

C301_Sermon on the Feast of St. Dominic, extract

I say that the second condition of salt is that it preserves from corruption. It doesn't just cure and clean what is already corrupt, but it also preserves. This is clear because when a man wishes to preserve meat or fish, he puts salt on them, which restricts moistures etc. Although this is clear, nevertheless there is a scriptural authority, of Tobias, who caught a fish, of which he ate a part, "...and they took it with them in the way: the rest they salted as much as might serve them, till they came to Rages the city of the Medes," (Tob 6:6).

So too of blessed Dominic. For I find that this world ought to be corrupted and finished. Already it has been two hundred years and more have gone by. But the Virgin Mary, wishing still to preserve the world, put salt in it, namely Blessed Dominic, and saved the world. For in the stories of the saints and in the life of blessed Dominic also in two places we read of a vision which Blessed Dominic and Blessed Francis both witnessed. When they were in Rome working for the confirmation of their orders, about which the pope and cardinals were giving them difficulties over this such new thing, because they were seeking confirmation of a status which was both higher and lower.

High, because it was both a contemplative life of study, and active. By exercising, by celebrating and by preaching -- spiritual efforts, the family [of God] is satisfied with the word of God, and the ignorant are instructed in the faith etc. And the dead, that is sinners, are buried in the wounds of Christ. Again, the captives of the devil are redeemed. The army is activated, because the demons are conquered. O what an assembly, that is, by preaching sinners are made subject to Christ. Secondly so lowly, because despising affluence, because they are mendicants, therefore the pope was not inclined to confirm them, because they could repay nothing.

One night, when Blessed Dominic was in a certain church praying, and blessed Francis in another, Christ was seen by them with three lances, wishing to destroy the world. These saints were saying to themselves, "O shall there be there no holy one in heaven who can call back this wrath?" And suddenly the Virgin Mary came, like a mother coming quickly to snatch her child from devouring wolves, saying, "O son, you are now bearing lances, you who are accustomed to bearing nails in your hands for the world. Christ replied -- Saints Dominic and Francis were listening-- "My mother, how much more should I do, since I have showered the world with so many graces? I sent the patriarchs, and prophets, and they killed them; and finally I myself came etc. History tells, how up until now, I have not spared [graces]. These three lances, destructive of the world, are the three great tribulations about to come shortly over the world. First is the tribulation and persecution of the antichrist, which lance can be said that it pierces the whole world. Second shall be the conflagration of the world through fire; the whole world is burned, etc. Third is the judicial sentencing by Christ. Of these three lances, scripture testifies, allegorically in 2 Kgs 18 About Absalom, the traitor and rebel son of David. He was killed by three lances from Joab, the captain of the army. The story says, "So he [Joab] took three lances in his hand, and thrust them into the heart of Absalom," (2 Kgs 18:14).

Why did God wish that Absalom be killed by three lances, since one would have been sufficient, especially for a man suspended etc. It was a figure. For the son betraying God the Father is this whole world acting against the commandments of God, expelling their father, namely God from the world as much as possible. But the prince of the army, namely Christ kills them with three aforesaid lances. Even in the time of blessed Dominic the world ought to have been destroyed by Christ and corrupted, but the Virgin Mary put the salt, namely, Dominic, gaining a reprieve.

Think now here how the whole world is in reprieve, and not for a fixed time, but on condition. If converted, OK, otherwise I shall no longer spare them. Now let us see if the world in these [our] lands, is corrected.

I believe that never was there so much pomp and vanities, etc. as there are now, no such luxury, unless in the time of Noah. For the hotels [hospitia] are full, and even the villas are filled with prostitutes. Mix bad apples with the good, and shortly all are rotten. Same for avarice and usury, because they change its name, usury they call "contrived assessments," but when the intention is not buying or selling, but of borrowing, it is usury. Also not for a just price, whatever you receive beyond strong [ultra forte] is usury and damnation. Same too with simony in the clergy; they have all sacraments ultimately for sale in some way. Same for envy. If someone among religious has some excellence in discussion, or the science of preaching, others are envious. It is the same with clergy and laity about gluttony. Already you see that Lent is not observed, nor vigils of the apostles nor the rogation days observed etc. [quatuor temporum, literally the four times] You know about anger, already worse, it is against both God and reason. If someone does another injury, and they cannot get him, they kill his innocent friend contrary to divine law, because it is against divine and human judgment to kill an innocent person. About sloth. The world comes to this that all are reputed lazy, unless a businessmen, but if someone takes some time off for a work of God and of prayer they are called lazy, but in the evening [of time] it will be apparent who was lazy, and because the world is not corrected, moreover that it is worse, these religions, which were given to correct the world are already destroyed. So if blessed Dominic or Francis should come now, they would not recognize their religious orders.

Since therefore the world has not been corrected, what follows, but that in a short time it will be corrupted before the coming of the day of judgment? and so for the others objections respond. etc. Behold the salt, namely Blessed Dominic. On his account we praise God saying: Blessed be the redeemer of all, who providing for the salvation of mankind gave St. Dominic to the world.