

## THE DOMINICANS AND THEIR RITE

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RELIGION in its essence resides in the soul, but the worship offered to God is and always has been outward as well as inward. The external actions serve not only to express the internal sentiments, but also to arouse and intensify them. "God is a spirit," says Our Lord, "and they that adore Him, must adore Him in spirit and truth."<sup>1</sup> We observe in every day life that men's mutual feelings regarding exterior objects ordinarily seek a common mode of expression. This mode of expression in religious matters, governed by established laws, is technically and commonly known as a rite.<sup>2</sup> Religious cult from its beginning has always made use of rites. However it was with the advent of Christ's divinely established institution that religious rite received its sacred and dignified meaning. Christ established the basic principles for the true worship of God and for the sanctification of men, and upon these principles His Church has erected its unique rite. The ceremonies and prayers, the objects surrounding the ceremonies of this rite, represent the greatest facts and truths of religion. They give expression to what is most fundamental and deepest in Christian life, as is so aptly brought out in the words of the Council of Trent. ". . . Holy Mother Church has instituted certain rites . . . by which . . . the minds of the faithful through these visible signs of religion and piety might be excited to the contemplation of the highest truths."<sup>3</sup> The liturgy of the Church during the process of development became such an arbitrary thing, and so unorganized, that it was imperative that some sort of order should be established. Hence, in the fifteenth century, Pope, St. Pius V instituted a reform. His Bull "Quo

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<sup>1</sup> John IV—24.

<sup>2</sup> Very Rev. J. B. Hogan, S.S., D.D., *Clerical Studies*, (2nd., Boston, 1898), IX, p. 330.

<sup>3</sup> Conc. Trid. Cap. V Sess. XXII. ". . . Pia Mater Ecclesia quosdam ritus instituit. . . . mentes fidelium per haec visibilia religionis et pietatis signa ad rerum altissimarum . . . contemplationem excitarentur."

Primum" (July 19, 1570) abolished many of the existing rites and moulded them into one great rite. The decree of Pius left the Greek Church in possession of its rites and conceded the continued use of the other rites which could prove an existence of two hundred years. Thus some dioceses and religious orders, such as the Dominicans, Carthusians and Carmelites retained their rites.

Properly speaking, the Dominican Rite has its origin in its Holy Founder St. Dominic. When Dominic founded his institution of Friars Preachers, the great number of varying rites then existing impressed upon him the need of uniform liturgical functions for his Order. But which of the existing rites was he to follow? If he turned to Rome for an unadulterated liturgy he would have found the Gallico-Roman Rite observed and observed with variations. Moreover the expense entailed in the adoption of any of these rites would have been quite beyond the spirit and means of the young Mendicant Order. Dominic laid the subject before the first General Chapters of 1220 and 1221 for consideration, but the death of the Holy Founder prevented his seeing the realization of his ideals. This remained for his successors.

The new Order of Friars Preachers developed rapidly and the urgent need of a unified rite was continually before the early Fathers. Hence, when Jordan of Saxony took over the rule of the Order in 1222 a definite step was taken in this direction. In the Constitutions drawn up in 1228, we find special legislation regarding the recitation of the Divine Office. In passing we should note that the first General Chapters also laid down, "simple monastic regulations to guide the brethren in their interior and domestic life." The newly formed Constitutions prescribed "the whole Divine Office to be recited in choir, 'briefly and succinctly, so that the Brethren may not lose devotion and that their studies may be impeded as little as possible.'"<sup>4</sup> Simple ceremonies for its decorous recital were outlined, such as genuflections, prostrations, the alternate sitting and standing of each side of the choir.

It is thought that Jordan compiled a breviary to advance the recitation of a unified Office; also an antiphonary (1239-1244), but this seems to have little foundation as the Chapters of Bo-

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<sup>4</sup> Rev. John Baptist Reeves, O.P., *The Dominicans*, (New York, 1930.) p. 47-48.

logna (1240) and of Paris (1241) allowed their convents to follow the rite of their respective localities.

The most successful attempt at a systematic organizing of Dominican liturgy was made by John the Teuton, fourth Master General (1241-1252). He suggested at the Chapter of Bologna (1244) that a report on the then existing liturgy be made at the next Chapter (Cologne 1245). At the latter Chapter a commission of four Friars representing the provinces of France, England, Lombardy and Germany, was appointed to correct, modify, in a word, to mould a unified liturgy which would serve the entire Order. The fruits of their labor were presented and approved at the Chapter of Paris (1246), and again by the Chapters of Montepulciano (1247) and Paris (1248). The Order had now a set rite which was obligatory on all Provinces and on each individual.

However, the short time given to the commission to perform their work, the scarcity of liturgical books, and other liturgical influences made their work unsatisfactory. Hence the Chapter of London (1250) appointed the same commission to reassemble and revise their work. The new work was approved and made obligatory upon the entire Order at the Chapters of Metz (1251) and of Bologna (1252). Master copies, so to speak, were placed at Paris and Bologna, which copies were to be faithfully copied for use in the entire Order. But even the newly revised rite did not please all.

Upon the accession of Humbert of the Romans to the office of Master General (1254-1263), the question of the liturgy within the Order was put before him for investigation. Humbert undertook the work personally and after a most thorough revision, the work of two years, the newly revised liturgy was accepted and approved at the Chapter of Paris (1256). Endorsed by several subsequent Chapters, Humbert's revision was approved by Clement IV (1267) and made the official rite for the entire Order.

Humbert's successor John of Vercelli (1264-1283) obtained the approbation of the Holy See on the newly drawn up liturgy. Clement IV not only authorized the use of this revision, but also forbade any changes to be made in it without the permission of the Holy See. Naturally, changes were necessary from time to time. Twenty years after John of Vercelli had obtained the approbation of the Holy See for the Dominican Rite, Munio de Jamora, seventh Master General (1285-1291) received from Honorius IV permission to make whatever changes he deemed

expedient without mutilating in any way the substance of the original text. This privilege was frequently made use of by the Order until revoked by Urban VIII in 1631.

Although Humbert's work is the soul and life of Dominican liturgy we must not be unmindful of the untiring energy and zeal expended in behalf of the liturgy by Humbert's predecessors and successors. However, Humbert's revision is the final word in Dominican Liturgy and the merit of that excellent work is very aptly brought out by the fact that subsequent papal regulations, particularly that of Innocent IX, Clement XII and Pius V were very strong towards the preservation of its integrity.

Three and a half centuries of comparative harmony passed until the liturgy became the subject of a new controversy. The Chapter of 1589 requested Master General Hippolytus Beccaria (1589-1600) to have a new revised edition of the Dominican liturgy edited. The Master General entrusted the task to Fra Paolo Castrucci, his companion. Castrucci's edition of liturgical books proved to be very unsatisfactory, so much so that it well nigh became the occasion of the Dominican Order's adopting the Roman Rite. The Master General, however, who stood solidly behind Castrucci's work, died, and the Order was unanimous in turning back to its primitive rite. Due to the efforts of Cardinal Baronius the Holy Father permitted the Dominicans to continue the use of their cherished and ancient liturgy.

Since that time only slight changes in the liturgy have occurred to meet the exigencies of the times. In recent years a revision of the Dominican Office and calendar has been made to restore the ferial office to its proper place. This change is suggestive of that endeavor of the Chapter of Salamanca (1551), when a similar correction was made. Another notable change was made in the Dominican Office in 1568 during the pontificate of St. Pius V, when the Pope instigated a complete reform of the Roman Breviary. At this time the Dominican Office was revised in accordance with the *Breviarium Pianum* and following the regulations laid down by the Bull "Quod a nobis" (July 9, 1568).<sup>5</sup>

To say that the Dominican Rite is an arbitrary collection of books and practices would be to do a grave injustice to its spirit and intention. The Dominican Rite, far from being an attempt at singularity, was an honest and since effort to restore unity to

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<sup>5</sup> Baudot, O.S.B., *The Roman Breviary* (B. Herder, 17 South Broadway, St. Louis, Mo. 1909).

a widely diversified liturgy and it pointed out to the ecclesiastical world of the thirteenth century the urgent need of liturgical harmony in a Church of unity.

The Dominican Rite is arranged for the whole Dominican family which includes the first, second and third orders. Rubrics, ceremonies and regulations for the spiritual life and guidance of each is amply provided for in the Dominican liturgical books. These liturgical books contain the sum total of all Dominican prayer and devotion.

The original number of liturgical books as compiled by Humbert were fourteen. To-day because of synthesis and elimination we possess eleven liturgical books. The present collection of liturgical books consists of: (1) The Martyrology. (2) The Collectarium. (3) Processional. (4) The Antiphony. (5) The Gradual. (6) The Missal for Conventual Mass. (7) The Missal for Low Mass. (8) The Breviary. (9) The Vespers. (10) The Horae Diurnae. (11) The Ceremonial.

The arrangement of all these books with the exception of the Breviary corresponds generally with that of the Roman Rite. All of the books have for their principal objects the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the recitation of the Divine Office. "All Dominican prayer is directed first and foremost to Corpus Christi, the Body and Blood of Christ. This is the great characteristic which distinguishes Dominican liturgy, Dominican art, Dominican mysticism, Dominican theology."<sup>6</sup> The differences however between the Dominican and Roman Rite are centered in rubrics and not in the essentials of the devotions. Father Callen, O.P., states that the "accidental differences in ceremonial forms do not in the least interfere with the essential unity of worship, which is to be regarded primarily and principally in the celebration of the same sacrifice and in the reception of the same sacraments."<sup>7</sup> This is to be remembered by any one unaccustomed to assisting at a Dominican Mass and who is surprised that the order followed therein differs from the observed in the Roman Rite.

The first difference is to be noted at the very beginning of the Mass. The Dominican priest celebrating the Holy Sacrifice comes to the altar with the amice drawn over his head, nor does he remove it until he is ready to begin Mass. The next variation

<sup>6</sup> Rev. John Baptist Reeves, O.P., *op. cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>7</sup> W. R. Bonniwell, O.P. "The Dominicans and their Mass," *Torch* XI (February 1926) No. 6.



comes also before the Mass actually commences when the Dominican celebrant places the wine and water in the chalice.

After blessing himself with the sign of the cross, the priest following the Dominican Rite begins with the versicle, *Confitemini Domino quoniam bonus*. He omits the psalm, *Judica me Deus* because the introduction of this Psalm into the Roman Missal dates only from the liturgical reform of Pope St. Pius V in 1568. Some Spanish Missals of the eighth century give it, but just before the Preface. In many ancient rites this psalm was recited by way of preparation for Mass. For example, Sarum York and Hereford prescribe its recitation either in the sacristy or on the way to the altar. York and Hereford also order the prayer *Actiones* immediately before beginning Mass, as does the Dominican rubric at the present day. The versicle *Confitemini* etc., likewise occurs in the Sarum, York, Bangor and Hereford Missals.

The *Confiteor* immediately following the introductory verses is a Dominican prayer and closely resembles the one in the Sarum Missal, the name of St. Dominic, being, of course, an insertion. The *Misereator* etc., is identical with the York formula, except for one word, namely, *servet* instead of *salvet*. The *Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini* is found both in Sarum and Bangor.

The Dominican Mass then proceeds as the Roman up to the *Gloria* but here the Dominican priest comes to the center for the intonation and then returns to the Epistle corner where the rest of the Canticle is read. This rubric is likewise similar to the Sarum. The reasons for the celebrant of a Dominican Mass reciting the *Gloria* at the epistle corner are many. One is because, before the printing of altar cards, which is of comparatively recent origin, the Canticle was said from the Missal which at that part of the Mass is on the Epistle corner of the altar. Thus to adhere to ancient customs the Dominicans still observe this ancient rubric.

"At the conclusion of the Gospel the Dominican following the ancient custom, makes the sign of the Cross. The response *Laus Tibi Domine* was not introduced into the Roman Rite until 1490 and consequently is not provided for in the Dominican Missal."<sup>8</sup>

On Sundays and great Feasts, on feasts of our Blessed Lady, the Apostles, Doctors and canonized Saints of the Dominican

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<sup>8</sup> Ignatius Smith, O.P., *The Dominican Mass*, "Dominican Year Book" (1907-1911) 1910 p. 52 by the Dominican Frs. of the Province of St. Joseph.

Order, the *Nicene Creed* is sung. The Eastern Churches began to recite the Creed during Mass about the beginning of the sixteenth century; the Roman and Gallican Churches in the ninth. The *Credo* according to the Dominican Rite is begun at the center of the altar and continued at the Gospel corner up to the words, *Et incarnatus est* etc., when the celebrant returns to the center for the genuflection at the words, *et Homo factus est*. He then returns to the Gospel corner to finish the Creed. The reason for this procedure is the same as for the *Gloria*.

As we enter upon the more solemn part of the Mass, the Offertory, wherein the sacrifice is offered by the priest for himself and the people, another difference between the two rites may be observed. The Dominican Rite, as the Sarum and Hereford, prescribes the offering of chalice and host together. The Roman and York Missals direct that the species be offered separately, and provide prayers of oblation for each. That the older Missals prescribe only one oblation seems to have been the prescription of the Sacramentary of Pope Gregory the Great and Cardinal Bona with many other liturgical writers.

Following the washing of the fingers, the celebrant of each rite pronounces the words *Orate Fratres* in an audible voice. Unlike the Dominican, the Roman Rite prescribes the response *Suscipiat Dominus sacrificium* etc., by the acolyte who answers in the name of the faithful.<sup>9</sup>

The *Canon* of the Mass from the beginning of the *Sanctus* to the end of the *Pater Noster* is identical in both the Dominican and Roman Rites. The reason is quite obvious, for at this portion of the Holy Sacrifice we have that which is essential. That is why the word *Canon* meaning *rule* is employed here, because, even in the days when so much was left to the discretion of Bishops, this part of the Mass was not subject to variation.

At the conclusion of the *Pater Noster* the prayer *Libera nos* etc., is recited in a low tone, and at the words *da propitius* the Dominican celebrant signs himself with the paten, kisses it, and then places it on the altar away from the corporal, not under the sacred Host as in the Roman Rite. The Hereford rubric, as the Dominican, prescribes that the paten be placed on the altar.

In the Dominican Rite the priest says the *Agnus Dei* immediately after the *Pax Domini* and then recites three prayers *Haec sacrosancta*

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<sup>9</sup> Rev. Dr. Nicholas Gihl, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, (8th ed., B. Herder, 15 and 17 South Broadway, St. Louis, Mo., 1929.)

*commixtio*, *Domine Jesu Christe* and *Corpus et sanguinis*, these latter prayers differing from those used in the Roman Rite.

The only remaining difference of any consequence is the manner in which the priest communicates. The Dominican Rite prescribes that after the Host is broken, until It is consumed, It is to be held over the chalice in the left hand, and that the Sacred Body be received from the left hand. No prayers are said at the consumption of the Precious Blood, the first prayer after the *Corpus et Sanguis* being the Communion. The Communion prayers of the Dominican Rite are not very ancient, as in early times these prayers were left to the devotion of the celebrant. They date back, however, at least a thousand years and are to be found in some ancient Irish Missals.<sup>10</sup> and.<sup>11</sup>

Linked inseparably with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, is the Divine Office, the official Prayer-Book of the Church. The priest's Breviary is his daily preparation for Mass and his thanksgiving after Mass. In division and arrangement of feasts, the Dominican Breviary differs from the Roman Breviary. This is due to the fact, that, being drawn up according to the Dominican Rite it has been compiled exclusively for the use of the members of the Order. Hence all Dominicans are bound to follow their own rite in the recitation of the Divine Office, and in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Dominican Rite like the Roman Rite has a special calendar or *Ordo* for the feasts of the year which is followed in the daily celebration of Mass and in the recitation of the Divine Office. The Dominican must follow the Dominican calendar at all times and in all places. However, in the Mass, although following their own rite, Dominicans must follow the calendar of that place where they celebrate the Divine Mysteries. But if, in that place, the calendar prescribes a semi-double feast or a feast of lower dignity, and the calendar of the one celebrating Mass prescribes a feast of greater dignity, a Mass of the feast of the celebrant's calendar can be followed (S. C. R. 3892 ad 5).

In the liturgical life of the Dominican Order a very special honor is rendered to the august Mother of God. Special laws are laid down in its Constitutions with regard to the times for celebrating the Mass of the Blessed Virgin and for the recitation

<sup>10</sup> A Dominican of the Second Order, Carisbrooke, *Dominican Mass Book*, (2nd ed., London, Burns & Washbourne Ltd., 28 Orchard St., 8-10 Paternoster Row W. I.—E. C. 4 1923)

<sup>11</sup> Ignatius Smith, O.P., *The Dominican Mass*, op. cit.



of her office. Over and above this, many devotions enter into the daily life of every Dominican, reminding them of their intimate relation with the Queen of Heaven.

Here mention might be made of two Dominican devotions which according to Dominican traditions were sponsored by our Blessed Lady herself, namely, that of singing the *Salve Regina* at the conclusion of Compline and at the last moments when a Dominican is about to pass to his or her eternal reward. The origin of this devotion is not merely a cherished tradition, but it is also a testified historical fact.

The Dominican Rite is adopted to meet the primary idea which was laid down by the Order's Holy Founder, St. Dominic, at the time of its establishment, namely, that happy merging of the active and contemplative life.

The liturgy serves to elevate the mind and heart to God in its public and private devotions thereby bringing down God's blessing upon the Order and its work. Hand in hand with meditation and study it constitutes the contemplative life, which is the soul of the active life. Always solemn, complete in its ceremonies, exact in its time, prudently brief, sober in its demonstration, having for its sole object the worship of God, the honor of His Blessed Mother and His Saints, it is a splendid example of Christian piety and prayerful gravity.

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