

MAY 7// HERE FOLLOWETH THE LIFE OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

St. Thomas Aquinas, of the Order of the Friars Preachers [i.e., the Dominicans], was a right sovereign doctor, high and of noble lineage, which was born in the realm of Sicily, and tofore that he was born he was shewed by divine purveyance. For in those parts there was a holy man in work and in renomee [fame] which with many other hermits led a right holy life, and all the people had him in great reverence. This holy man, replenished of the Holy Ghost, came to the lady and mother of this holy child, not yet born, and with great joy said to her that she had conceived a son, and she supposed that she had not conceived. Then the holy man said to her: Lady, be thou glad, for thou shalt bring forth a child which shall be called Thomas, and shall have great name and renomee through all the world in science and in holy life, and he shall be of the Order of the Friars Preachers.

All the which things like as the holy hermit has said were accomplished in the name of the Saviour of the world, and to the glory of his glorious saint.

THOMAS'S BROTHERS OPPOSE HIS ENTRY INTO THE DOMINICAN ORDER

When the child was born he was called Thomas by his right name. He had the world and the vanity thereof in despite [contempt], and for to live in the more holy and clean life he entered into the Order of the Friars Preachers, and after he was drawn out thereof by his brethren and was closed up in a chamber in a tower two years. And because that by menaces ne fair words his brethren might not change his good purpose ne revoke it in no manner, they put in to his chamber a young damsel to the innocent child, for to subvert his good courage, and anon he took a brand of fire, and drove the damsel out of the chamber, which was come for to deceive him.

And after that, he put him in humble prayers, devoutly beseeching our Lord that by his benign grace he would always maintain his chastity. Anon as he had made his prayers two angels in marvellous habit appeared to him, saying that his prayer was heard of God, and they distrained him by the reins [kidneys], saying: Thomas, we be sent to thee by the commandment of God, and in his name we gird thee with the girdle of chastity, which shall never depart from thee, ne shall be broken.

The which gift was given to him of special grace, and was in him so fast and firm that he never after felt pricking of his flesh, and so kept him as long as he lived, as it appeared hereafter in his life. When he surmounted one of his adversaries with his ministers, his good mother considering and having mind of that which the good man had told to her, and shewed how he should be of the order of the friars preachers, and let him to be led to them peaceably, notwithstanding that tofore his brethren would have empeshed [prevented] him of the entering in to the order, and of his study.

For when he was returned in to the Order by consent of his good mother he began to study, which was as sweet to him as it is to the bee to make the honey, and like as of the bee the

honey is multiplied, right so in like wise was by this glorious doctor the honey of holy scripture. Whereof he made marvellous books in theology, logic, philosophy, natural and moral, upon the Evangiles [Gospels], in so much that the holy church throughout all the world of his holy science is replenished. And as he thus profited he was sent to Paris.

Then his brethren heard that he should depart, anon came after him, saying that it appertained not that a child of so great lineage as he was, should be in the order of mendicants ne of truants [vagabonds], and all to-rent his coat and cope, and would have taken him away from his good purpose.

HIS DEVOTION TO PRAYER AND SCHOLARSHIP

And when he was restored to the order to serve and give praising to our Lord, he set all his intent to study, in thinking on God when he was in contemplation that his thought was replenished with great joy. For many times were, as he was in a secret place and set all his intent in prayer, he was seen lifted up many times without aid of anything corporal. This then is well a holy doctor, for thus as he set not his thought in this world, he set all his heart and his thought toward God, and was enhanced as he that had not had no flesh ne bone, ne any weight.

We read that the blessed doctor desputed, read, or wrote, or argued, or did some other virtuous thing, and after when his prayer was past, anon he had in his mouth that which he should dispute or write as if he had tofore long studied in many books. All which things he shewed secretly to his fellow, named friar Reynold. To whom privily he shewed all his other secrets as long as he lived, and would that none other should know it, to the end that the vain glory of the world should not surprise him. For the science that he had was not of human study, but was of the administration divine by the prayers and service that he did to our Lord.

This holy man is then as Moses was, which was given to the daughter of Pharaoh. For like as he was taken out of the sea and saved and rendered unto the said daughter, right so the blessed doctor, notwithstanding that he was born of the great lineage of the Earl of Alquin was by the purveyance of God rendered to his mother holy church, and cast out of the flood of this world, and enhanced and nourished by the paps and mammels of the scripture of holy church. And like as Moses made many marvellous signs tofore the children of Israel, in like wise hath this blessed doctor and his science and blessed doctrine in destroying errors always preached verity and truth, as his holy life witnesseth.

As on a night this glorious doctor was in his orisons and prayers, the blessed apostles Peter and Paul appeared to him and induced him in holy scripture, and especially of the prophecy of prophets all entirely and holy. This then is a holy doctor to whom the chancellor of heaven and the doctor of divine scripture have opened the gate; and he that was ravished to heaven hath shewed to him the secret of all the verity. And thus this blessed doctor is taken from the world and made burgess of heaven he being yet in the earth.

On another time as he was in the convent of his order at Naples, being in the church in devout prayers he was enhanced and lifted up from the ground the height of two cubits and more. Then a friar that saw him was much abashed and amarvelled, and after, was heard a clear voice

of the image of the crucifix tofore whom the holy man was turned and made his prayer, the which voice said unto him: O Thomas, thou hast written of me, what reward wilt thou have for thy labour?

St. Thomas answered to him: Lord, I will none other reward but thyself.

For he himself wrote in his time and made the service and office of the precious sacrament of the altar. And for as much as on a time a question was moved among the scholars of Paris how the accidents might by right be without subject, and hereof made they doubt, and determined all wholly unto that which the glorious doctor should say, which thing he clearly shewed to them. And for so much as said is that the demand or question was moved of our Lord, it was given to understand of the end of his life which was nigh.

And as he was sent for of the Pope Gregory the tenth, he went by Champagne into the realm of Sicily, he began to be sick in such wise that he lost entirely his appetite. And in passing by the abbey called Fossenew of the order of the Cistercians, he was prayed greatly of the monks that it would please him to come to their abbey. His sickness began for to increase from day to day, and yet notwithstanding his malady, he ceased not to sow and spread his holy doctrine of divine scripture and sapience, and then he was prayed of the monks for to expound to them the canticles.

HIS DEATH

And that time it happed that in that monastery was seen a star three days tofore his death in manner of a sun, whereof they were abashed what it might signify, but certainly it signified that the holy man should depart out of this world within three days, and that appeared well, for when the holy man was dead the star was no more seen, and it was in the year of our Lord twelve hundred and fifty-four. And anon brother Reynold, his fellow, witnessed in truth, part saying and openly preaching in this wise; I, friar Reynold, have heard many times and now, the confession of this glorious doctor, and have always found him clean and net [clean] as a child of five years of age, for he never consented ne had will in mortal ne deadly sin.

And it is not to be forgotten what marvellous tokens were shewed when the blessed doctor should depart out of this world and of the entry of the perdurable felicity which was granted to him. For a friar, much devout, saw in the hour of his death the holy doctor reading in the school, and St. Paul entering into him. And St. Thomas demanded him if he had had good and true understanding in his epistles. Then St. Paul answered to him: Yea, as good as any creature living might have.

And above that St. Paul said to him: I will that thou come with me and I shall lead thee to a place where thou shalt have of all things more clear understanding.

And it seemed to the friar that St. Paul drew St. Thomas out of the school by his cope. Then this friar began to cry, saying: Help brethren, for friar Thomas is taken from us.

And by the voice of this friar the other friars awoke and demanded that friar what he had. Then he told to them and expounded this said vision, and the friars made inquisition of the truth, and found that it was so as the friar had said, for in the same hour that the friar had so cried, the holy doctor departed out of this world. And like as he had had in divine sapience and science a doctor and teacher, right so in his passing he had a leader unto the glory perdurable.

And long after that he was put in his sepulchre, the monks doubted [feared] that the holy corpse should have been taken away against their will, for the glorious doctor had commanded that his body should be borne to Naples, forasmuch as he was of that place. Wherefore the monks translated his body from one place to another, wherefore the prior of the abbey was in the night grievously reprov'd in a vision of St. Thomas. The prior, which doubted the judgment and sentence divine, commanded that the body of the Saint should be remised [put back] in the place that they had taken it from, and as soon as the sepulchre was opened there issued so great and sweet an odour that all the cloister was replenished therewith, and it seemed not that anybody had been buried there, but it seemed that there had been all manner of spices, which body they found all whole in all his members. The habit of his order, his cope, his scapulary and coat, were all without any evil corruption, and the odour of his precious body and his habit were sweet smelling by evident witnesses seven years after that he was translated, and the body was translated all whole.

Our blessed Lord hath honoured his blessed saint with many marvellous signs and miracles. By his benefits and merits he hath raised some from death and some from wicked spirits, and from the puissance of the fiend, and many from divers maladies, which have been brought to health by the grace of God and the merits of this glorious saint.

We read also that there was a friar much devout, called brother Albert, which on a day was much devoutly in prayers tofore the altar of the Virgin Mary, and two reverend persons, marvellously shining, appeared to him. That one of those twain was in the habit of a bishop and the other in the habit of friars preachers, which had a crown on his head beset with precious stones, and about his neck two collars, one of silver, the other of gold, and on his breast he had a great stone which of his brightness cast out many rays of clearness and illumined all the church, his cope that he had on was full of precious stones, his coat and scapulary were all shining of whiteness. When the friar saw this sight he marvelled much.

Then he, that was in the habit of a bishop, said to him: I am Austin, that am sent to thee to the end that I may show the glory of brother Thomas Aquinas which is in heaven in glory like unto me, but he precedeth me in the order of virginity, and I him in dignity pontifical.

Many other signs and miracles hath our Lord showed unto the honour and glory of his glorious saint, St. Thomas, whose merits be unto us aidant and helping. Amen.

The [iconography of St. Thomas Aquinas](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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