars Preachers, saying that the severity of their lives unfitted them for the active apostolic work for which they were founded, was the Rule modified? No, indeed! The only response the Fathers assembled in council made to His Holiness, was to send him a list of the martyrs the

"severe" Rule of the Friars Preachers had given to the Church in approximately the first hundred years of its existence (1234-1334). The total was 13,370! In the sixteenth century the number reached 26,000. And down the centuries the same story has been repeated. Calmly, quietly, steadily, in one uninterrupted stream, the blood of Dominican martyrs has never ceased flowing. Thus the number of our martyr saints reaches into the tens of thousands. Merely to list their names would make a respectable book. Obviously, we can only mention them here; revere them, and pray that the spirit which animated them may never die in the Order wherein they gloried, and which they so nobly glorified.

The canonized blessed of the Order number several hundreds. These sainted sons and daughters of Dominic are to be found in every walk and station of life—from peasant to prince, from priest to Pope. They form, as they march majestically down the lapse of seven hundred years, a grand and noble procession of great men and women. There are fathers and mothers; little children and venerable old men; learned doctors and ignorant laborers. There are virgin souls who never strayed from the land of the eternal lilies, and there are some who, having



"Well Hast Thou Written of Me, Thomas"

wandered far, returned to present the red and fragrant roses of repentance to their forgiving God. Here we find a Blessed Albert the Great; here, too, is Blessed Henry Suso, known as the Prince of Mystic Theologians; here the Venerable Bartholomew las Casas, the Apostle of the Indians. We find, too, Blessed Jane of Aza, mother of Saint Dominic. Here we see the gentle child Imelda, patroness of First Communicants, and beside her stands the patient old Albert of Bergamo. Here also are two of the Dominican Popes, Benedict XI, and Innocent V. We behold Blessed Reginald receiving the scapular, which is distinc-



Saint Vincent Ferrer
Cloister, House of Studies



Saint Rose of Lima
Cloister, House of Studies

tive of the Dominican habit, from the hands of the Blessed Mother. Among the Blessed, too, we see the penitent Anthony Neyrot who proved his contrition by a martyr's death. And thus the seemingly endless line of the Dominican Blessed passes before our vision. We wonder, we admire, we pray to them—but now we must hasten on.

We come next to the canonized saints of the Order. Of these there are fourteen. In the order of their deaths, or, as the Church beautifully puts it, their birth into eternal glory, they are: Saint Dominic, Saint Peter Martyr, Saint Hyacinth, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Vincent Ferrer, Saint Antoninus, Pope Saint Pius V, Saint John of Gorcom, martyr, and Saint Lewis Bertrand. The women saints are: Saint Agnes of Montepulciano, Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Catherine de Ricci, and Saint Rose of Lima. But to recount even some of the deeds and virtues of all, and to show their influence which shed special lustre on the Church, would be a giant task. We must content ourselves with merely mentioning a few of those who stand out preeminent in heroic sanctity as strong factors in the history of their day, as well as in our own times.

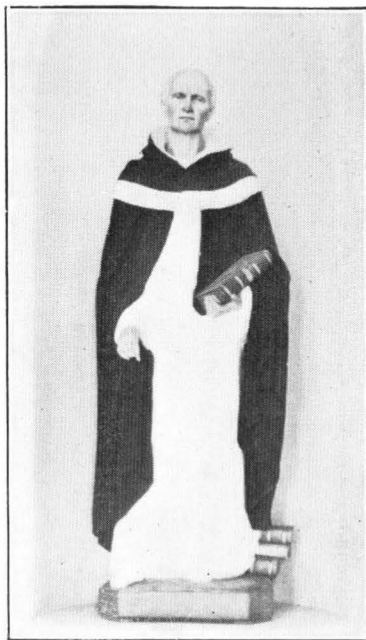
There are, however, a few points of similarity which are so striking and interesting as to merit consideration. The Dominican ideal "*contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere*"—to meditate on God and His truths and to give the fruit of such contemplation to others—has been

perfectly realized in all the saints of the Order. The spirit of prayer and mortification of a Saint Dominic (canonized in the thirteenth century) was accurately reproduced in a Saint Catherine de Ricci (canonized in the eighteenth). Study and intellectual development in the Order has ever been second only to prayer. Hence a Thomas Aquinas of the thirteenth century was the exemplar of Pius V centuries later. It is a noteworthy fact that the canonized saints of the Order are all virgin saints. Possibly it is for this reason that the Order has been called the Angelic Order. And truly may an Order be called angelic that has produced an Angelic Doctor, Saint Thomas Aquinas; an Angelic Preacher, Saint Vincent Ferrer; an Angelic Painter, Fra Angelico; and the Seraphic Mother, Saint Catherine of Siena.

The gift of miracles is one of the necessary conditions for canonization. It is a significant fact that among the many miracles performed by the sons and daughters of Saint Dominic, those predominate which Christ commanded His apostles to perform. Hence we see Dominic, Thomas Aquinas, Vincent Ferrer, and Hyacinth, not only conquering evil spirits in individuals (the Bolandists give seventy as the number of persons possessed of devils whom Vincent cured), but, as in the case of Hyacinth, driving unclean spirits out of whole towns and cities. Again, the Preacher Saints were famous for their power in curing all manner of infirmities. Saint Raymond of Fennafort on one occasion by



Saint Catherine of Siena
Cloister, House of Studies



Saint Antoninus
Cloister, House of Studies



**Saint John, O. P., and His Companions,
Martyrs of Gorcom**
Choir, House of Studies

laying his hands on the head of one who was tormented with evil imaginings, cleansed his mind for the rest of his life. Saint Vincent Ferrer is the special patron of the sick; and so efficacious has been his help toward his clients that he is called the Thaumaturgus—the Wonder-worker. Of Dominic, Lewis Bertrand, Hyacinth, and Vincent, it is authenticated that on several occasions they called the dead back to life. Even in their miracles the Friar Preachers were truly apostolic.

Consider some of the Dominican saints in the light of the injunctions

of the Master: "Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves." Saint Dominic heard the well-beloved voice. Undaunted by dangers, unafraid of threatening assassins, unflinchingly walking over stony, briar-strewn roads, he carried the words of eternal Truth to the erring Albigenses. Saint Lewis Bertrand heard the call, and his zeal and labor have won for him the title of "Apostle of the New World." Saint Hyacinth hearkened, and so fruitful were his missionary labors that he is called "the Apostle of the North." Saint Peter of Verona and Saint John of Gorcom heard the command and they died in obeying the summons. To all, the words of Christ are applicable: "They will deliver you up in Councils and scourge you." But what mattered it to them! Were they not about their Father's business? Was it not the life-long prayer and desire of Saint Dominic to give his blood to ransom the souls of the Tartars? And should the disciples be above the Master? To all of them there was but one path open—"to go to the lost sheep of Israel."

"Be ye, therefore, wise as serpents and simple as doves." Saint Thomas Aquinas obeyed literally. Every obstacle men could put in his way, every device that could be invented to lead him from his vocation, he met, fought, and conquered, manfully. Yet, withal, he possessed a gentleness that is miraculous. The Church through her Pontiffs has conferred on him the title of "The Angelic Doctor." His *Summa Theologica* is the monumental work for which the Church of God is specially grateful to Saint Thomas. The encomiums of the Popes on the writings of Saint Thomas are as numerous as they are eloquent. It was Pope John XXII who said, that had Saint Thomas performed no other miracle than to compose his *Summa* he would deserve canoniza-

tion for that alone. Leo XIII called Saint Thomas "by far the master and prince of all the Scholastic Doctors." And it was this same Pope who constituted him the universal patron of Catholic schools. Pius X, of blessed memory, showed his esteem for Saint Thomas when he commanded that the text of the "Summa" be used in all the seminaries of Italy. It is alleged that it was his intention, had he lived, to make this regulation world-wide.

Saint Raymond of Pennafort entered the Order at the age of forty-seven. He had been a brilliant career—professor of Canon law at Barcelona when only twenty; he taught for fifteen years with great success; and later became canon of the cathedral—then leaving all he chose to follow Christ as a Son of Dominic. He was the first to compile a work on cases of conscience for the use of confessors. This bears his name and is called "Raimundina." He was co-founder with Saint Peter Nolasco, of the Order of Our Lady of Mercy. Raymond also was the confessor of Pope Gregory IX at whose command he drew up the "Decretals," a work containing all the decrees and documents of Popes and Councils which had been accumulating for centuries. This gigantic task Raymond completed in three years. It is for this work that he is specially famous. It was the first authentic, unified, exclusive, and universal code of Church law to appear. He became Master General of the Order, but resigned in two years on the plea of ill health. Two years, however, sufficed for him to do great work. Immediately on his release from the responsibility of office, he revealed his apostolic heart by asking to go as a missionary to the infidels. As a result, when eighty-one years old, he was able to report to the General the conversion and baptism of ten thousand Saracens. Saint Raymond of Pennafort was universally recognized as the greatest ecclesiastic of his time.

"And going preach, saying the kingdom of God is at hand." Saint Vincent Ferrer took these words unto himself, and so successful was he, that he is known as the "Angel of the Judgment." Saint Vincent declared that he was the angel spoken of in the Apocalypse, and called a woman to life for a moment to witness the truth of his statement. The work of this apostle was prodigious. He converted over two hundred thousand Jews in Spain alone. Saint Vincent and Saint Catherine



**Blessed William Arnould and His
Companions**

Choir, House of Studies

of Siena were largely the instruments whereby peace was restored to the Church at the time of the Great Schism. So effectual was the work of our Seraphic Mother in this undertaking that historians call her the "Joan of Arc of the Papacy."

We in America should have a special love for Saint Lewis Bertrand—the Apostle of the New World. Fired with zeal for the conversion of the inhabitants of the land across the seas, the saint long sought the permission of his superiors to set out. At length the favor was granted. Many severe trials but proved the mettle of this earnest Dominican; and the gift of tongues, of prophecy, and of miracles, attested the truth of the doctrine he taught, and crowned his preaching with numerous conversions.

Saint Rose of Lima, the Little Flower of the New World, was the first canonized American saint. A mystic, a virgin spouse of the Spotless Lamb—her continual prayer, her fasts, her long and heroic sufferings, at length won for her the crown of glory and the peace that passeth not.

One of the four Dominican successors of Saint Peter was Pope Saint Pius V. He is known in history as the "Pope of Lepanto," and the "Pope of the Rosary." In the sixteenth century the Turks like a black cloud were hanging low over Europe and threatening to break and inundate civilization. Pius raised a fleet of nearly 200 ships and 20,000 men which he sent against the Turks. The hostile fleets met in the harbor of Lepanto. Despite the overwhelmingly superior forces of the Turks, the Christians gained a decisive victory. It was miraculous. Saint Pius had prophesied certain triumph; had ordered special prayers and a Rosary procession; and at the moment of victory, he, in Rome, was miraculously informed of the defeat of the enemy. It was Saint Pius who published the catechism of the Council of Trent, and who revised the Missal and Roman Breviary.

And so we might continue almost indefinitely. It might be told how the economist of the Middle Ages, Saint Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, despising gold and silver and money, devoted his life to the poor; how Saint Agnes of Montepulciano, an abbess at fifteen years of age, was later miraculously called to found a Dominican community; how Saint Catherine de Ricci by one sublime act of prayer could scale greater spiritual heights than by a hundred exterior acts. The martyrdoms of Peter of Verona and John of Gorcom might be retold, for these are all glorious deeds which shed light and glory on the Order of Preachers, and on the Church of the Living God. But even then the tale would remain unfinished. For the works of the saints, like their virtues, are truly known and appreciated only by the Almighty. Rather, as we reflect on a few of their heroic achievements, let us breathe a prayer that, when this life is over, the rainbow of endless peace may illumine the sky of our eternity. And let us hope that through their intercession we, their least brethren, may find a resting-place near them with Saint Dominic, beside the throne of God.

—**Brother Justin, O. P.**