



Dominican Religious Order

The Dominican order is one of four great religious orders in the Roman Catholic Church. It was founded by St. Dominic in the year 1215. The members of the order include friars (priests), nuns, active sisters, and lay people. This order differed from others established earlier, in that it combined contemplative life with active ministry. Rather than living in monasteries, the Dominicans were mostly an army of priests organized under a master, ready to go and preach the faith, evangelizing wherever there was a need. St. Dominic originally came across heretics and confused believers, and thus saw the need to preach the true faith to them. The

Dominicans have been preaching the Gospel in every corner of the world for over 800 years. The simple objective for the order's mission is that every soul may come to know and love Jesus Christ. Every member belongs to the order, rather than to any specific house, and in this way members can be sent anywhere to preach, as needs arise.



St. Dominic was a Spanish priest from Osma and started establishing convents as early as 1206, but it wasn't until 1216 that Pope Innocent III gave his approval. St. Dominic adopted the rule of life for his order from St. Augustine. Prior to St. Dominic and his order, the preaching of the Gospel was a task only for bishops and their delegates. Members of the order were not just preachers, but they were also well-educated in theology at some of the best European universities of the time. The Dominican order gave the Church some of the greatest saints, such as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Martin de Porres. The order has over 5000 members, of which over 4000 are priests. The short abbreviation for the order is OP, which stands for the Order of Preachers (*Ordo Praedicatorum* in Latin). The motto of the order in Latin is *Laudare, benedicere, praedicare* which stands for "To praise, to bless, to preach." The Dominican order also gave us four popes, including St. Pius V.

St. Dominic is also known for receiving a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1208, when she gave him the rosary. It is thanks to the Dominicans and their preaching that today we have such a great devotion to the rosary throughout the world. St. Dominic performed countless miracles in his time, including controlling the weather and fire, performing many healings, and even resurrecting people. St. Dominic also multiplied bread, following the example of Our Lord in the gospel. Indeed, St. Dominic was a great saint, and there is not enough written about the great works of God that he performed.





Franciscan Religious Order

Franciscan order is a general term used to describe men and women who observe the rule of St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis is a saint from Italy who was born into a noble family, and initially lived a carefree life of a rich man because of his father's silk business. However, while still a young man, Francis realized that the riches of this world were not for him, and so he turned to poverty. He renounced his father's riches and became a beggar. In 1209 when Francis was 28 years old, he obtained permission from Pope Innocent III to establish a new religious order following his simple rule of life, based on the Bible. This rule was to follow Jesus Christ and walk in His footsteps, and it meant that no member of the order could own any possessions as an individual, nor could the religious community as a whole own property. The Franciscans could not accept money as payment for their work and often had to beg for food. The Franciscan order actually consists of three different orders, all of which all follow this rule to varying degrees. The first order Francis founded in 1209 is known as the Friars Minor. When Francis began preaching to ordinary people, he quickly gained 11 companions who followed him. He soon rewrote the rule for his order, and it was confirmed by Pope Honorius III in 1223; this is the Franciscan rule we know today. While St. Francis became a deacon, he was never ordained a priest. But the impact of his preaching was so tremendous, that within the first ten years the order gained over 5000 members.



Not long after this first Franciscan order was formed, St. Clare of Assisi established a second Franciscan order in 1212, known today as the Poor Clares. The rule followed by the Poor Clares differs from that of the first Franciscan order, and it was revised several times until it assumed its present form in 1253, when St. Clare died. The second order is made up of nuns living a life of total poverty.

In 1221 St. Francis also established a third order, known as the Brothers and Sisters of Penance; it is now known as the Third Order, or the tertiaries. This third order's purpose was for the lay people who were not able to leave their lives because of marriages and other worldly commitments, but who wanted to follow St. Francis. Over the centuries the first order went through many reforms, separations, branch-offs, and reunions. In 1525 the Franciscan Capuchins were founded by separating from the main order with permission, and later other branches were reunited into the Friars Minor by Pope Leo XIII.

We owe to the Franciscans several devotions that remain popular today, including the Stations of the Cross, the Angelus and the manger nativity scene, or crèche. The Franciscans have also produced numerous great saints of the Catholic Church, including St. Francis, St. Clare, St. Anthony, as well as St. Bonaventure, who is one of the Doctors of the Church—he was a cardinal and the minister general of the order in his time. The order has even given us five popes, including St. Pius X.

St. Francis performed numerous miracles, including talking to animals and healing with a touch. He received the wounds of Christ, known as the stigmata, toward the end of his life.

The Franciscan motto is *Pax et Bonum*, which means "Peace and Good." You will often see the abbreviation OFM (*Ordo Fratrum Minorum*) after the names of priests and brothers in the first Franciscan order.





Carmelite Religious Order

The Carmelites date back to the early 13th century, when a group of hermits from Europe formed a community on Mount Carmel in the Holy Land, in search of God. They helped pilgrims and crusaders while they took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. They wanted to follow the prophet Elias (Elijah), through whom Mount Carmel became famous from Biblical times. They also wanted to follow Jesus and Mary through their way of life. Today, Carmelites are a huge order with many branches that work in over fifty countries around the world.



Mount Carmel is considered a lush garden of Palestine and indeed, its name means garden. This is where the Prophet Elias defended the true faith in the God of Israel, by defeating all the false prophets of Baal through the performance of miracles. Because of his life as recorded in scripture, Elias is sometimes considered the founder of a monastic lifestyle.



The first hermits built a chapel at Mount Carmel dedicated to Our Lady, thus making her their patroness. Later, Mary became known under the title of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel due to this devotion to her. Not long after they settled at Mount Carmel, their numbers began growing and stability was needed, so the hermits turned to St. Albert, the Bishop of Jerusalem, who wrote their rule of life known as The Carmelite Rule. This rule received several approvals by various popes, and was finalized in 1247 by Pope Innocent IV, and the Carmelite Religious Order came into existence.

The Carmelite Order or family is made up of many branches today. The original friars who formed the order had to flee the Holy Land in 1235, when the crusaders lost control of the region. Most of them returned to their countries of origin in Europe, where they adapted their Rule to new circumstances; many became preachers similar to the Franciscans and Dominicans. The friars of this first branch of the order are both priests and lay brothers.

The order was opened to women in the mid-1400s, and some of the women who joined became cloistered nuns focused on prayer, while others became sisters with public ministries, including teaching and working with the poor. Monasteries where nuns and friars live in a secluded way are also known as Carmels. In addition to these two branches of the order, there are also lay members of the order, both married and single, who also follow the Carmelite Rule.

The Carmelite motto is *Zelo Zelatus Sum Pro Domino Deo Exercituum*, which means "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts." We often see the abbreviation *O. Carm.* next to a name, which indicates the person belongs to the Order of Carmelites.



The Carmelite Order gave us some great saints, including several Doctors of the Church, two of whom are women; these include St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Ávila, and St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Many forget that St. Simon Stock received the brown scapular from Our Lady in England around 1251. Today many of us wear the scapular for protection as a powerful sacramental; it is also associated with a fair number of miracles.





Jesuit Religious Order

The Society of Jesus is also known as the Jesuit Order, and was founded in Paris by St. Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish soldier. Originally he called the order "The Company of Jesus," by which he intended to point to Jesus as the True Leader, and to make the name indicate a soldier's spirit--this is not surprising because St. Ignatius had served in the military. When Pope Paul III approved the order in 1540, the name was Latinized into *Societas Jesu*. The term Jesuit had a different meaning originally and was not formally approved by St. Ignatius, but with time it was accepted by the order and remains to this day. The Jesuit order is an order of priests, and therefore has no women in it. The order's mission is to do apostolic work following their rule, and relying on alms for their financial support.



St. Ignatius did not plan to start a new order, but to simply imitate Christ. However, through services to the pope, it became clear that an order was to be formed. It took St. Ignatius a long time (probably over six years) to write down the rules for the order, and a few more years to formalize them. The order introduced many innovations that differentiated it from other religious orders, and it employed a much greater mobility and adaptability, which allowed its members to engage in a variety of ministries and missionary work. The order promoted great obedience, especially to the pope. From the very beginning the order sent its members to all parts of the world, including Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. By the time St. Ignatius died in 1556, more than 1000 Jesuits were doing missionary work all over Europe and other parts of the world. By the year 1749, there were well over 22,000 Jesuits in the order.

The headquarters of the Society of Jesus is in Rome, where its superior general resides. Members of the order profess poverty, chastity, and obedience. They have to accept orders to go anywhere they are directed to, regardless of conditions. Because of its military approach, the Jesuits are often referred to as "God's soldiers." Over the centuries Jesuits got into conflicts with secular governments, and eventually the order was suppressed by Pope Clement XIV in 1773; it was not reinstated until 1814.

The Jesuit order gave us many great saints, including St. Ignatius, but also St. Robert Bellarmine, who is a Doctor of the Church. St. Francis Xavier, one of the co-founders of the Jesuits, has an incorrupt body that has still not decomposed, some 600 years after his death. He was reported to be present in multiple places at the same time, and even raised people from the dead.

St. Stanislaus Kostka, a Polish youth, entered the Jesuit order at the age of 18. Twice he received Holy Communion from angels, and the Blessed Mother appeared to him and placed the Infant Jesus in his arms. There were many great saints in the Jesuit order, both young and old, many of whom gave their lives as they went on missions to foreign lands, bringing the gospel to pagan cultures.

The abbreviation for the Jesuit order is SJ and their motto in Latin is *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, which means "For the greater glory of God."

