St. Dominic

1170–1221

Feast Day:
August 8

Dominic de Guzmán was born in Spain, and studied at the University of Palencia. Even as a young man, he showed the selfless love of a Christian: he sold everything he owned to help people suffering from a famine, and even offered to sell himself to slavery to the Moors in order to ransom the freedom of others.

He was ordained a priest, and he went with his bishop to southern France to preach against the Albigensian heresy. This was a false teaching that claimed that everything we can see was created by a bad god. At the time, the most common way to disagreements was armed conflict. But Dominic knew true victory could not come from force. He recommended prayer as a weapon "instead of a sword," and told people to be "clothed with humility instead of fine raiment."

He put this advice into practice, choosing to live among the Albigenses, preaching the truths of the Catholic Faith whenever he had a chance. When asked what he'd do if he were cornered by his enemies, Dominic bravely answered, "I would tell them to kill me slowly and painfully, a little at a time, so that I might have a more glorious crown in Heaven."

Dominic organized a group of followers; they established a rule of life and system of education. In 1216, the Pope recognized a new Order of Preachers which would be known as the Dominicans. They spent their lives devoted to Christ through teaching, preaching, and prayer.

Dominic traveled through Italy, Spain, France, and Hungary, preaching the truth and starting more communities of Dominicans. He founded a college in Rome where people studied medicine, law, and theology. This college still exists and is now called the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas. His preaching and his order were successful because he used the wisdom he had from studying many books and applied it to the practical knowledge that people needed to lead good lives.