

# *The Cloistered Dominican Nuns*



*Your life is hid with Christ in God (Col 3, 3):  
Lord, what will become of sinners?*



Our Blessed Father Saint Dominic  
Fresco of Blessed Fra Angelico

**T**he Dominican nuns were founded by Saint Dominic himself in 1206, nine years before their brothers, the Preachers. The first among them were young women converted from the Catharist heresy by the preaching of Blessed Dominic. The holy founder grouped



*One thing I have asked of the Lord:  
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. (Ps 26, 4)*

them together at the monastery of Prouilhe in Languedoc (France), and entrusted them with the task of assisting him in the defense of the truth through their cloistered life of prayer and renunciation. He knew all too well how vain is preaching if it is not made fruitful by immo-



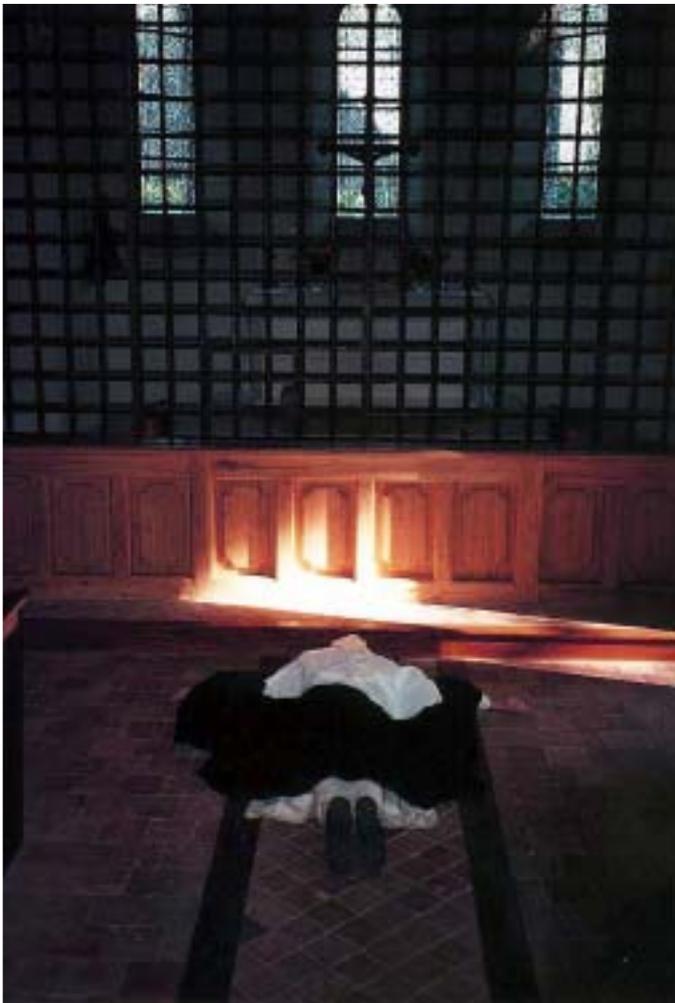
*My house shall be called the house of prayer. (Mt 21, 13)*



A look inside

lation and sacrifice. Who better than his first daughters heard and understood his cry faced with the distress of souls: "What will become of sinners?" Thus came into being the nuns of the Great Order – who, very early on, were called the "Preaching Sisters" – whose preaching is that of silence.

Like every cloistered nun, a daughter of Saint Dominic is dedicated to contemplation, which is a loving knowledge of God, and an anticipation in faith of the life of eternal union in heaven. But what distinguishes her from other contemplative religious is, on the one hand, **a very particular thirst for the salvation of souls** which gives to her prayer an



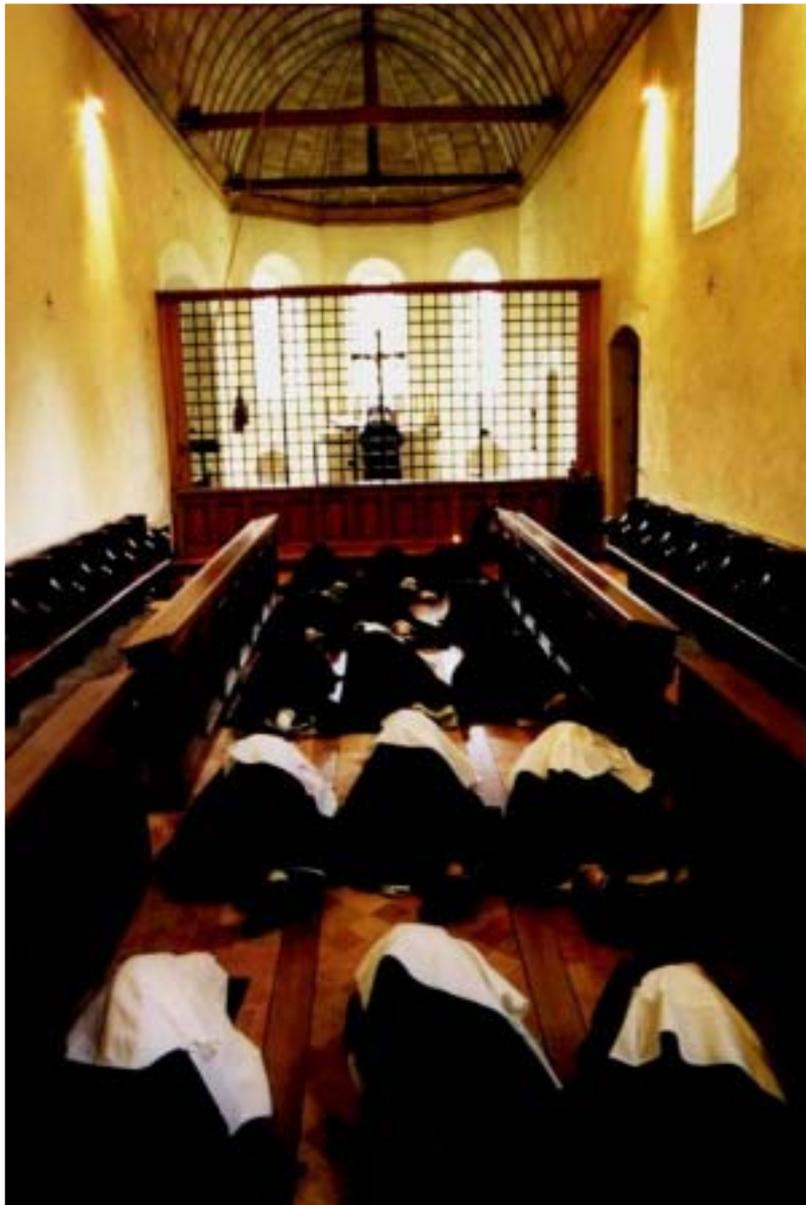
eminently apostolic character, and, on the other hand, the means she employs in order to fulfil her contemplative vocation: **choral recitation of the Divine Office, study, and the monastic observances.**

For the Dominican nun, the cloister is a sanctuary of prayerful compassion and immolation. In it she offers her life in order to render fruitful the apostolate of her brothers, the Preachers, of all the ministers of the Church, as well as that of the teaching religious and of all consecrated souls who labor to lead souls to God.

Centered around the treasure of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the "work" preeminently entrusted to the nuns by the Church is the **Divine Office**. They sing it every day using the most beautiful and ancient Gregorian

*Solemn profession usque ad mortem  
If you wilt be perfect,  
Go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor,  
And thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow me.  
(Mt 19, 21)*

melodies particular to their Order. In this way they unite themselves to the prayer of Our Lord Jesus Christ, offering Himself to the Father in the name of the whole Mystical Body, in a prayer of praise, adoration and reparation. Together with the Sacraments, the liturgy is the vital nourishment of the Sisters' life of silent prayer. Intercession for the souls in Purgatory is also a heritage dear to the Dominican Order: every week we offer the Office of the Dead and a *Requiem Mass* for them.



The *Confiteor* in *venia* (prostration) before Communion



*A continual commerce with God  
by prayer and reading.*  
(P. Cormier O.P., 1832-1916)

The Dominican soul has a passionate devotion for the Light and the Truth, and desires to contemplate them at their very source, which is the Blessed Trinity. In order to establish this theological contemplation on the unshakeable foundations of the faith, the nuns benefit from a daily period of **study**. Even those who are not "intellectuals" are able to find their sweet sustenance in Sacred Scripture with commentaries by the Fathers of the Church (the *lectio divina* of the ancients), Christian doctrine, theology from the school of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and spiritual reading, not to mention the weekly classes of their Dominican Fathers as well as their sermons.

When a soul spends all its time being nourished by and contemplating the Truth, it cannot help but suffer profoundly from the errors which sully and obscure it. Thus we grieve over the present crisis in Our Holy Mother the Church, which is attacked on all sides, from the outside but especially from within. Saint Pius X already remarked: "The danger today is nearly in the very entrails and veins of the Church." (*Pascendi*). The Second Vatican Council, as Archbishop Lefebvre often explained, unleashed devastating havoc in the Church. And so we desire to make reparation by the gift of our lives for this almost universal loss of the Catholic faith. Saint Catherine of Siena in her day lamented: "And what good will it do me to have life if Thy people are in death?"



Courses

During the rest of her time, the Dominican nun devotes herself to various types of manual or intellectual work. Besides the necessary tasks such as the sacristy, kitchen, and laundry, the religious life and the circumstances which accompany our relatively new foundation allow us to discover and learn all sorts of "trades": from finishing the buildings (plastering, painting) to gardening, from illumination to the creation or reparation of priestly vestments, from making rosaries to the minute corrections of translations and scripts. The nun has the grace to accomplish all this work in a spirit of prayer and thus she remains profoundly united to Our Lord, to whom she has offered all her being.



The Library



Embroidery of vestments





*May I spend for you all that I have received from you,  
without keeping anything for myself!*

*May I die to all for you!*

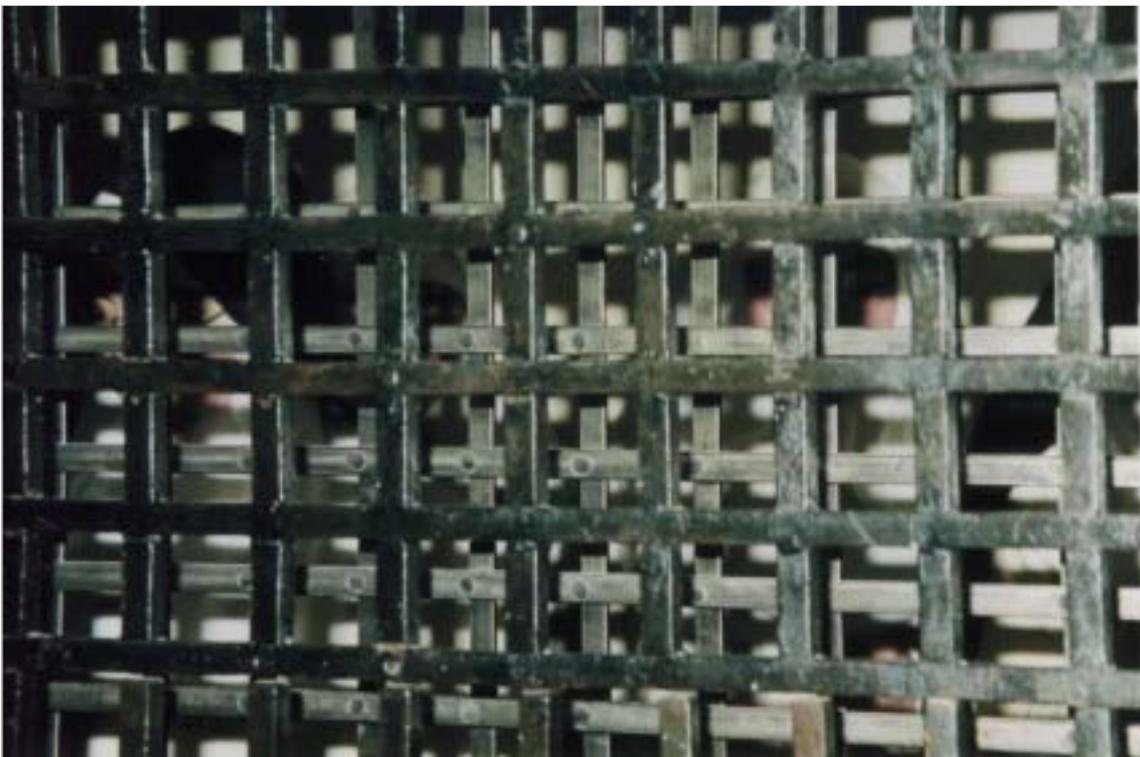
*May I gain souls:*

*Souls!*

*Souls, o my Lord, souls!*

(P. Lataste O.P., 1832-1869)

Finally, an immense family of saints and eight centuries of tradition have handed down to us the most excellent **monastic observances**. These observances — the practice of the vows, the cloister, the silence, the community life, the monastic fast and other penances of the Rule, as well as two hours of silent prayer each day — are at the service of charity and prepare the soul for the task of contemplation, by detaching it from the world and from itself.



*The contemplative life, by renouncing the world,  
finds its pleasure and its joy in living for God alone.*

(Saint Isidore)

The double grill of iron, desired by our Father Saint Dominic,  
sets the nun apart from the world,  
and shows that she belongs exclusively to God.



*May we say of these souls who always remain united to the Divine Will  
that they make, so to speak, a perpetual communion?*



*Immolate yourself for My tired, abandoned, and persecuted priesthood. Capture My divine mercy for My priests...*

*A monastery is not a paradise. It is a place where human beings live who are incomplete and thus « under construction »... but what makes the grandeur and the profound stability of these humans is that they remain in intimate contact with God.*





**From this spiritual structure a very balanced impression emerges:** solitude and fraternal life, silent prayer and the liturgical chant, intellectual study and manual work, austerity and joy.

*Walk before me, and be perfect!*

(Gen 17, 1)



*Have charity, guard humility, possess voluntary poverty!*

(The last testament of Our Bessed Father Dominic)

Fewer in number, there are also the lay nuns who are more particularly dedicated to manual work and charitable services. In this way they allow the choir nuns to undertake the Divine Office. Manual work is their means of union with God, and the recitation of the rosary in common takes the place of the Office for them. Their humble and simple vocation continues that of Saint Joseph at Nazareth, and is full of various activities, including the reception of guests, with whom they often share the joys, the pains, and the confidences. Prayer, reading, and different household tasks give their life a very balanced note. They are also responsible for the exterior service of the turn, being thus the precious guardians of our life hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3, 3).



Every day our lay nuns pray the entire rosary in common.

United under the watchful gaze of Our Lady, to whom Our Lord entrusted our Order,



In the evening, after Compline, the procession of the *Salve Regina* to our Mother of Mercy

and unceasingly praying the mysteries of the rosary, both choir and lay nuns live in the spirit of their father Saint Dominic which is full of joy and simplicity. “The religion of thy father Dominic,” God said to Saint Catherine of Siena, “is very broad, joyful, and fragrant; it is a garden of delights.” (The Dialogue)

After ten years passed close to the cradle of our Order

under the care of the teaching Dominicans of Fanjeaux, our foundation took root in July 1986 near the convent of the Dominican Fathers, in Avrillé, a few hundred yards from the Martyrs' Field where innumerable Catholics were massacred in hatred of the faith during the French Revolution.

His Grace, Archbishop Lefebvre, wrote to us then: "May God bless your foundation. This resurrection of the Orders and Congregations is very encouraging. It is the future of the Church by the attachment to the graces given by Our Lord in the past. From this comes the importance of fidelity to the past. (...) Today more than ever the Church needs holy men and women who shine in the darkness of the world."

In our abandon to Divine Providence (we live on alms alone), Saint Joseph has been



from the beginning a father of incomparable solicitude: year by year – with the exemplary support of our brothers in religion and the cooperation of admirable benefactors who are convinced of the primacy of the contemplative life – he helps us build his monastery in which we have recently completed the cloister. The church, of Romanesque inspiration, was consecrated to Saint Joseph in June 1997.

*O how have I loved thy law,  
O Lord!  
It is my meditation  
All the day.  
(Ps 118, 97)*

The nuns of different nationalities who make up our community truly live in a profound unity of heart and soul in God, according to the words of Saint Augustine. By their sisterly charity, their life of silence and poverty, and the supernatural gaiety which emanates from them, they rejoice at being able to follow in the footsteps of the first daughters of Saint Dominic, for the joy of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation of a great number of souls.



Recreation

After six months of postulancy, the future nun receives the holy habit along with her religious name. Two years of novitiate prepare her to pronounce, for three years, the single vow of obedience - an observance particular to our Order - for it includes those of poverty and chastity. At the end of this period, the nun reengages herself for another three years after which she offers herself to God “until death” by solemn vows and thus joins the community definitively.



A liturgical procession  
... in our park



*Isn't love's most profound need to repeat the beauties of the Beloved, His qualities and His charms, and to sing them to those capable of hearing and understanding?*

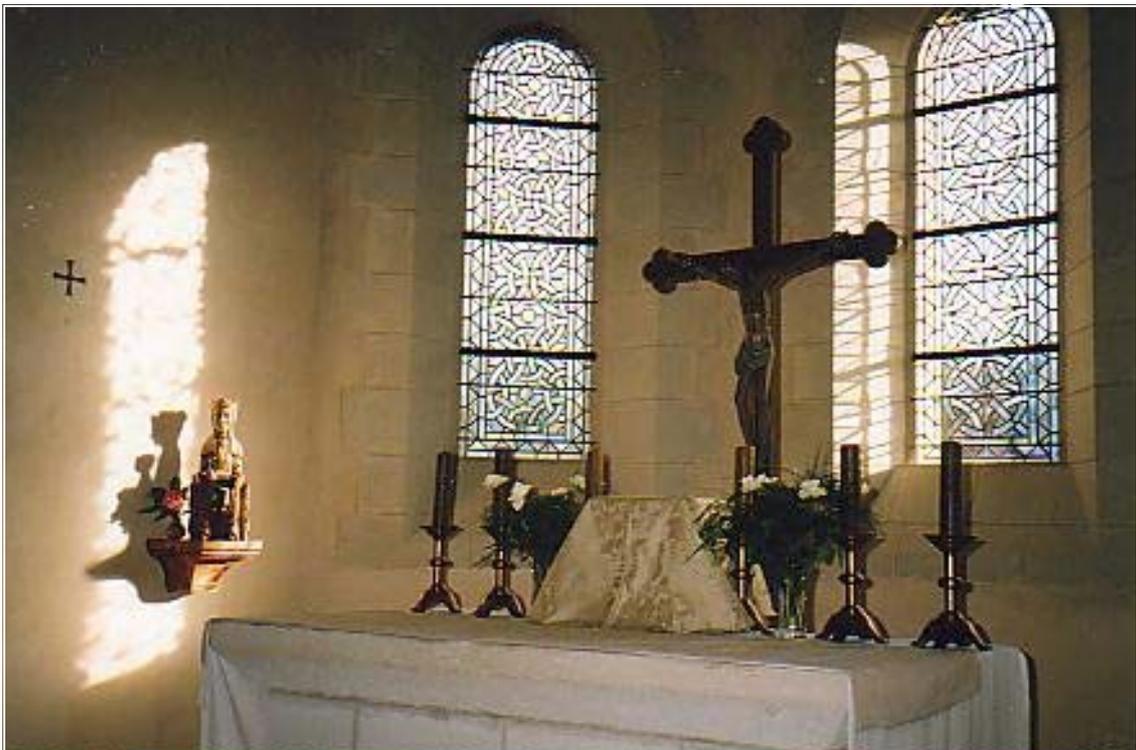
(A Dominican)



*O blessed and so blessed the soul who has merited to be drawn to God and by God.*  
(William of Saint-Thierry)

## Daily Schedule

5.20 a.m.:	Matins and Lauds
6.20:	Silent prayer
7.20:	Angelus, breakfast
7.40:	Sacred Sripture
8.15:	Prime
8.30:	Work
9.40:	Terce and Mass
11.00:	Personal study or classes
12.15:	Sext, Angelus, lunch
1.30 p.m.:	Recreation
2.00:	None
2.15:	Free time with spiritual reading
3.15:	Work
5.15:	Gregorian chant or Latin
6.00:	Vespers, Angelus
6.30:	Supper
7.15:	Compline, followed by an hour of silent prayer
9.00:	Bedtime



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*I have confided your Order to my Mother.*  
(Our Lord's words to our father Saint Dominic)