



Inquiry Formation

Meeting Eleven

The Pillars of Dominican Life: Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

A deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary has always been a hallmark of our Order, one of its pillars, you might say. It began with St. Dominic himself who was especially devoted to her and used to pray for long periods before her altar. We are told that he would pray one Hail Mary after another, and as he did so he would genuflect at each one. He also joyously accepted the change in religious garb that Our Lady had given to Blessed Reginald. Before that time, St. Dominic and his first companions had worn the clothing of the canons regular, which he had been when he was in Osma. It consisted of a white robe or tunic and a surplice. After Blessed Reginald had decided to join the Order he fell deathly ill. St. Dominic prayed fervently for his recovery. Shortly after, our Blessed Mother along with St. Cecilia and St. Catherine of Alexandria, both virgin martyrs of the early Church, appeared to him and anointed him with a heavenly perfume. She then showed him a long white scapular and told him it was to be a part of the Dominican habit. He was completely cured and was clothed in the new habit by St. Dominic himself. Ever since then the scapular has been the essential part of the Dominican habit and is specially blessed. The Lay Dominican receives a smaller version of this scapular, which is given at Temporary Promise.

Another devotion to Mary that is precious to Dominicans is the singing of the Salve Regina after night prayer. The singing of this beautiful hymn was started by Blessed Jordan of Saxony who would later succeed St. Dominic as Master of the Order. As he himself tells it in his little book "On the Beginnings of the Order of Preachers" one of the brothers in the house at Bologna, where St. Dominic died and is buried, was plagued by a most savage demon who almost drove him mad and created all kinds of disturbance in the house. Blessed Jordan then decided that they should sing the Salve Regina after Compline or Night Prayer. The brother was freed from his tribulation so the practice spread to the rest of the Province and from there to the entire Order and it is still our practice today. Then Blessed Jordan goes on to say:

A dependable religious once told me that he had often seen in spirit, while the brethren were singing, "Turn then, most Gracious Advocate," the mother of the Lord prostrating herself in the presence of her Son and praying for the safety of the whole Order. The memory of this ought to be preserved, so that when the brethren read of it, they will be inspired to an even greater devotion in their praises of the Virgin.

Every Dominican saint and blessed has had a tender and loving devotion to our Blessed Mother. St. Louis De Montfort, a Third Order Dominican and author of True Devotion to Mary, has this to say about Our Lady:



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Updated May 2025

The more we honor the Blessed Virgin, the more we honor Jesus Christ, because we honor Mary only that we may the more perfectly honor Jesus, since we go to her only as the way by which we are to find the end we are seeking, which is Jesus.

St. Louis De Montfort goes on to say:

When Mary holds you up, you do not fall; when she protects you, you need not fear; when she leads you, you do not tire, when she is favorable to you, you arrive at the harbor of safety.

It is understandable, then, that we Dominicans can and should feel that our Blessed Mother has a special affection for our Order, for devotion to her is a basic characteristic of it and has been from the very beginning. The Friars make their vows to Mary. The Laity make their promises to Mary, saying at profession: To the honour of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Blessed Dominic; and so on. The crowning glory of Dominican devotion to our Blessed Mother is the Rosary, the greatest and most widely used popular devotion in the Church. When you pray the Rosary you are praying the sacred scriptures. At the same time you are contemplating, with Mary, the life of Jesus. Through the ages, the Rosary has been known as “the weapon”. Saint Pope Pius V, a Dominican, knew the power of the Rosary. He did much to popularize it by attributing to the Rosary the victory of the Christian fleet over the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto, perhaps the most crucial naval battle of all time. During the battle he asked the Rosary Confraternity of Rome to be constantly reciting the Rosary in our church of the Minerva while he himself was saying it in his private chapel. Afterwards, he established the feast of Our Lady of Victory, which later on became the feast of the Holy Rosary. The importance of the Rosary in the life of a Dominican cannot be overemphasized. It is held in such a high regard that through our Particular Directory, we are required to fast on the Vigil of the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. There are only two other days that we, as Dominicans, are required to fast (in addition to the Church requirements) and they are the Vigil of St. Dominic and St. Catherine of Siena.

Even though the Rosary as we have it today was developed over a long period of time, we can say in a very real sense that St. Dominic was responsible for it because it was he who established the tradition from which it came. As Father Benedict Ashley, O.P. in his book, “The Dominicans” says:

His devotion to the Blessed Virgin established in the Order the tradition that eventually took a popular form in the holy rosary. (p. 12)

On the wall of the Sistine Chapel there is that magnificent mural by Michelangelo called the Last Judgment and most of you have seen at least pictures of it. Depicted in the mural is a man leaning over holding out a Rosary and, two men who are falling into hell, have grabbed it and are being pulled up into heaven. That was the expression of Michelangelo’s belief in the power of the Rosary in one of the world’s great masterpieces of art. There is a rumor that this author cannot confirm that Michelangelo was a Dominican layman. We do know his brother was a Dominican Friar, and he had done, as a beginner in the art of sculpture, an angel on the tomb of St. Dominic

in Bologna. Whether a Dominican lay man or not, he was convinced of the power of the Rosary to save souls. We as Dominicans are firmly convinced of that today. Let each one of us, then, use the Rosary as a means of drawing us closer to Christ, through Mary, by contemplating Jesus' sacred mysteries, which wrought our salvation.



Madonna of the Rosary
by Lorenzo Lotto (1539)

The Dominican Method of the Rosary

Below is the Dominican form of saying the Rosary taken from *Pray the Dominican Rosary* produced for the Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage.

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Opening Prayers

V. Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;
R. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
V. O Lord, open my lips;
R. And my mouth will proclaim your praise.
V. O God, come to my assistance.
R. O Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia. (Alleluia is omitted during Lent)

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses; as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women; and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us; and, after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Pray for us O holy mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Closing Prayer

V. Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, pray for us.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us Pray: O God, whose only begotten Son, by his life, death and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech thee, that by meditating upon these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

V. May the Divine Assistance remain always with us.

R. And may the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace.

(If a Priest is present:) And may the peace and blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit descend upon you and remain with you forever.

(Otherwise:) And may Almighty God bless us, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE ORIGIN OF THE SALVE REGINA

from Lives of the Brethren

The Virgin Mother of all love both cherishes with a very special affection and watches over this Order which she has founded, while the devil – who is jealous of everything that is good, and who hesitated not to tempt the Lord of all – assailed our brethren in Bologna and Paris. As superiors bore witness, he threatened one with a burning furnace which seemed about to fall upon him, he would suddenly embrace another under the guise of a woman, to this one he appeared like an ass with horns, to another he offered fiery serpents, others he abused with scurrilous words, so much so that at last some of the brethren had to keep guard while the rest slept: some lost their reason, others were horribly tormented.

Having recourse to their singular protectress, Mary most holy, they made it a rule to have a solemn procession, after Compline, while singing the “*Salve Regina*” with its proper prayer. At once the phantoms were put to flight, those who had been tormented were left in peace, two who had gone mad were restored to their wits and from that time all went well with them. How pleasing their procession was to God and his holy Mother was shown by the piety of the people, the way they thronged to our churches, the devotion of the clergy who came to assist at it, the tears and sighs of devotion, and the visions accorded.

A holy and honest woman dwelling in Marseilles, but a Lombard by race, who loved God and our Order well, one evening was caught up in ecstasy in the church during the singing of the *Salve*, and saw four things deserving of being ever remembered and prized. She observed the Queen of mercy perform four actions in keeping with the four sentiments of the antiphon. First of all, as the brethren sang the words “*Our life, our sweetness, and our hope,*” she saw the blessed Virgin graciously return their salutation. As the anthem was continued, at the words ‘*Turn then, O gracious advocate,*’ she observed her fall on her knees before her Son and make intercession for them. At the phrase ‘*Thine eyes of mercy towards us,*’ she looked at them with a most gracious and happy smile; lastly, as they sang, ‘*After this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb Jesus, O clement, O holy, O sweet Virgin Mary,*’ she saw her clasp her Son as a child, and hold Him out to each in turn.

Additional Reading List

Saint Dominic

- Chapter 6

Supplemental Articles (available on website)

- *Pray the Dominican Rosary (trifold)*
 - <https://laydomsouth.org/main/groups/provincial/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2025/05/Rosary-Printable-guide-trifold.pdf>
- *The Rosary: A Short History of Its Origins, by William A. Hinnebusch, OP*
 - https://laydomsouth.org/main/groups/provincial/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2025/05/Meeting_11_Hinnebusch_TheRosary.pdf

Questions

Write a one page summary of these readings