

# BLACKFRIARS

VOL. XX

APRIL 1939

No. 229

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## H A B E M U S P A P A M

THE election of Cardinal Pacelli to the throne of St. Peter has been acclaimed with unprecedented sentiments of satisfaction in both the Catholic and non-Catholic world. The lonely white figure crossing the already darkened basilica of St. Peter to pray at the tomb of the Apostle after his great decision, is symbolic of the man who has been providentially prepared by God to reign over the Church as Pius XII. His unmistakable ability, combined with a saintliness of life, could not fail to impress all who saw him. Even when placed in high station and surrounded with the pomp of the papal court, nothing seemed to disturb or distract the calm tranquillity of his soul deeply occupied with God. His linguistic ability combined with a fiery apostolic zeal particularly fitted him as an eloquent preacher. His sermons may still be read in various languages, but there was one which reveals the inner spirit of wisdom and the ideal he set before himself, so that his own life became a living sermon. This masterpiece of oratory was a panegyric preached on the occasion of the seventh centenary of St. Dominic, in the great Dominican Church of the Minerva, Rome. His text was taken from St. Paul, 'Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine.'<sup>1</sup>

The theme of this discourse was the Word of God made man, Who by the voice of the preacher establishes a reconciliation between heaven and earth. St. Paul is presented as the great preacher of faith and truth, chosen by God to transmit His word received from Christ Himself. And St. Dominic of Guzman by so closely imitating St. Paul

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<sup>1</sup> II Timothy, iv, 2.

became a living image of Christ. So the light set aflame by Our Lord is by contact passed on from one preacher to another and issues forth into the one increasing divine light. Like St. Paul, Dominic became, as His legate and ambassador, a preacher of Christ Our Lord. His was a life's sermon, living and effectual, surpassing the spoken word.

Again and again the illustrious preacher came back to his own great ideal: 'Christ is our unique Master and the Announcer of the eternally good news; He is the Word Who preaches Himself, since He is truth itself and wisdom, and in preaching Himself He preaches also the Father Who sent Him.' And turning to the Friars assembled before him, he addressed them as 'the generous and worthy sons of so great a Patriarch,' and exhorted them to follow closely in his footsteps not less by word than by example.

On many occasions Pope Pius XII has shown his clear understanding and appreciation of the Dominican ideal, and it has been his desire to make that ideal his own. And that he has already done by showing himself on all occasions first and foremost a great priest, and an eloquent and humble preacher. Moreover, so closely did he wish to resemble St. Dominic, the image of Christ the Priest and Preacher, that his humility led him to become one of his adopted sons.

Not many months after that sermon preached at the Minerva, the then Cardinal Secretary of State of His Holiness Pope Pius XI, presented himself before the Master General of the Order of Preachers, that he might be enrolled as a brother in the Third Order of St. Dominic. It is set on record in the chronicle of the Order, that on December 26th, 1935, His Eminence Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli was received to the Dominican habit and made profession in the hands of the Master General. In memory of the two great Doctors of the Order, he assumed the title of Brother Thomas Albert. He is described as a man of high principle, and from his earliest years imbued with

the Dominican spirit. The ceremony was performed in the presence of all the Friars, whom afterwards he embraced fraternally in the kiss of peace.

That this illustrious son of St. Dominic was fully conscious of his membership in the Dominican family is evidenced by the following narrative.

On one privileged day during the General Chapter of the Order held in Rome, in 1938, 'the Fathers were honoured by the presence at lunch of His Eminence Cardinal Pacelli, Secretary of State of His Holiness. After the Master General had presented the various Diffinitors to the Cardinal as they sat at table, he then presented the latter to them in these words: 'I could present His Eminence to you under many and distinguished titles; but I prefer, and I am confident that His Eminence would prefer, that I present him to you as Brother Albert Thomas, Tertiary of the Order of St. Dominic.' This was received with a tremendous burst of applause, and the Cardinal himself beamed delightedly and nodded his agreement again and again. It is impossible to express the simplicity, the charm and the manifest saintliness of this truly great Prince of the Church. Neither the Monsignore and the Majordomo who accompanied him, nor the two detectives who waited to follow in his wake as he left, could modify the sense of fraternal kindness which His Eminence inspired and encouraged in the fathers.'<sup>2</sup>

Thus whilst we unite ourself in the universal rejoicing and pay our filial homage to Pope Pius XII as the Vicar of Christ, we cannot forget the close ties which will always unite us Dominicans to him as his humble brethren, who beseech his own Holy Father St. Dominic, and ours, that he may receive of that inextinguishable light enabling him to guide the Church as her most illustrious and universal preacher.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Dominican Annals*, November, 1938, p. 7.