

THE NINE WAYS OF PRAYER
OF SAINT DOMINIC

ONGOING FORMATION
DOMINICAN LAITY

Submitted by:

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The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic

Opening Prayer - Liturgy of the Hours (according to time of day).
The prayer of the church is prayed as Community.

Objectives/Goals -

- To consider: Definitions of prayer
The necessity of prayer
Effects of prayer on Christian life
Qualities essential for prayer
Forms of prayer
- To consider: The recorded ways of prayer practiced by St. Dominic - their meanings and how they relate to the present day.
- To consider: The many ways of prayer we practice today.

Several sessions have been devoted to Prayer - Dominicans as People of Prayer, Lectio Divina and Liturgical and Personal Prayer.

In one of the previous sessions, it was stated if we want to get to know someone we must spend time with that person, time in which we share thoughts, hopes, feelings and ideas. So too, if we want to get to know God, we must spend time with Him and this is time in prayer. St Dominic spent almost all his time in prayer either talking to God or about Him.

To live out the Spirituality of the "Preacher", personal prayer is of the utmost importance. One must know God, Not Know of God. If you only know a theology of God and not the God of theology - you do not know God.

Definition of Prayer -

1. An Earnest Request - the act or practice of addressing a divinity especially in petition.
2. St. Dominic - prayer was the simple converse of the soul with God and it is easier and fuller when it is between friends.
3. Traditional Catholic - the raising of one's mind and heart to God; when we pray, we turn our minds and hearts to God, to adore Him and thank Him or ask favors or forgiveness of Him.

4. The verb to pray means literally to ask for something and yet prayer is much more than just asking God for something. Any definition of prayer must show that it is more than an activity of the intellect. A person's will, affections and activities are all to be lifted up to God bringing about an intimate personal relationship with Him.
5. St. John of Damascus described prayer as "the ascent of the mind to God, the request for fitting things from God."
6. St. Thomas Aquinas points out there is an element of petition in all prayer.
7. Broad definition of prayer - as "speaking with God", not a monologue but a dialogue, a conversation. Prayer covers meditation and various degrees of contemplation. By prayer, man responds to God who first spoke to us, especially through His unique Word made flesh.

Necessity of Prayer -

Prayer is necessary for Christian Life. Christ told the apostles "watch and pray". The Lord commended prayer as a constant activity. Any life lived in faith, hope and love will have to express itself to God in prayer.

Second Vatican Council - Prayer is presented as an identifying mark of the Church and of the genuine Christian, the success of the lay apostolate depends upon the laity's living union with Christ.

Effects of Prayer on Christian Life -

St. Thomas Aquinas said prayer brings about three effects:

- It merits graces from God
- It obtains benefits from God
- It brings a certain spiritual refreshment of the mind

Prayer has a transforming on one's life. One's whole life becomes penetrated by prayer. Prayer ultimately leads to a refashioning of oneself according to the plan of God. Prayer can be, at times, the solution to a difficult problem - prayer helps to change priorities. Prayer should be a special part of your day. True we should be praying always, there are times of the day that should be set aside for prayers.

Qualities Essential -

- Attention - with absolute inner sincerity
- Devotion - a total dedication to God
- Confidence - unshakable belief born of faith
- Perserverance - never give up

To Whom We Pray -

The Christian prays to one triune God. To God we give absolute worship and to Him we pray; "Have mercy on us."

To the Blessed Mother and to the Saints we show a different kind of honor or devotion and we ask them to "Pray for us."

Forms of Prayer -

- Individual - private
- Vocal - expressed in words "Our Father" etc.
- Spontaneous - usually a response to a situation
- Mental - absence of words - the intellect and will are truly attentive to God, Meditation and Contemplation
- Shared - private vocal - voiced aloud in a group
- Liturgical - prayer of the whole church

Purpose of Prayer -

- Adoration - to express God's excellence and man's absolute dependence
- Thanksgiving - to express gratitude for benefits received
- Petition - to express a request for something
- Contrition - to express sorrow for sin

All other kinds of prayer - Love, Praise, Abandonment to God's will, Atonement and Reparation can be included in one of the above. We also bargain with God. A friend in his prayers bargained with God to allow him time to tell his very ill mother that he loved her. (She already knew.)

Prayer is not a science or exercise but a turning of the whole being to God as we will see in Dominic's Nine Ways of Prayer.

encourage dialogue before going into The Nine Ways of Prayer; Ask questions such as - How many ways do we pray?

Ex: At mass, in private prayer, try to show that most of the ways that Dominic used are used by us today.

At Mass - we stand, we kneel, we sit, we raise our hands, etc.

In private prayer we might bury our head in our hands, we may clasp our hands, we may look to heaven.

A stained glass window of the crucifixion show three people at the foot of the cross - all praying in different ways.

The Blessed Mother standing looking upwards with hands clasped.

Mary Magdeline kneeling head buried in hands.

John standing arms apart raised, hands open.

Because of the increasing influence of Eastern Spiritualities on Western Christianity, there is a growing rediscovery of the importance of body in prayer. Our body is very much a part of us. We cannot do without it in any of our activities nor can we in prayer.

Saint Dominic used the body in all nine ways of prayer.

Dominicans are people of prayer and they have their way of prayer which they inherited from their founder - The Eucharist, The Divine Office, Meditative Study, Contemplative Action. Another feature of Dominican prayer is the use of the body; a few simple gestures toward the harmonization of body and spirit. Dominic bequeathed this to his Order. Dominicans should pray whole and his prayer should be varied and a personal response to God's varied and personal touch upon him. Methods from of old may be borrowed; he may institute new methods. He must move to his own personal meeting with God and to where Christ and his prayers are.

The Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic

1. BOWING humbly.

Before the altar as if Christ whom the altar signifies were really present and not just symbolically. He taught the brethren to do this whenever they passed a crucifix and also in honour of the whole Trinity whenever the "Glory be....." was said.

Bowing deeply was the beginning of St. Dominic's devotion.

bowing as usual practiced before the blessed Sacrament (reserved on altar, became normal in 16th C.) during the "Glory be.....". Those unable to kneel or genuflect substitute bowing.

2. PROSTRATE

St. Dominic would pray by throwing himself down flat on the ground and he could be heard saying "God be merciful to me a sinner." With love and reverence he would say, "It is I who have sinned and done unjustly." He would weep and groan and continue to pray.

He related to the brethren how the Three Kings fell down and worshipped when they found the child with Mary his mother. He told his brethren, we know for certain we have found him too, man and God. So come let us worship and fall down before God, let us weep before the God who made us.

He told the young men if you cannot weep for your own sins because you have none, weep for the sins of others.

Today: Not generally used. Used by those men in ordination to the diaconate and priesthood.

3. THE DISCIPLINE

St. Dominic used an iron chain. Three times every night he would take the discipline with his own hand, once for himself, once for sinners still in the world and once for those in torment in Purgatory.

The Primitive Constitutions of the Order, drawn up under Dominic himself, do not prescribe this practice; the discipline being mentioned only as a specific penance for certain faults, Humbert of Romans refers to it as a universal but unwritten custom of the Order.

Today known as Observance:

To this belongs all those things which make up Dominican Life and promote an orderly brotherhood by common life, celebration of Liturgy, private prayer, keeping of vows, study, apostolate and work.

Cloister	Silence	Habit	Self Denial
	Laity we give up	we do.	

4. GENUFLECTIONS

Standing before the altar, looking at the Crucifix St. Dominic would kneel down over and over again (maybe 100 times) praying silently at times and aloud at times.

He might remain kneeling for a long period of time. At times he appeared radiant with joy, tears were visible.

Today: We do kneel, for long periods of time. We do genuflect each time we pass the Tabernacle. We do not usually repeat this action over and over as St. Dominic was known to have done.

5. STANDING ERECT DOMINIC WOULD ASSUME THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS:

- a. raise hands at shoulder level as if listening
 - b. clasp hands
 - c. hold hands out before him as an open book
- He would do this with immense reverence and devotion as if he were reading in the actual presence of God. The brethren used to be greatly moved to see their father and master at such times; it was the best possible instructions in how to pray continuously and reverently.

Today: Used by many in prayers of petitions.

6. STANDING ERECT WITH HANDS AND ARMS STRETCHED OUT AS IN THE FORM OF A CROSS

St. Dominic used this type of prayer only when he knew by God's inspiration that some great miracle was going to happen by virtue of his prayer.

St. Dominic prayed this way:

- a. at St. Sixtus in Rome when the boy Napoleon was restored to life
- b. at Toulouse when the English pilgrims were saved from drowning.

Cruciform praying was traced to the first decades of the church's existence, probably had fallen out of general use.

Today: Not generally used.

7. STANDING ERECT STRETCHING HIS WHOLE BODY TOWARD HEAVEN, HANDS EITHER TOGETHER OR OPEN, HE COULD BE HEARD PRAYING

It was thought that grace increased in him and that he was caught up in rapture and that he won from God in prayer the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the Order he had founded so they might find it their joy to live in the spirit of the beatitudes.

Today: May be used by someone who is pleading.

8. SITTING

To read and pray after coming from the liturgical hours.

He would read or pray from a book first making the sign of the cross. He would read, listen, discuss, argue, laugh, weep, fix his gaze, bow his head and beat his chest. He would pass from reading to praying, from praying to meditation and from meditation to contemplation.

Today: Parts of this way of prayer are used by most of us.

9. TRAVELING

Dominic would go aside from his fellow travelers, either ahead, more often he would linger behind. He would walk by himself and pray. While praying he would seem to be brushing away flies - he used the sign of the cross. The brethren feel that in this kind of prayer Dominic reached the fullness of sacred scripture and the very heart of understanding God's words.

Today: Many pray while traveling by foot or car. I pray the Rosary while driving.

Encourage discussion, show how prayer is part of everything we do. We cannot hope to fulfill the purpose of the Order if we do not have a good prayer life.

One may close with a Dominican Blessing or Prayer.

A DOMINICAN BLESSING

May God the Father bless us,
May God the Son heal us,
May the Holy Spirit enlighten us
and give us eyes to see with
ears to hear with,
hands to do the work of God with,
feet to walk with,
and a mouth to preach the word
of salvation,
the angel of peace to watch over us
and lead us at last,
by our Lord's gift,
to the kingdom.

Amen.

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