

Excerpts from the Writings of the Popes On the Order of Friars Preachers

Pius X, Letter *Filiali Ossequi*, May 7, 1907, to the Very Reverend Cormier, Master General of the Friars Preachers



In [Dominicans'] teaching, far from allowing themselves to be tainted or besmirched by the evil of the prevalent modernism, a disease which it will be their mission to tend and cure, they will be able, in their lecturer's chair, to combat with charitable firmness and untiring energy the errors and dangerous innovations which, to the great detriment of souls, tend to invade the domains of philosophy and theology.

In preaching they will set before the people the truth so faith and the precepts of morals, in a clear and simple manner, within the reach of all. They will avoid otiose speculations, risqué theories, subjects foreign to the sacred domain, which smell of the profane and dazzle minds infatuated with the foolish theories of the times, without yielding any profit. To act otherwise would be to betray their divine mission and the expectation of the

Church who confides her own children to them to be nourished with love and wisdom, not in *persuasibilibus humane sapientiae verbis*, but with the substantial bread of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, forearming them thus against the multiple errors abroad in the world. It is only by such preaching that they will be able to save individual souls and at the same time consolidate the basis of social well-being, substituting charity for selfishness, humility for pride, reasonable submission for false independence, and moral purity and integrity for unbridled sensualism.

But the fruit of this preaching would be very meager if it were not accompanied by the more eloquent preaching of life and example. Their exterior decorum should ever be such that in beholding them and hearing them all men should understand how much they love their cloister cell, whose sweetness they have only—for a moment and with regret—abandoned for their neighbor's good and to spread abroad in the world the good odor of Jesus Christ. Their whole life will be a happy mingling of austerity and sweetness, of simplicity and prudence, of kindness and reserve, of zeal for the progress of the just and of compassion for sinners. In this way they will show, in fact even more than in name, that they are the sons of their great, wise, and lovable Patriarch; and they will become the faithful imitators of him of whom it is written: . . . the grace of God our Savior hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world (Titus 2:11-12).

From: *Papal Teachings: The States of Perfection*, trans. Mother O'Gorman (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1967), 199-200.

Pius XI, Apostolic Letter *Inclytam ac Perillustrem*: March 6, 1934

The Church today, no less than in former times, needs apostolic men of purity and integrity to give themselves wholly to the study of divine things, to solid piety, and to the preaching of the word of God. Today as in the 12th cent., numerous and dangerous errors relative to religion and morality are spread practically everywhere, and it is not rare to see even open and public contempt for the divine law and the natural law. Almost everywhere, by a multitude of pleasures and distractions, people are being brought to consider only passing things, and they are urged, almost irresistibly, to seek only frail and earthly treasures, as if our pilgrimage on this earth were the only and truly eternal life. It is therefore necessary to meditate constantly on divine teaching and to study it attentively, so that the faithful moral life is made for the heavenly and better possessions for which we were born. In our day, peoples and nations make very little of divine assistance, and too often they are hoping only for a human and purely natural aid; therefore, the supernatural life must be lived intimately; we must take delight in it and each day ask for the divine assistance without which we cannot do any good.



Ibid., 295-296.

Pius XII, Letter *Quum Dominicanum*, July 16, 1946, to the Master General of the Dominicans

Recognize your nobility and do not flinch in the struggle in which you are engaged: it has already been made illustrious by success. Therefore, the members of the Dominican family



should apply themselves with greater ardor to serve God and to sanctify themselves, by the means and with the resources which you enumerate: regular life, monastic observance, assiduous study of the truth, and the solemn celebration of the Divine Office. All of this will be done with a view to maintaining and increasing in souls the ardor of supernatural life by the simultaneous exercises, according to your tradition, of the virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the evangelical beatitudes; thus your sentiments and the conduct, your words and the actions will form a harmonious ensemble. Moreover, as light and perfume diffuse themselves, seeking your teaching and your preaching, in which you ought to put forth the greatest efforts, seek, in your turn, in the fire of charity, to pour out more and more on others the treasures accumulated in study and prayer.

If in our day so many people are the prey of vice and absurd doctrines, this sad disaster comes in part from the fact that the Gospel has not always been preached as much as it should have been or in the way it should have been. The remedy for this evil, it is your task to give to others by the example of your action, walking in the footsteps of so many holy religious of your Order who have become illustrious by the preaching of the Gospel.

Let Dominican Preachers know well that they are the envoys of Christ, and that their lives must always be in agreement with their words, their eloquence with truth. They should not rely on the seductions of a wholly human art, but on the strength which has been begged at length from the Holy Spirit. They will have in view, not the desire to obtain glory and eloquence, but to win the greatest number of souls to Christ the King; and they will adapt

their words to needs, speaking in a way to be heard with profit, good grace, and submission. "When thou speakest in the church, let thy word provoke not the cries of the people but their groans. Let the tears of thy hearers be thy recompense. Let the word of the priest be supported by the reading of Scripture. I do not want a lawyer, a gossip, or a rabble-rouser; I wish thee to be instructed in the mysteries, and deeply versed in the secrets of thy God" (St. Jerome, Epist. LII, *ad Nepotianum*).

We desire to make of your Order a rampart and a should bulwark for the Church in the troubles of our own day, and perhaps still more for tomorrow. Therefore, We must warn you on a point which may do you great harm: you have at present a tendency to increase beyond measure the number of your provinces, to multiply small convents, and to accept willingly the office of parish ministry. If necessity, or the public good, requires this, and the reasons are serious ones, We do not condemn the practice; but it is not good to turn laudable exceptions into habitual usage. History and experience proves that the Dominican Order was never more flourishing, never produced better fruits of teaching and holiness, than when grate monasteries regularly established permitted your brothers to lead religious life as God deigned to lay it upon you in rules which are full of wisdom. There are many mansions in the Church: each one must develop where it has been placed.

We also wish to congratulate you on another development which will be very useful to your Order: We have in mind the Normal School for the Masters of Novices established at Rome at Santa Sabina. For everyone must understand how useful and wise it is to procure from the masters who will form the souls of novices all the elements of doctrine and of life which will be necessary for them to carry out their task, not haphazardly, but with zeal and competence.

Ibid., 338-340

Pius XII, Allocution to the members of the General Chapter of the Friars Preachers, September 22, 1946

As peace is the result of the harmonious ensemble of virtues in actions, strive ever more generously to subject the body to the soul and soul to God; and thus, developed by the effects of evangelical grace, your desires and your thoughts will be pleasing to the angels and your works to men. Let all that could trouble fraternal concord be far from you; this concord is sovereignly suited to religious whom it enriches and adorns with sweet wisdom. Among you let authority be a faithful support; let submission be a perpetual holocaust; let your life shine before the eyes of men as a living rule and a remarkable example of the Christian profession.

In *studio assidui*, assiduous in study. Your peace is not an indolent repose; it compromises, on the contrary, an activity which is the equal in grandeur and importance to any other career. For it is your special function to shine in the study of doctrine and, in particular, to enrich yourselves constantly more and more in a deeper knowledge of the divine sciences, to meditate, to explain, to defend revealed truth. Let each one of you find a stimulus to the more abundant acquisition of learning, which does not exclude holiness of life in the wise exhortation of St. Jerome: "Never let your hand be without a book; never lift your eyes from the page; let the psalter be learned by heart; let prayer be said without interruption; let

attention be ever on the alert, but not occupied with vain thoughts. The body like the soul must tend towards the Lord" (Epist. CXXXV, *ad Rusticum*).

You who have always accorded first place to the study of theology and philosophy, you have the right to claim the greatest glory. It is you, in fact, who gave to the Church St. Thomas Aquinas, the common Doctor of these sciences. His authority is unique of its kind, as much for the instruction of young students as to guide the steps of the searchers of hidden truths. This authority is recognized in an absolute fashion in the very Code of Canon law [1917 ed.]: "Let professors, in what concerns the study of natural philosophy and theology, and the teaching of these subjects to their pupils, follow in all points the method, the doctrine, and the principles of the Angelic Doctor, and hold to them religiously."

...

Review with care books concerned with the institutions, the laws, the history of religion; weigh carefully and consider wisely all that is produced by the new era and put it to use for the profit of sacred science. May your peace, that friend and companion of calm activity, shine out under the light of heavenly truths.

...

Now this honor, this glory, this dignity is proper to you by virtue of your own peculiar name. Remain faithful to that name, realize your profession; let none, through indolence or fear, refrain from the task of preaching. Rather, it belongs to you to surpass all others in this ministry. In you, let words and conduct ever be in harmony: what you say, confirm by the brilliance of your example. Although it is necessary to learn and cultivate profane letters as far as they are useful, lest the word of God be deprived of the adornment which its due, the heavenly force of the divine word resides no less in the grace of the Holy Spirit obtained by prayer and good works. "It is thus the Christian orator acts when he speaks of things just, of things holy, of things virtuous, for he ought not to treat any other subject. Therefore, he does all that he can do when, treating of these matters, he uses a discourse clear, attractive, persuasive. And let him be thoroughly convinced that if he can and insofar as he can do so, he will reach his end more by the fervor of his prayers than by the resources of his eloquence, and that, consequently, he must, in prayer for himself and for those to whom he is going to speak, be an intercessor before being a preacher" (St. Augustine, *De doctrina Christ.*, c. XV, n. 32).

These are the things which should be the constant object of your thought and your concern if you wish to be in name and deed Dominican religious: peace, the study of doctrine, preaching; three things which should not be separated from one another, but united and conjoined; not loved individually, but simultaneously. By these forces honor your profession, second your ministry, come to the help of a world in disarray.

Pius XII, Letter *Cum Septembri Mense*, March 25, 1955, to the Vicar General of the Friars Preachers

We wish to use this occasion to propose for your meditation something which is especially applicable to your Institute, and these words of St. Bernard come to Our mind: "merely to shine is vain; merely to burn is a small matter; to burn and to shine, that is everything." For

it must be that, obedient to the rule of your Father and Lawgiver, you give yourselves zealously to the study of the divine and human sciences. And in your Order there are brilliant stars whose rays, coming down through the centuries, throw light even into the darkness of our own period: We have in mind St. Albertus Magnus and in particular his disciple Thomas Aquinas who, "full of divine and human learning, is like to the sun. . . And who single-handed triumphed over the errors of former times and furnished invincible weapons to conquer those which will not cease to rise up in subsequent periods" (Encycl. *Aeterni Patris*).

If [the study of Thomas is mandated by the 1917 Code], this article is incumbent in a very special manner to you. And this for two reasons in particular: first, so that you may keep intact the integrity of Catholic teaching such as the Church transmits it to us, that you may courageously defend it with the appropriate weapons against the attacks of error; and secondly, so that you will neglect no one of the branches of human learning which, in the course of time, may be capable of throwing new light on the truth of Christianity which remains ever the same.

But the light of your teaching must also bur with that charity which comes from God, making easier men's assent to the wisdom of the eternal Godhead. "Knowledge puffeth up," as the Apostle says, "but charity edifieth." Again, that most holy Mellifluous Doctor with reason states the same thing when he asks, "What is knowledge without love? It puffs up. What is love without knowledge? It goes off the right path."

To seek out both must be for you, therefore, a very grave duty, the more so as you preach to the clergy and the faithful—this is the function proper to your Order. So you must be "instant in preaching" as your constitutions demand. For if human words are not on fire with divine love they are in vain and useless as the Apostle of the Gentiles holds: "If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Moreover, your words must be in agreement with your deeds so that what you teach by word you demonstrate by the example of your lives.

May this Christian charity unit you closely among yourselves as brothers. We are fully persuaded that discord will never find footing among you, that there will never be in your ranks that vain and exaggerated self-love which wounds one's neighbor. Christian humility, that most noble virtue which is the foundation of all the other, will be the adornment of your souls and will preserve you from all that might offend, in however small a measure, the souls of others and especially of your brethren.

May your obedience be founded on unshakable motives: those which make you behold God himself in your superiors. Disobedience, that scourge peculiar to our times, dissipates strength and renders apostolic enterprises weak and sterile.

Pope John Paul II, Address to the Members of the General Council of the Order of Friars Preachers, Friday, 15 February 2002

Dear Religious,

I greet with great joy, you who make up the General Council of the Order of Preachers. I greet cordially each one and through you greet your entire religious family. In particular I thank the Master General, Fr Carlos Azpiroz Costa, for expressing your common sentiments of loyalty and fidelity to the Apostolic See.



Meeting you today reminds me of the contacts I have had with your Order. I still have pleasant memories of my student years at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome. It was a very fruitful period for my theological formation due to the expert contribution of my superlative and unforgettable Dominican teachers. Here I would like to mention Fr Garrigou-Lagrange and Frs Paul Philippe and Mario Luigi Ciappi, who later became Cardinals, and other distinguished Dominican professors. What I had the chance to assimilate in the classrooms of the Angelicum, has always been helpful in my pastoral ministry.

The Dominican Order of which you are the ranking representatives, has a specific task in the immense undertaking of the new evangelization that the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 vigorously launched. This is a common ecclesial enterprise to which all the members of the People of God, and particularly religious families, are called to contribute.

As I wrote in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, "The men and women of our own day often perhaps unconsciously ask believers not only to "speak' of Christ, but in a certain sense to "show' him to them" (n. 16). Doesn't this request coincide with the project of life that St Dominic expressed so effectively: "*contemplata aliis tradere*" (to hand on to others what contemplation has taught)? Only those who have had an experience of God can speak of him convincingly to others. At the school of St Dominic and of all the Dominican saints you are called to be teachers of truth and holiness.

Dear friends, may this be the basic thrust of your General Council in providing courageous instructions for the life and apostolate of the Dominican Friars throughout the world. I follow you whole-heartedly, wishing every good thing for your communities spread on every continent. I call down upon you the motherly help of Our Lady of the Rosary and the protection of the saints and blessed of your Order.

As I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, to your confreres and to all who belong to the Dominican spiritual family.