

A SPIRITUAL TESTAMENT



EARLY in 1950 there was announced the death in Rome of the Very Reverend Father Cordovani, o.p., Master of the Sacred Palace and some time Regent of studies at the Collegio Angelico. For the benefit of some readers we may explain that the office of Master of the Sacred Palace was created for St Dominic's sons. In the days when that great Pope Innocent III was using all his endeavours to raise the standard of clerical education, a work for which he saw the Order proposed by St Dominic was so well adapted, one of his chief prescriptions was the establishment of schools of theology with a competent master in every episcopal court. As chief bishop of the Church the Pope himself set the example by establishing such a school in his own palace. Fr Michael Brown, o.p., has very recently been appointed to the office in succession to Fr Cordovani.

Among the papers left by him at his death was discovered a document which deserves to be widely known, composed a few years ago and confirmed by him on the eve of his death. He called it his last spiritual will and testament and it runs as follows:

'My testament as a Dominican is my religious profession. To this I have nothing to add, for whatever I may possess as Master of the Sacred Palace at the moment of my death will belong to the Roman Province of the Friars Preachers.

First, I wish to thank our Lord for all the graces he has given to me during my life; I thank him likewise for all the sufferings I have met with. Whatever good there is in me, my education for example, and whatever good I have been able to do as a religious, I owe it all to my Province. And I feel bound to declare that I feel myself to be a Dominican to the very core of my soul. If I could see my time over again, I declare that I would again become a Dominican.

But I also feel bound to ask pardon of the whole Order for having so poorly realised in myself the ideal we profess of the perfect life, for having so imperfectly corresponded to my religious vocation. I beg for my soul God's pardon and that he may apply to me the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. I beg

also the protection of the Blessed Virgin. Chief of all I beg for the grace of a good death along with final perseverance, and to obtain that I ask the fervent prayers of my brethren and of the many good souls that I have known.

I ask forgiveness of all those whom I have in any way offended, even though I am not conscious of ever having offended intentionally. For my part I forgive all who have ever done me harm, as our Lord bids us in the holy Gospel. And I ask pardon of the whole world for all the sins I have ever committed, for every infringement of the holy law of God of which I have been guilty during the whole of my life.

I call down the blessing of God on all those souls who by their virtue, by the good example they have shown me, by the beauty of their spiritual life and by their care of me (whether they are my brethren in the Order or not), have taught me how to love God and have given me a foretaste of heaven.

I intend to live and die in the bosom of the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, knowing that whosoever is not with the Church is not with Jesus Christ. She alone has divine authority to teach us revealed truth. She is the living school of holiness, and whatever defects there are in the Church spring from the human element which she contains. Moreover they are remedied in and by herself; they in no way compromise the value of her divine character. Souls are saved in the Church and by the Church.

I profess my gratitude towards the Sovereign Pontiff, happy to have been called by him to labour in this delicate and obscure office with which he has charged me. I acknowledge him to be the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

May Saint Dominic obtain for me the protection of the Blessed Virgin, so that through her patronage I may receive the pardon of Jesus my Saviour and eternal life. Amen.

Written with my own hand this eighth day of December in the year 1937.

On the 25th of November in the year 1949, almost on the eve of the Holy Year, I confirm what I have written above and I do so with greater earnestness than ever.'