On December 22, 1216, Pope Honorius III formally approved the Order of Preachers (Dominican Order) as a religious order with the mandate to preach for the salvation of souls.

From November 7, 2015 until January 21, 2017, the Dominican Order is celebrating the 800th Jubilee of its founding. Please join us in this wonderful celebration.

For more information, go to jubilee.opeast.org.

---

“The bow is bent in study and the arrow is shot in preaching” (Hugh of St. Cher, O.P.) That is the best image I have ever seen of who we are and how we preach when we preach. There is a background tension in our preaching, like the bending of the bow and the stretching of the arrow. The flight of the arrow is the preached word and it would not have the force or the velocity or the direction it has without great attention to the bending of the bow.

If the bow is bent only slightly – if study is mere skimming, the shallow harvest of an ungrown crop – the result will be meager and ineffective. If the bow is bent but no true aim is taken – if study is merely the collection of curiosities and the preacher “a picker up of unconsidered trifles,” the arrow will fly nowhere in particular. If the bow is bent too much and the arrow pulled too far back – if study comes so to dominate the Preacher’s life that he is no better than a mere pedant, parading exotic trifles, hoping to impress the elite and the jaded – then the arrow will crack as it is drawn and splinter in midair, and he shall have lost both the opportunity and the arrow. His learning will have betrayed him. His bow will be a useless ornament. And if the Preacher does not study at all, but falls back on cute anecdotes; if he sets aside the Gospel to tell autobiographical tales; if he cannot resist the “narrative imperative,” then he might just as well try to hurl the arrow off by hand. His message will be weak. His preaching will fall close to home without ever hitting home. Neither bow nor arrow will serve as a weapon in the service of the Word.

Only when study and preaching combine in this right balance – the drawing of the bow, the shooting of the arrow – will the Preacher be doing something distinctively Dominican. He will combine learning with insight, and the truth will have the power, the austerity, the concentration of the arrow well-aimed, well-shot, and well-targeted. When the bow is bent just right and the arrow shot just right – when learning becomes the soul in the preached word – the Gospel will have found new life, even in ears that have grown accustomed to hearing scripture quoted and quoted and quoted and quoted and quoted.

That’s the great trick, and it needs constant prayer: to balance study and proclamation so that the two seem inseparable and the matter indistinguishable from the form. And as often as you hear preaching like that – the warmth of the evangelical suffusing the clarity of the doctrinal and the clarity of the doctrinal giving new solidity to the power of the evangelical – you may conclude either that the preacher is a Dominican or, at the very least, he ought to be one.

~ Fr. Nicholas Ingham, OP · Associate Professor of Philosophy · Providence College
Why does Bl. Fra Angelico so frequently depict Our Holy Father Dominic (1170–1221, feast – Aug. 8, patron of astronomers) at the foot of the Cross? What is it that binds Dominic to the Cross? His compassion.

St. Dominic had a great zeal for the conversion of sinners. He spent his life trying to bring heretical Albigensians back to the flock of the True Shepherd. After having traveled out of Osma where he was a Canon of St. Augustine, he saw how much people were starving for the truth. And, thus with his bishop’s permission, he remained in southern France seeking to lead them back to the sheepfold. One famous story during his travels with Bishop Diego involves St. Dominic staying up through the night conversing with a heretical inn keeper. By the end, the man was won back to the true faith.

St. Dominic was likewise known to weep for sinners. He would spend his nights in prayer weeping and crying out to the Lord to have mercy on sinners. He was so often heard beseeching the Lord,

“What will become of sinners?”

Throughout his life of traveling around Europe by foot, St. Dominic lived a life of mercy. He experienced the Lord’s own mercy in his life and sought to share that with those to whom he preached. He reconciled sinners to the Church; he aided pilgrims in need; he even raised the dead. By the time of his death, he was known to be a man of great compassion, seeking to draw sinners away from the wolves of heresy and back to the flock of Christ.

Through the intercession of Holy Father Dominic, may we too be given the grace to spend ourselves for the conversion of sinners and lead them back to the true fold of the Church.

O God, you were pleased to enlighten your church with the merits and teaching of the blessed Dominic, your confessor and our father; grant, at his intercession, that she may not be wanting in temporal help, and may always increase in spiritual growth. Through Christ our Lord.

---

Top: “Our Lady gives the Rosary to St Dominic,” Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome (photo by Fr. Lawrence Lew, OP).
Right: Detail from “Crucifixion with Mourners and Sts Dominic and Thomas Aquinas,” by Bl. Fra Angelico, OP, c. 1441–2, Cell 37, Convento di San Marco, Florence