

Lesson 4: St. Dominic

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Dominic was born in Spain, the youngest of four children. Before he was born, his mother had a dream in which she saw Dominic born under the appearance of a white and black dog, holding in his mouth a torch which illuminated the world. On the day of his baptism, his godmother beheld him, in a vision, with a brilliant star gleaming on his forehead.

He was educated by his uncle, a priest. Dominic became a priest and joined a religious community.

Dominic might have lived his whole life in that monastery if he had not gone with his bishop to northern Europe in 1204. As they traveled, Dominic saw that many people were following heretics, or false teachers.

Dominic saw that the Catholics sent by the pope to preach against the heresies lived in comfort. The people would not accept their teaching because their lives did not support what they taught. Dominic, his bishop, and three monks went from city to city preaching the truth of Christ, using the Bible. They went on foot, depending on others for food and a place to sleep. Soon people returned to the faith—not only because of what these preachers said, but because of how they lived.

In 1206, Dominic began an order of religious women. At one point, the bishop died, and the three monks left Dominic. To make matters worse, war broke out between the heretics and some Church members. Dominic's mission seemed to be failing. At this time, he was greatly supported by the prayers and encouragement of the Nuns.

When St. Dominic was laboring without success to convert souls back to the one true faith, Our Lady gave him a powerful weapon, the Angelic Salutation [the Angel Gabriel's greeting to the Virgin Mary at the Incarnation], and the pattern in which it should be prayed. If St. Dominic would preach her rosary and its meditations on the life of Christ, many souls would be converted from their error and saved through her intercession.

By 1215 a few men had joined Dominic in his work of preaching. He founded the Order of Preachers, better known as the Dominicans. Dominic urged his members to study and to pray. Then they would be ready to preach. Dominic realized that to be true witnesses of the Gospel, Dominicans could not be wealthy. His followers also deeply loved the Blessed Virgin Mary and spread devotion to her through the rosary.

Dominic's community was different from most because his friars traveled and preached instead of staying in their monastery. Dominic's order tried to reach the well-educated who were deceived by heresy, while the Franciscans went to the poor and uneducated.

While St. Dominic was on a preaching mission through northern Italy, he died, only six years after he had founded his community.

Dominic was able to draw the members of this community together and inspire them to love and forgive one another. He was outstanding for his love of truth, his clear thought, his organizing ability, and his sensitive, loving nature. For Dominic, love for people was part of his love for God.

These stories of St. Dominic's mother's vision have found a place in the coat of arms of the Order, on the shield of which is to be found the dog with his torch, and the shining star of the saint's baptismal day.

