

ST. IGNATIUS AND THE DOMINICANS

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ATHER HYACINTH CORMIER, late Master General of the Dominicans, once wrote that we should have special honor for St. Ignatius Loyola. He was sincerely convinced of the friendship that the founder of the Jesuits had for the Dominicans. Such traditions of friendship between Dominicans and Jesuits are not well known. More familiar perhaps are the theological disputes which have stemmed from their disparate views on grace, predestination and many other fundamental points of doctrine. It may come as something of a revelation therefore to most Catholics to learn that Dominicans were instrumental in starting the founder of the great Society of Jesus on the road to sanctity and that Dominicans came to his defense over and over again in times of difficulty.

On July 31, of this year, the Church celebrated the four hundredth anniversary of St. Ignatius' death. The services of the Dominicans to the great saint before and after this time make an engrossing study. Some of the highlights of this history are set down in the following pages.

Two hundred years before the appearance of the Jesuits, St. Vincent Ferrer foresaw the rise of "a company calling itself the Company of Jesus, and consisting of men carrying to perfection humility and charity, the pure heart and single spirit—men who were to know nothing but Jesus crucified: to love, speak, and think of Him only; to have no care for themselves; to desire nothing but Heaven and death, that they might come to it sooner." Thus St. Vincent heralded the official sentiments of the Dominican Order which were publicly promulgated shortly after the establishment of the Society of Jesus.

The leader, model and hero of St. Vincent's prophesied band came from the Basque country of Spain. His early manhood is a familiar story and needs little development. The same love of battle that lured him into a worldly life, God used as an instrument of his conversion. The wounds he received in battle were serious: bones were broken and set and rebroken. Medical facilities were primitive. Physical suffering of such intensity leads to either destruction or glory. In St. Ignatius' case, it was pliable matter for divine grace.

As St. Ignatius began his slow physical recovery, the man of action begged for the reading he enjoyed most—the cavalier literature so popular in the sixteenth century. But the only available books were the *Life of Christ* by Ludolph and Bl. James of Voragine's well-known *Golden Legend*. These two Dominican works seem to have made a fine impression on him. Cavalier literature began to pale; knightly deeds took on a note of absurdity. But the actions of the saints began to excite him. "St. Francis did it. St. Dominic did it. Why shouldn't I?"

The saint had made a good physical recovery at Loyola; now his soul began to long for the peace of divine love. About 1522 his yearning for solitude carried him to Monserrat, but his friends tracked him down. He fled again, this time to the nearby town of Manresa whose fame now rests largely on the visit of this great man.

St. Ignatius entered the town as a beggar and received rough treatment from the townspeople. Burning zeal for God prompted him to seek out a hermit's retreat—the famous "Santa Cueva." Some time later the local inhabitants found him unconscious in the cave—a victim of his own asceticism and insatiable love for God. It is at this point that the Dominicans began to exert their greatest influence on St. Ignatius. The sick man was carried to the Dominican convent at Manresa, founded in 1318. One of his biographers, Fr. Dudon, S.J.,¹ argues from probability in the matter: "St. Ignatius himself has spoken with great gratitude of the charitable hospitality he found in the priory at Manresa. And before the present disorders (1931) the walls of the convent bore the inscription recalling the fact that the Saint had dwelt there. During this stay, Inigo would certainly have sought to speak of the things of God with his hosts and he would have had recourse to one of them for confession. Through these associations, something of the Dominican spirituality would have filtered into the soul of the pilgrim. . . ."

As a matter of fact we have no precise data concerning the successive abodes of Ignatius at Manresa, but indications of the value he placed on his stay with the Dominicans can be found in the *Spiritual Exercises*, even though he does not make any specific allusion. "Wherein, as a rule, he will benefit in proportion as he withdraws himself from all his friends and acquaintances and from all worldly cares; as for example, if he leaves the house in which he

¹ Dudon, Paul, S.J., *St. Ignatius of Loyola*. Translated by William J. Young, S.J. Milwaukee, 1949.

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was staying to take another house or room in order to dwell therein in all possible secrecy so that it may be in his power to attend Mass and Vespers daily without fear of being hindered by his acquaintances." These words are virtually a recording of his own experience. Ignatius himself found tremendous joy in the recitation of the Office—without knowing a word of Latin. Fr. Mortier tells us that he loved to carry a cross while making the stations in the cloister of the priory. And so it seems that his frequent remark: "I saw it thus at Manresa" would refer at least occasionally to his stay with the Dominicans.

At this same period of his spiritual growth, St. Ignatius began to be troubled with scrupulosity, one of the most dreaded spiritual diseases. He could find no comfort in prayer, fasting, or the sacraments. He was even tempted to suicide. Dominican tradition maintains that Ignatius then chose Guillermo Pellaroz, the prior of the Dominican convent at Manresa, as his confessor. Fr. Dudon notes that "other passages in the confidence made to Camara [to whom St. Ignatius dictated personal reminiscences] incline us to think that Inigo sometimes confessed to a Dominican of the convent where he had his little room." Perhaps it was this prudent and holy Dominican who saved Ignatius from spiritual ruin at this crucial point.

Indications of St. Ignatius' spiritual progress at Manresa are found in the following account: "Now one day, being about to recite the hours of Our Lady on the steps of the Dominican monastery, his understanding began to be elevated. And it was as though he had seen the Holy Trinity under the form of three keys of an organ. . . . Another day, in the church of the Dominicans, when he was assisting at Mass, at the moment of the Elevation he saw with his interior eyes white rays which came from on high, and . . . clearly saw at the time with his intelligence how Christ was present in the Blessed Sacrament." One woman testified that "Fr. Ignatius had holy visions and raptures . . . near another cross at the convent of the Friars Preachers. . . ."

During this time the divine love welling up within him began to overflow into the initial drafts of the Spiritual Exercises. Fr. Dudon thinks that it is highly probable that they were written, not in the Santa Cueva as legend has long asserted, but in his cell at the Dominican convent. It should be one of the glories of the Order that it sheltered the author of this great work.

St. Ignatius' next step in the development of his spiritual life was a long-meditated pilgrimage to Jerusalem. His contacts with the Dominicans at this time seem to have been few, though it seems un-

likely that the saint would neglect those who had shown him such friendship before. He sought and found heroic penance and conformity to Christ on this trip. He suffered sickness, starvation and the dangers of shipwreck, prison and flogging. On his arrival in the Holy Land, the Franciscans refused to let him land because of the dangers of possible captivity. After this disappointment, St. Ignatius returned to Barcelona to begin his famous study of Latin among the schoolboys. In 1527 he went to Salamanca where he sought a Dominican confessor.

If other Dominicans had contributed a great deal to the success of the Jesuits, the famous theologian Melchior Cano did much to forestall it by his attack on the *Spiritual Exercises* at Salamanca. His influence caused Ignatius to flee to Paris where he eventually received his master's degree in arts and the licentiate in theology. The latter degree he received at the Dominican college of S. Jacques. At this same time, he seems to have become associated with another Dominican, Juan de Pena who became a great defender of Ignatius during later difficulties in Spain. A Fr. Laurent, another Dominican and Inquisitor General of France, was his confessor at Paris. Before Ignatius left Paris, he asked Fr. Laurent for a certificate of orthodoxy for the *Spiritual Exercises*. The text of this certificate is still extant: "We, Brother Thomas Laurent, professor of theology, priest of the Order of Preaching Brothers, Inquisitor-General in France, delegated by the Holy See, certify . . . that after an inquiry made by our precursor, Valentine Leivin, and by us, his council, into the life, morals and doctrine of Ignatius of Loyola, we have found nothing that is not Catholic and Christian; we also know the said Loyola, and M. Peter Faber and some of his close friends, and we have always seen them live in a Catholic and virtuous manner, and observed nothing in them but what becomes a Christian and virtuous man. The Exercises also which the said Loyola teaches seem to us, so far as we have looked into them, to be Catholic."

Fr. Dudon says that we must regard the school of S. Jacques as the cradle of that affection for St. Thomas which the founder of the Society later showed in that part of his constitutions in which he regulates the studies of his order. He studied under some famous Dominicans of his day: Matthew Ori, Jean Benoit, and of course, Thomas Laurent. After reading the *Spiritual Exercises*, Matthew Ori praised it highly and expressed a desire to have a copy. A few years later he became Ignatius' defender in Rome where the Company was attacked on grounds of heresy.

When St. Ignatius composed his constitutions, he did not rely

heavily on the way of life St. Dominic had proposed. According to Von Pastor, however, St. Ignatius did adopt the famous Dominican clause which states that with the exception of the vows themselves, the regulations of the Order as such do not bind under sin. Another small point in the history of the Jesuit constitutions was their approval by the Dominican Master of the Sacred Palace before papal approbation was granted. When the theologian returned the constitutions with the words "pious and holy" Pope Paul III wrote: "We give this our benediction; we approve it and call it good."

But the voice of Melchior Cano, together with all his influence, was raised against the new mode of life and its departure from tradition. To counteract this, the Master General of the Dominicans, Francis Romeo, sent a circular letter through the whole Order arguing that "the Society of Jesus had the approval of the Pope, and was doing an extraordinary amount of good by its labors and example. [And they] ought rather to be looked upon as an ally in spiritual welfare and to receive protection and help." Louis of Granada, siding with the Jesuits against the powerful Cano, wrote: "This new opposition, striving to destroy the Company, is forced to become an occasion to exercise it in humility, make it more and more pious, exemplary, circumspect, devoted, and thence rise to greater credit and higher favor in the world. So the means invented by this monk to oppress your reverences will be used by God to lift you up." Juan de Pena came forth with an Apologia, which according to Father Dudon, left Cano no ground for further action.

St. Ignatius' love for the Dominicans was enkindled in the hearts of his sons. To Caraffa he said: "Nevertheless it appears great and grave wisdom, remembering how the blessed saints like St. Francis and St. Dominic and many others bore themselves when they founded their institutions, to have recourse to the true and higher Wisdom, to ask and obtain more light in order to arrange all things to His greater service and honor." Strong Dominican influence and friendships can be found in the lives of such notable early followers as Sts. Francis, Peter Canisius, and Francis Borgia, to mention a few. Xavier wept when he said Mass at the tomb of St. Dominic. His confessor and companion for a while in the Orient was a Dominican, Friar Denis of the Cross. The bond between the two Orders at this time can be traced in St. Francis' letters: "Give me all the news of . . . the friars of St. Francis and St. Dominic, to whom you will give my most affectionate good wishes and beg them earnestly to remember me in their Holy Sacrifices and prayers." "Those of the College are always to show themselves the very good friends of the

Franciscans and Dominican Fathers and Brothers. . . . They and we are bent on one common course, which is the glory of God and the salvation of souls. . . . Visit them from time to time, and let charity between you not only be maintained but ever grow."

St. Francis Borgia, while still a layman, founded a large Dominican convent to help convert the Moors. When he was general of the Jesuits, he was assisting at a theological lecture at the Alcala when the Dominican professor bore witness to the spirit of friendship between the Orders when he "closed his book and made a speech on the excellence of the choice Borgia had made in preferring the goods of heaven to those of earth."

Near the end of the *Golden Legend*, the Dominican work which influenced Ignatius so much at the beginning of his spiritual climb, there is a very interesting allegory which bears a close resemblance to the saint's own experience. It is a story of a young man who was given to earthly pleasures. He saw a vision of himself in a wide field and a raging tempest swept down upon him. Fleeing from its force, he beat on the doors of Justice, Truth and Peace, but could find no entrance. Finally, when he came to the last door the lady within replied: "I am Mercy, who dwell herein. If therefore thou desirest to be saved from the menacing storm, go to the house wherein dwell the Friars Prechers, and there thou shalt find the stable of penance and the crib of continence and the pap of doctrine and the ass of simplicity with the ox of discretion. And Mary will enlighten and Joseph perfect, and Jesus save thee!" But the allegory is not to be verified of St. Ignatius alone; it is true of his whole Order. In their early struggles, the Order of Preachers as a whole was ready to help them, guide them, and protect them. The friendship that bound the Orders then continues now in the close-knit harmony of the Church's apostolic activity. Dominicans can take real pride in this divinely-inspired association with the Society of Jesus—just as we are conscious of the tremendous honor of having sheltered their founder within our cloisters.