

Preaching through Art - A Dominican Tradition

“Preaching and religious art are related in that each is concerned with communicating truth and beauty.”

Since its founding over eight hundred years ago, the Order of Preachers has understood artistic expression as an important and central way to preach the Gospel. Throughout its history, the order has given an honored place to many Dominican artists as well as those commissioned under the auspices of Dominican patronage, influence, and inspiration including Duccio, Botticelli, Raphael, Fra Angelico, da Vinci, Michelangelo, Matisse, Le Corbusier, and Marie-Alain Couturier, to name a few. These artists, along with scores of other Dominicans in every century, have sought to express truth and beauty through the revelatory power of the image. Indeed, art as the Holy Preaching enjoys a privileged place in our tradition.

- An excerpt from the Dominican Arts and Artists

Resources:

Dominican Arts and Artists - A ministry of the Southern Dominican Province, an online store of sorts with reproductions of contemporary Dominican artist's works.

(<http://dominicanartsandartists.com/>)

Dominican Institute of the Arts - A collaboration of sisters, friars, laity and associates of the Order of Preachers who are committed to preaching through the arts.

(<http://www.diartsop.org/index.html>)

An excerpt from *Creative Preaching through Art: The Dominican Contribution*, by Eleanor Carlo, T.O.P

It is a well-known fact that, among its members, the Order of Preachers has contributed some distinguished artists and architects. That it has also been responsible for recognizing and commissioning some of the greatest talents of all time is another fact with which art historians and art lovers are well-acquainted.

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Preaching and religious art are related in that each is concerned with communicating truth and beauty. Since Dominicans are called to preach the truth and beauty of the Catholic faith, not only by word and example, but in every possible way, it follows that if one happens to be an artist in the Dominican Family, he will endeavor to lead others to God through his art. As St. Catherine of Siena relates in her “Dialogues” there are many roads and ways which God uses through His Love to lead people to Him. Art is the way of beauty, a road which leads directly to Him, if we are so blessed as to be led along this road.

Because their inspiration comes from God, the preacher and the artist communicate with a sense of mission. Mission implies the giving of self — and the motive of mission is Love. Artists are ardent preachers who have been inspired by God and have been given gifts for interpreting the Gospel and spiritual reality. Fra Angelico and Fra Bartolomeo are among those who point out things we often fail to see without their help.

The greatest masterpieces are in reality sermons on canvas or stone. They are created to dispose us to prayer. They have the capacity to arouse us from an attitude of indifference to deepest compunction or to a sense of the sublime. We come away from them ennobled and enriched.

Dominican art is marked by the strong influence of St. Dominic's spirituality, the Order's theological emphasis of preaching truth and fighting heresy, as well as the contributions of such distinguished authorities as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Antoninus, and Savonarola.

[A PDF Guide of Sanctity Pictured: The Art of the Dominican and Franciscan Orders in Renaissance Italy, an exhibit at The First Center for Visual Arts, Nashville TN](#)

[Companion Book to Sanctity Pictured: The Art of the Dominican and Franciscan Orders in Renaissance Italy](#)

[The Dominicans and Franciscans and the Influence on Early Renaissance Art by Logan R. Helman](#)