



# Why Dominican?

## Presentation Handout Candidacy Module 1:

### Symbols and Traditions of the Order of Preachers

Catholic artistic tradition assigns each saint particular symbols that denote the saint's martyrdom, miracles, or life's circumstances. These symbols serve to identify the saints and they aid us in recalling a saint's life and actions. They also become symbols of spiritual ideals. Please note the web sites that were used in sourcing information on Dominican symbols and traditions for this handout.

**Veritas** - Truth, is the motto of the Order of Preachers

"Veritas, truth, is the motto of the Order. It was this that first brought me to the Order. When I left school, I became a friend for the first time of people who were not Christians, and who tried to convince me that my views were crazy. And the insistent question for me became: 'Is my faith true? If it is, then it must be the most important thing that there is. And if it is not, then I ought to be honest and give it all up.' At this point, I remembered that there was an Order that had the motto 'Truth', and I decided that I wanted to join it. The problem was that I could not remember which Order it was. So I telephoned the Benedictines who had educated me and they told me it was the Dominicans." ~ fr. Timothy Radcliffe, O.P.

<http://laici.op.org/eng/library/mottoes-symbols-customs.php>

### To Contemplate and Give Others the Fruit of that Contemplation



St. Thomas gave rise to the motto of the Order - *contemplata aliis tradere* or to give it its fuller expression, *contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere*. Since the turn of the last century, that phrase has been often translated as "to contemplate and to give to others the fruits of contemplation." What we contemplate, as Dominicans, is Truth - with a capital T - Divine Truth. It is that Truth which we have encountered in contemplation that we hand on to others through our preaching and teaching and other ministry. William Hinnebusch pointed out long ago in this regard that the simply word "Truth" does not merely point

to the object of our collective vision and mission, but expresses exactly what we mean by "contemplation."

<http://domlife.org/beingdominican/spirituality/contemplationwoods.html>

[http://opne.org/traditions\\_&\\_symbols.htm](http://opne.org/traditions_&_symbols.htm)

## **To Praise, To Bless, To Preach**

### **Laudare - To Praise**

As a child is drawn through wonder to get to know something, the wonder of God manifest in all of creation draws us to know the cosmic song of praise.

Dominican life joins in the contemplative act of the universe in allowing God to draw us to the center of all life. It is a gift given. From the attentiveness to the One who loves us all into being, we are moved to be transparent witnesses to the fire of love that is God. Our very being becomes an act of praise.

### **Benedicere – To Bless**

In contrast to our cultural norms, our value lies not in what we do but in who we are. To be a blessing calls forth our recognition of the Divine Presence in our very being as it is. It is not a matter of doing but of existence in the presence of God who is Love.

To bless another is to place the presence of God into the light of the other's eyes. It is to pour forth from our hearts God so as to meet God in the other.

### **Praedicare – To Preach**

We are not graced by God for ourselves but for mission that the gift of love poured out on us might be shared in the Holy Preaching. When Dominic founded the Order over 800 years ago at Prouihle, it was the community of women, men, nuns, friars, and laity together that grounded the preaching in reality and truth.

[www.catholicdominicansisters.org/topraiseblesspreach.html](http://www.catholicdominicansisters.org/topraiseblesspreach.html)

**St .Dominic**, founder of the Dominican order, is pictured with symbols from his childhood. A dog bearing a torch refers to his mother's prenatal dream; a star or corona of light was said to have appeared on his forehead at his baptism. A loaf of bread he sometimes carries recalls a story of a miraculous supper, served to Dominic and his starving friars by angels.



[www.symboldictionary.net](http://www.symboldictionary.net)

**St. Dominic** - images of St. Dominic are very common in Latin countries. Usually you will be able to identify them easily by these attributes:

**Star on Forehead** - The Legend relates that when St. Dominic was a baby, his godmother saw a star on his forehead during the baptism, so another common attribute is a star either on the forehead or above the head.

**Rosary** - St. Dominic also carries a rosary which, a legend starting in the 15th century claimed, had been given him by the Virgin Mary.

**Lilies** - Yet another attribute is a lily or stalk of lilies, referring to St. Dominic's notable chastity .

**Book and Staff** - Finally, we often see St. Dominic with a book and a staff, a reference to a vision recounted in the Golden Legend in which Peter and Paul give him these items and urge him to take them into the world and preach. (In the sculpture below, the position of the outstretched right hand seems to suggest that originally it held a staff.)

A given image may use any combination of these six attributes, in addition to the saint's tonsure and black-and-white Dominican habit. Sometimes, when the context has established who the figure is, the habit and tonsure may be the only attributes.

**"Bury me under the feet of my brothers"** - spoken by St Dominic at his death. - His friars had taken Dominic to a local Benedictine abbey, where they hoped he might rest more comfortably. Since death was approaching, the Benedictine superior intimated that he would be very pleased to bury Dominic in the abbey; the holy man would be given a prominent grave that would accommodate the numerous pilgrims who could be expected to visit his final resting place. When he caught wind of this, however, Dominic ordered his friars to take him home to their own priory. There, after his death, they were to place his body in an unmarked grave beneath the flooring of the house. "Bury me under the feet of my brothers," he commanded them.

[http://opne.org/traditions\\_&\\_symbols.htm](http://opne.org/traditions_&_symbols.htm)

<http://seiyaku.com/customs/crosses/dominican.html>

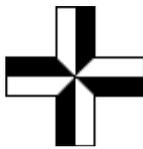


St. Dominic (1170 – 1221) founder of the Order of Preachers

### **Dominican Cross**



Order of Preachers (Dominican) Cross



Gyronny Cross

The **Dominican Cross** is a Gyronny Cross of the *Ordo Praedicatorum* (Order of Preachers). This order was created by St. Dominic to preach to the Cathars of southern France in the early 13th century. The French connection is seen in the Fleur de lis on the end of each cross arm.

The Gyronny Cross reflects the characteristic Dominican habit, largely unchanged for 800 years: a long white tunic, contrasting with a black cloak, cappa (shoulder cape) and/or scapular. The black and white represents truth over heresy. In addition, the white reflects the joy and the purity of Christ, and the black reminds servants of the Lord of their humility and obligation for penance. These black cloaks led to the term 'Blackfriars', as opposed to Whitefriars (Carmelites) or Greyfriars (Franciscans).

*"the travelling dog also relates to the Dominicans being itinerant preachers. They went from place to place preaching and then returned to their convents. Unlike most of the monastic orders, Dominicans do not make a vow of stability. The men can be assigned to any province in the world depending on need."*

Dogs are often seen to be faithful followers of their master. And there's a pun on the term 'Dominican': The Latin for 'Lord' is *Domini*, and 'dog' is *canes*, hence 'Dogs of the Lord'. There is, of course, no need to stretch the imagination to such an extent. The real meaning of the cross is quite clear.

<http://seiyaku.com/customs/crosses/dominican.html>