

The Life of St. Dominic
Fr. Gregory Anderson, OP

I. The Formative Years

A. The Man and the Boy

Blessed Cecilia, one of the early nuns to put herself under the guidance of St. Dominic, described him thusly:

He was of medium height: his figure supple, his face handsome and slightly sanguine, his hair and beard blond with a slight reddish tinge, his eyes beautiful. From his brow and eyes there emanated a certain radiant splendor which won the admiration and veneration of all. He always appeared joyous and smiling except when moved with compassion at some affliction of his neighbor. His hands were long and handsome and his powerful voice noble and sonorous. He was not in the least bald and wore the religious tonsure entire, sprinkled with a few white hairs.

(Relation of Sister Cecilia, no. 14)

St. Dominic's cheerfulness and joyousness are characteristics remarked upon by a number of people who knew him. And yet, some of his biographers, Bede Jarret, O.P. among them, present him as a rather serious sobersides when he was a boy, not given to sports or play. That is hard to accept. As a boy, there had to be in him the same cheerfulness and joy that marked him as man. There had to be a certain liveliness and vivacity of spirit that we see in the adult. Personalities just do not change that radically in the course of our lives. Certainly, he must have loved games and playing in the fields around his home. He was a real boy and showed something of the leadership ability he had as a man.

He was born in the year 1170 in the small town of Calaruega in Old Castile about a hundred miles north of Madrid. His father was the lord of the surrounding area. To know how he got that position you must remember that in 711 the Moors from North Africa had conquered all of Spain except for one corner in the rugged mountainous area in northwestern Spain known as the Asturias. From there the Spaniards began a long and bloody reconquest of their country, known in Spain as the Reconquista. It did not end until 1492 with conquest of Granada, the last Moorish outpost in Europe.

About 200 years before the birth of St. Dominic the Spaniards had pushed their way as far south as Calaruega. One of his ancestors was given the land around where the town is now with the provision that he set up a fortification in case of inroads of the retreating Moors. Part of that fortification was to be a tower to serve as a lookout. The remains of many of these towers can still be seen throughout Old Castile. In fact, the territory is called Castile because of these towers or castles. Sentries were posted on the top to keep a lookout for hostile troops. If any were

sighted the alarm was given so that the local knight and his retainers could take defensive action. The enemy, incidentally, was not always the Moors; it could be a neighboring knight who wanted to expand his territory or a detachment of soldiers of one of the several kingdoms that made up Spain in those days bent on plunder and loot.

The tower built by St. Dominic's ancestral knight — we do not know his name — is still there and has been maintained in good condition. It is about five stories high. If you climb to the top of it you can look out over the vast plain that stretches to the south and east. One can see 30 to 40 miles so the sentry could spot an enemy force coming long before it got there. But how about the north and east? It is extremely rugged country in those directions so that no effective force could get through. As you stand there, you can imagine the boy Dominic running up the stairs and looking out over the same scene that you can see. It has changed very little since then.

Dominic's family name was Guzman. A Spanish Dominican who taught me at St. Albert's when I was a student there had a most interesting and plausible explanation for its origin. In his opinion it was originally Goodman, an English name, which in Spanish would quickly be transformed into Guzman. But how would an Englishman get to Spain? In the Europe of that time, the eldest son inherited the title and estate of the father. The second son was destined for the Church. There were few opportunities for any other sons. Very often what they did was to join in some military campaign going on in the hope of getting a title and estate of their own. The Crusades were one possibility and Spain was another for there Christians were also fighting the infidel, the Moors being Islamic. Thus, according to this priest's theory, the third or fourth son of an English nobleman joined the Spaniards and did get a title and estate of his own. He became the lord of Calaruega and ancestor of St. Dominic.

By the time St. Dominic was born the Spaniards had pushed the Moors so far south that there was no longer any danger. The area was quiet and peaceful. St. Dominic's father, Felix Guzman, had married a woman from another noble family of the area, Jane D'Aza and they had three sons and perhaps one daughter, for we read that two nephews of St. Dominic also joined the Order. It was an extraordinary family. Felix has been declared a Venerable by the Church, the first step toward canonization. His mother is Blessed Jane D'Aza. His older brother, Mannes, who joined the Order, is also a Blessed. The oldest brother, Anthony, became a priest and Canon of St. James, devoting himself to the service of the poor and sick, but he has not been beatified. Here in this one family you have one saint, two blessed and one venerable. We do not know who inherited the title and estate of Felix, for the Guzman line, as far as we know, died out with this family.

The story is told that while Blessed Jane was carrying St. Dominic she had a dream in which she bore in her womb a dog who broke away from her and ran through the world setting it on fire with a torch he carried in his mouth. She was troubled by this dream and went to pray at the Benedictine abbey of San Domingo de Silos which lies in a pleasant valley about 20 miles north of Calaruega. The answer was, of course, that her son would set the world on fire by his preaching. That abbey, incidentally has become famous recently because of a record of their Gregorian chant that has become a best seller throughout the world. At any rate, when her child was born she named him after the founder of that monastery, St. Dominic de Silos. Another

extraordinary sign occurred at his baptism when his godmother saw a bright star shining on his forehead as the water was being poured.

These two incidents have become a part of Christian art. Usually, statues and pictures of St. Dominic show him with a star over his forehead and a dog with a torch in his mouth which is often shown with the saint.

B. The Schoolboy and Student

He spent his earliest years, the most impressionable ones, in this atmosphere of love of God and neighbor, good works for the poor and needy, deep piety and high moral standards provided for him by his parents. His two older brothers were studying for the priesthood so it was only natural that at an early age the idea of being a priest himself would be formed in his mind. His parents were willing so at the age of seven he was sent to his uncle, his mother's brother, who was the parish priest of Gumiel d'Izan, a small town about ten or twelve miles to the west, for his primary studies which included Latin. This may strike us as rather heartless, this sending of a child so young away from home. But this was common in those days and it was not as bad as it may sound at first. He went to the house of his uncle, a man who must have had many of the qualities of his mother, so that he would be a loving and kind guardian and teacher. Besides, there was no other alternative, there being no schools in his native village. Besides, Gumiel d'Izan was close enough so that he could return home or his parents go visit him from time to time.

We are told, however, that he was an apt student so that by the time he was fourteen years old, he was ready to go to the University at Palencia, the first university in Spain. There he studied was known as the Trivium, consisting of grammar, rhetoric and logic. After learning them he passed on to the Quadrivium, which consisted of arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. This was the common course of studies in medieval times. All of this took six years, which means he was twenty when he started his study of theology. It was during this time, to balance the dryness of his studies, that he increasingly turned to prayer to set the divine truths he was learning on fire with divine love. This would be a characteristic with which he would endow his Order in later years.

He lived very simply in those days, his only extravagance being books which he carefully annotated in his own writing. But he sold even those to help the refugees of war that poured into Palencia. He explained this drastic action in these words: "I could not bear to prize dead skins when living skins were starving and in want." Undoubtedly, this compassion for the poor and suffering was instilled into him by the example of the good works done by his father and mother during his childhood. This would be a quality that would stay with him all his life.

C. Priest and Canon at Osma

At about the age of twenty-four or twenty-five he was ordained a priest for the diocese of Osma in which Calaruega was located. He then became a canon of the cathedral. Canons were priests who lived a religious life under the rule of St. Augustine. They recited the Divine Office daily in

the Cathedral, did some priestly duties such as caring for the religious needs of the people of the parish and going out to neighboring parishes who did not have priests (there was a shortage in those days too) or were too poor to support a pastor. This was what St. Dominic did for nine years. It was a quiet life, affording him ample opportunity for study, prayer and contemplation.

He was elected subprior of his chapter in 1199. When the prior, whose name was Diego d'Azevedo, became bishop in 1202, Dominic was selected to succeed him as prior. This would provide him with administrative experience which would stand him in good stead in the years ahead.

We want to keep the name of Bishop Diego in mind for he will play an important role in the next stage of St. Dominic's life, which we will be talking about in our next section.

II. Laying the Foundations

At the end of our last chapter you were asked to remember the name of the Bishop of Osma, Diego D'Azevedo. It was he who was responsible for catapulting Dominic into a whole new sphere, radically different from the peace and quiet of the cloister of Osma where he had intended to spend the rest of his days. In 1203, the king of Castile sent Bishop Diego to arrange a marriage of his son, Ferdinand, with "a noble lady of the Marches." Scholars agree that the "Marches" were what is now known as Denmark. The identity of the noble lady is not certain, but it seems probable that she was the niece of King Vademar II of Denmark, the daughter of his sister, Sophie, and Count Siegfried of Orlamünde. Since Prince Ferdinand was only 15 years old she probably was at least as young. The bishop asked Dominic to go with him. After they had crossed the Pyrenees, or, what is more likely, gone around them, they had to cross the district of Toulouse in southern France. The first night they spent in an inn whose owner had rejected his Catholic faith and joined a great heresy that was raging in the Toulouse and had practically taken over the entire area. It was called the Albigensian heresy.

It was based on the very ancient idea that matter was evil and spirit was good. It has been around for a long time and is still with us in the form of theosophy, Christian Science and those who go in for Buddhism and other Eastern religions. It appeals to people who have vague and hazy minds and do not want to do any serious thinking. Albigensianism had the additional twist in that it did develop a logical and clear theological system. Marriage was evil, sex was sinful, flesh meat was forbidden, austerities were the in thing, and suicide was the preferred way of death. This would not, of course, appeal to many people, but Albigensianism had an answer for this. Only a few, the perfect, were obliged to this form of life. The rest were free to live as normal human beings. They were required only to renounce the Catholic faith and the Sacraments.

The lords, of course, were all in favor of this approach for it meant that they could have the lands and income of the Church, which was the same tactic Luther used in Germany and Henry VIII used in England. The result was that it was a deep-seated heresy and difficult to eradicate. Dominic was appalled that anyone could fall for this nonsense. He and the innkeeper got into an argument that lasted the whole night, but in the morning the innkeeper fell on his knees and asked to be reconciled to the Church. This experience changed Dominic's life forever. He could never go back to the cloister at Osma. He did, however, have to continue on the journey to the

Marches, return to the court of the king of Castile with the result of their successful negotiations, and then go back to the Marches to escort the young princess back to Castile. But on they were on this last leg of their mission, word came to them the bride-to-be had died, or, as some think, entered a monastery. In either case, she was dead to the world and marriage was out of the question. The retinue of courtiers broke up to return home in any way they wanted. Diego and Dominic decided to go by way of Rome.

Diego shared with Pope Innocent III some ideas close to his heart. One was the situation in southern France, another was a desire to resign his see so he could go and convert the Tartars or Tatars, a warlike Mongolian people who had invaded what is now Russia and were threatening to move further westward. St. Dominic would adopt the same dream and grow a beard so he could be ready to leave at a moment's notice. Monks and friars were usually clean-shaven so this made the saint distinctive. The Pope, however, refused Diego's requests and told him to go home for there was greater work to be done there.

In obedience, the bishop and his prior started back home but the Albigensian heresy was always in the back of their minds. On their trip they stopped at Cîteaux, the great monastery founded by St. Bernard of Clairvaux and the mother abbey of innumerable others of the Cisterian Order throughout Europe. The Pope had entrusted the mission of preaching to win back the heretics to the Church to the monks of Cîteaux. Diego was so impressed with the Cisterians that he received their habit and persuaded a group of monks to return to Spain with him.

On their journey, they met at Montpellier the Abbot of Cîteaux and two other monks, Pierre of Castelnau and Raoul of Fontfroide who had been preaching in southern France with no success. The monks were discouraged and frustrated, for the heretics proved to be unmoved by their efforts. Bishop Diego quickly pointed out the reasons for their failure. They had gone there as papal legates surrounded by all the pomp and circumstance that attended papal legates, fine horses, splendid regalia, impressive robes, comfortable living quarters and good food. The Cisterians actually lived very austere lives, but they felt they had to take on all the trappings of papal legates. As Diego made clear, this was no way to impress people whose leaders led lives of extreme austerity. Actually, the Cisterians would have been more successful if they had gone there as simple Cisterians, living their own austere lives.

They took Diego's words to heart as did Dominic. In fact, he went them one better. He was even more austere than the most austere of the leaders and he let it be known how much he denied himself. He would not sleep on a bed, but on the floor; one Lent he lived only on bread and water; he had the discipline given to him — in other words, he was whipped. In all of these he made sure that everyone knew the extent of his penances. They may have been done for show, but the hard floor was real, the emptiness of his stomach was real, the lashes he received were real. They impressed even the heresy's leaders who wondered at his physical endurance that they could not equal.

At the same time he engaged in public debates with the heretical leaders and won one after another. One common way of deciding the winners was to throw the resume of their arguments into the fire. In every case, the resumes of the heretics were burned but Dominic's were thrown back out of the fire intact. In one case, the charred beam of the fireplace that his document hit as

it flew out of the fire can still be seen. In other words, it was so hot that it could char a wooden beam but miraculously it was not consumed by the heat as great as it was.

One evening in 1206, outside the north gates of the village of Fanjeaux, St. Dominic sat reading about St. Mary Magdalen whose feast day it was. As he reflected on the life of the saint he was moved to ask God for guidance in what he should do. He also asked for a sign from the Blessed Virgin to help him. Just then a globe of fire came out of the heavens, hovered a bit and then in a blaze of glory settled over the forlorn and desolate church of Prouille which was nearby. The saint could not believe his eyes. He came back to the same spot the next evening and the sign was repeated. He returned again on the third evening and sure enough the vision appeared again. He took this as the sign he had prayed for and determined that the church at Prouille was the place God wanted him to begin his work. This vision is known as the Seignadou, “the sign of God” in the language of the place and time.

The way he began his work was to collect a group of women at Prouille and form them into nuns. This was not just a gathering of a group of pious women. Rather it was a daring tactic to counteract a strategy of the Albigensians who used similar groups of women who had attained the rank of “perfect” to teach the children of impoverished Catholic nobles and raise them in the heresy. These convents also served as apostolic centers where people could go for instruction and help. This is exactly what St. Dominic intended to do, but only for Catholic women, specifically, those who had been heretics but had returned to the Church. The initial group was nine in number. He gave them a simple white habit with a black veil. They were cloistered but not in the strict sense that our present day cloistered nuns are. Rather they were more like the Religious of the Sacred Heart or as the Ursulines used to be. They could not go out of the cloister but people could freely come to them for instruction, encouragement and assistance.

Bishop Diego highly approved of this move as did the bishop of Toulouse who in addition gave the sisters title to the church and land as well as the tithes and first fruits due to it. Thus, the financial security of the new foundation was assured. In addition, St. Dominic moved the little band of men who were working with him on to the property so it became a kind of “double monastery” which was not uncommon at the time.

The following year, 1207, Bishop Diego decided it was high time for him to return to his diocese of Osma with the intention of returning as soon as possible. But this was never possible for he died the following year. Upon his departure, Dominic was left in charge of the mission. He became a close friend of the Bishop of Toulouse, Foulques, a most apostolic pastor who saw in Dominic a kindred spirit who could be of great help to him in fulfilling his pastoral duties.

The situation would be greatly complicated the following year, 1208, when the papal legate in charge of the preaching mission to the Albigensians, was killed by the heretics. This brought on a bloody crusade led by Simon de Montfort, an English nobleman. Dominic was highly respected by Simon but he never expected the saint to participate in the battles that went on nor did he serve as an inquisitor. In fact, he saw that war was no way to overcome a well-established heresy so he wanted nothing to do with the so-called crusade.

In February of 1213, the bishop of Carcassonne went to France to see if he could get more troops to help in the Crusade. He appointed Dominic as his vicar general during his absence which lasted several months. This gave him an insight into the working of a diocese and administrative experience. It was in this position that he realized that the parochial system alone was inadequate to handle situations such as those of Southern France. Something more was needed.

All during this time Dominic continued to preach, engage in debates with the heretics and give lectures. His cheerfulness and joyousness of spirit never deserted him even in the face of threats against his life. He was fearless. Once, he walked alone through a village that he knew was bitterly against him singing at the top of his voice so that if they wanted to harm him they had their chance. Another time a group of heretics asked him, "Have you no fear of death? What would you do if we siezed you now?" Dominic laughed and said, "Oh I would just ask you not put me to death all at once; but gradually limb by limb to make my martyrdom a slow one, so that hardly human in form, blinded and a mass of blood, I should have a really much finer place in heaven." What can you do with a man who wants to be a martyr? Bodily harm or even a cruel death would play right into his hands. The result was that they left him alone.

In 1215, a wealthy merchant of Toulouse, Peter de Seila, gave St Dominic and his companions some houses in the city. Later on he was to join the Order as a brother and took care of finances. He used to say that it was not the Order that received him but it was he who received the Order. This was his little joke that he used repeatedly. As soon as the brethren had moved into the house Dominic took them to the lectures of Alexander of Stavensby, a distinguished theologian who was teaching in Toulouse at the time.

It was during this period that Dominic began to realize that that something more that was needed over and above the parochial system was a world-wide Order that would be devoted to preaching divine Truth. Its members would have to be learned, live a life of austerity and be contemplative. He saw that the problems of the Church were not confined to Southern France but were universal.

In that same year, 1215, he attended the Third Lateran Council in Rome as canon theologian for Bishop Foulques. There he had a chance to talk with Pope Innocent III about his ideas for a preaching Order. His basic problem was that the idea of a world-wide Order under one head was radical. It had never been done and Dominic had no models to build on. Another difficulty was that Rome and the bishops were wary of a group of preachers because they had had bad experiences with other groups such as the Humiliati. The major obstacle was that the Lateran Council had forbidden the founding of new Orders. New religious rules were out. There were to be no more of them.

The upshot was that Pope Innocent III told St. Dominic to go back to his little community of six brothers and select which one of the approved rules they would follow. He hurried back only to find that his group of six were now sixteen. There was really no problem in the selection. The Rule of St. Augustine, which St. Dominic and most of his other brethren had lived by for years was the obvious choice. It was a rule written by a cleric for clerics. They also adopted some customs in regard to eating, fasting, sleeping and wearing wool. These were the beginning of what would develop into the Dominican Constitutions.

One other obstacle remained. Despite the houses of Peter de Seila they had no real religious house. It so happened that a priory was vacant in Toulouse, dedicated to St. Romain, with a hospital attached. Bishop Foulques and his canons gave it to St. Dominic and his companions. Although it was small it was remodeled (a practice which Dominicans are still used to) and was made into a serviceable house.

In 1216, Dominic set out for Rome with everything in proper order for papal approval. When he got there he found out that Pope Innocent III had died and a new Pope, Honorius III, was the man to deal with. How that turned out we must leave to the next section.

III. The Building of the Edifice

At the end of our last session, we saw that when St. Dominic arrived in Rome in 1216 with everything all in order for papal approval of his new foundation, he found that Pope Innocent III had died. This meant that he would have to go all through the process of persuading Innocent's successor that his Order would be good for the Church. As it turned out, the man elected to succeed Innocent was Honorius III who was even more supportive of Dominic than his predecessor had been.

The first thing Honorius did was to give a bull of approval of the Order on December 21, 1216. On the following day, he issued a second bull of confirmation in which are the words so dear to the hearts of Dominicans, "We, considering that the brethren of the Order will be the champions of the Faith and true lights of the world" and so on. On January 26th. of 1217 he issued third bull which called the Dominicans "preachers" This was the one St. Dominic really wanted. That title given by the Holy See was a radical one. It meant that now priests, and not just bishops, were authorized to preach the Word of God. This was completely new in the Church.

Dominic was eager to return to Toulouse, but the Pope held him in Rome. He was made the theologian to the Pope, the office of Master of the Sacred Palace, an office that has been held by a Dominican since that time. The present one is Cardinal Chiapi. Finally, in May he was allowed to return home. On August 13th., 1217 he summoned his brethren to Prouille, the place where he had begun to found the Order. There he took another radical step. On the Feast of the Assumption, he dispersed his small band of followers, some to Spain, others to Bologna, but the largest number to Paris, the greatest center of learning in the west at that time. There were those who thought this was a foolish move, but he said, "Do not oppose me, for I know very well what I am doing." Usually, St. Dominic deferred to the wishes of his brethren, but in this case he was insistent and he was right. The Order grew tremendously as a result. Upon the suggestion of the saint, the brethren chose Matthew of France to be Abbot in case he was incapacitated. But as time would show, the title just did not fit so Matthew was the first and last abbot in the Dominican Order. Then Dominic set off again for Rome.

He arrived there in January of 1218. The Pope gave him the ancient church of San Sisto Vecchio, which is right across the street from the baths of Caracalla and down a short way from the Circus Maximus. The Pope, however, had another project in mind involving Dominic. He wanted to

bring together all the nuns of Rome who were living in various monasteries all over the city. Their discipline was lax and they needed to be brought back to a stricter way of life. He saw Dominic as the man who could persuade them to leave their various places and take on a more rigorous rule of life. This was a big order but somehow or another the saint was able to bring it off. As soon as the remodeling of San Sisto was complete the nuns were to be brought there. This meant that the Dominican Fathers and Brothers had to have some place to move to. The Pope came through again and gave the Friars the magnificent basilica of Santa Sabina on the Avelline Hill overlooking the Tiber River. It had been built in the fifth century and is certainly one of the most beautiful churches in Rome. It is still the headquarters of the Order. Sometime after their arrival there St. Dominic planted some lemon trees in the courtyard of the cloister. Cuttings from those trees were planted in the courtyard of St. Albert's Priory in Oakland and they are flourishing.

Since the dispersal of the brethren there were houses of the Order all over Europe and the numbers would continue to grow, for vocations came in great abundance. Many of the men entering were distinguished scholars already. One of the most notable was Reginald of Orleans who held the chair of canon law at the University of Paris. He was the one to whom the Blessed Mother appeared and gave him the white scapular that we all wear and is the most important part of the Dominican Habit. He also was a most eloquent preacher and attracted a great many young men into the Order. One of those was Blessed Jordan of Saxony, who would succeed St. Dominic as General of the Order. He would attract over a thousand novices into the Order, among them two future popes, two canonized saints, numerous blessed and countless intellectual giants of the time, one of whom was St. Albert the Great. Entering during this period were also St. Hyacinth, who preached not only in his native Poland but in other countries of northern Europe as well, and his brother, Blessed Celsus, who worked in Bohemia and Silesia.

The Order grew very quickly then. St. Dominic began visiting the various houses to insure that all these new members understood his ideals and purposes, to encourage them in their work and inspire them to greater apostolic zeal and regular observance. Keep in mind, he walked every step of the way. There was no public transportation or good roads. He would not ride a horse or a mule or even a donkey. He walked thousands of miles, to Spain, all over France as far as Paris and to Rome and other cities of Italy. He never stayed long anywhere. When he got outside of town he would take off his sandals and go barefoot even over rocky ground. He carried with him a staff and a little bundle on his shoulder. In it, among other things, of course, were the gospel of Matthew and the epistles of St. Paul which he read constantly. Every where he went he preached and drew great crowds to hear him. He always lived an austere life no matter where he was, fasting, praying most of the night, and scourging himself. He did have one weakness in the line of food. He loved turnips, which most of us might consider a penance.

One fact quickly became obvious. There was a urgent need for a written rule of Constitutions. The Friars had already chosen the Rule of St. Augustine as the basic law of the Order and had adopted a few regulations, but the Rule needed to be made more specific and applied to the purpose and spirit of the Order. For this reason, a General Chapter consisting of delegates from the various houses of the Order was called to meet in Bologna on May 17, 1220. We do not know the names of those who were present with the exception of Jordan of Saxony who has left us a brief account of the chapter proceedings. This is the only record we have of it. Jordan,

incidentally, had been in the Order only two months when he was selected as one of the four delegates from Paris.

From his account we know that several characteristics were built into the Order's legislation. The first was a democratic spirit that was totally unheard of at that time. Every superior was to be elected, even the Master of the Order, for definite terms of office. Poverty was to be observed with the brethren living on alms. We still do it that way. Even the work we do in the St. Jude Office and on our mission band is a form of begging. Instead of going from door to door asking for food and money as they did in the Middle Ages, we write letters to people or preach asking for money to educate our students for the priesthood. The capitular fathers also re-affirmed that preaching was the primary work of the Order hand in hand with study, for ignorant preachers were causing problems. Both preaching and study were so essential that a superior could grant dispensation from regulations of the Rule if they would interfere with either one. One piece of legislation was that Chapters were to be held every year alternating between Bologna and Paris. This had to be abandoned later on when the Order grew so large that it became impractical.

We do not know how long the Chapter lasted for Jordan does not tell us. We do know that on May 24th., a week later, St. Dominic was on the road again travelling all over northern Italy.

In May of 1221, the second General Chapter was held once again in Bologna. We know even less about it than the first for Jordan was not there. By this time he was the Provincial of the Province of Lombardy in northern Italy. We do know that the Order was divided into eight provinces each with its own Prior Provincial. They were Spain, Provence, France, Lombardy, Rome, Germany, Hungary and England. Further refinements were made in the Constitutions, but we are not certain what they were for the records of it have not come down to us.

In June, Dominic was in Venice, conferring with Cardinal Ugolino, his close friend, the one who as Pope Gregory X was to canonize Dominic. In July, the saint returned to Bologna feeling tired in body but tireless in spirit. It was a unusually hot summer and on top of it, he had a fever. It was decided to move him to higher ground in the hills above Bologna where it was cooler. He talked about his life's work to the brethren present. He made a public confession to them and admitted that although he had preserved chastity all of his life he had taken more pleasure in conversing with younger women than with older ones. He then made his last will and testament: "These are, beloved ones, the inheritances I leave you as my sons: have charity among you, hold to humility, possess voluntary poverty."

It was now obvious that the end was near. He requested to be taken back to Bologna to die among his brothers. They had to carry him back very slowly for it seemed as though he would die on the way. They finally made it, his body burning with fever. He told the friars around his bed not to weep for him for, in his words, he was going to where he could serve them better. They wanted to begin the prayers of the dying, but he told to wait. A little later on, he said "Begin." At the words "Come to his help, you holy ones of God; come out to meet him, you angels of the Lord, taking his soul, and offering it in the sight of the Most High." He repeated the words, opened his eyes, sighed and died at six o'clock on Friday evening, August 6, 1221. He was only fifty -one years old.

In five short years, from 1216 to 1221, St. Dominic had accomplished the almost incredible. He had founded a religious Order with just six followers at the beginning. When he died they were in the thousands. It was a totally new form of religious life made up of highly educated men whose mission was to preach the Good News of salvation. Yet he intended that they should follow what we call the monastic observances — Divine Office said in choir, silence and penance. Oh yes, he met with opposition. Those who consider themselves conservatives who never like anything new and they were the ones who attacked the whole idea of a world-wide Order under one head who were itinerant preachers, but learned men who roamed all over Europe helping the bishops to fulfill their office of preaching. One critic complained that “they have the world for their cell, and the ocean for their cloister.” Dominicans gleefully seized upon this statement as an apt description of their way of life.