

# ST. DOMINIC'S NINE WAYS OF PRAYER



## #1: THE BOW

In the Dominican Tradition, there are three forms of this gesture: the bow of the head, bow from the shoulders, and the bow from the waist. Bowing profoundly, Dominic humbled himself before the Christ who took on the humiliation of the cross. When bowing his head, he humbly considered the bowed head of the crucified Christ. The brothers would hear him praying: "I am not worthy that you should come under my roof." [Mt 8:8]

*How can bowing be intentional in your prayer?*



## #2: LAYING FACE DOWN WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARMS

Dominic laid face down with humility, outstretched on the floor. It was said that he assumed this posture when he was overtaken with great sorrow, he wept, and prayed for God's mercy for all. He would pray, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." [Luke 18:13]

*In what ways do you pray for God's mercy and how do you pray for God's mercy for others?*



## #3: REPENTANCE

Dominic prayed on his knees in penance to participate in the sufferings of the Lord, and he would scourge himself with an iron chain. The context of the time in which Dominic lived provides an understanding of what would now appear to be an unacceptable form of prayer. "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice!" [De Profundis, Psalm 130] "Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; ...wipe out my offenses." [Miserere, PS 51]

*How does humility, mercy and self-discipline serve you and others to overcome faults?*



## #4: GENUFLECTION

In awe of the crucified Christ, Dominic frequently genuflected: he would rise, then kneel, rise and then kneel again and again. In these postures, a change would come over him and he would feel great confidence in God's mercy toward himself, toward his brothers, toward all sinners.

He would sometimes be heard murmuring, "Unto you will I cry, O Lord: O my God, be not silent to me..." [Ps. 27:1] At other times, silently he would gaze at the crucifix, contemplating God's supreme love.

*What circumstances in your relationship with God, bring you to your knees?*



## #5: STANDING WITH HANDS HELD AS IF READING A BOOK

Dominic stood with his hands held before him as if reading from a book. It is said that he stood in such reverence as if to be reading the very presence of God. He would then for a time clasp his hands together; at other times he would raise his hands as the priest does at liturgy. It appeared as though Dominic stood as a prophet who first spoke with God, listened deeply to God's response and then lingered in silent thought of what had been revealed to him.

*How do you communicate with God and how do you contemplate what God has revealed to you?*



#### **#6: STANDING WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARMS, IN FORM OF A CROSS**

It is said that Dominic prayed in this way in anticipation of something great to come about through. This is also the way Dominic entreated God when a boy was raised to life in the Church of St. Sixtus in Rome, when Dominic himself was raised from the ground at the celebration of the Mass, and when a group of pilgrims was delivered from drowning in a river near Toulouse.

In this reverent supplication, Dominic seemingly knew God's intent to bring forth new life from the death of the cross. "I stretched forth my hands to thee... Hear me speedily, O Lord." (Ps. 142:1-7)

*Can you move beyond the discomfort to some kind of communion with God?*



#### **#7: HANDS RAISED ABOVE THE HEAD, POINTED UPWARD**

Raised above his head, Dominic's hands were either joined together or slightly parted as if to be receiving something from heaven. In this way, or prayer of supplication, Dominic acknowledged that all good gifts are from God. While in this posture, Dominic would pray, "Hear, O Lord, the voice of my supplication which I pray to thee, when I lift up my hands to thy holy temple." (Ps. 27:2)

*How would this way of prayer intensify your prayer experience and your relationship with God?*



#### **#8: REFLECTIVE READING**

Reflective reading might be described as Dominic in conversation with the Word. Dominic would go off to a quiet place to read a book. It was as though Dominic found God in some way speaking to him through the words he read. It is said that Dominic appeared to move from reading to prayer, from prayer to meditation, from meditation to contemplation.

*Recall a time when recently something you read moved you to prayer.*

*What would you require in order to bring your daily reading into conversation with God?*



#### **#9: PRAYING ON THE JOURNEY & WALKING IN SOLITUDE**

As Dominic and his companions traveled by foot from country to country, he would remove himself from their company and he would walk by himself. He meditated upon the scriptures and communed with the Holy Spirit. About his long solitary walk he would quote to his companions:

"I will lead her (my spouse) into the wilderness and I will speak to her ear." (Hosea 2:16) This was considered a preparation for being Holy Preaching.

*What are ways that helps you tune your heart to God?*

Based on:

<https://opcentral.org/resources/2014/02/17/the-nine-ways-of-prayer-of-st-dominic/>

<https://www.racinedominicans.org/about-us/prayer.cfm>

<http://www.stmaron.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Nine-ways-of-bodily-prayer.pdf>

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-explains-st-dominics-nine-ways-of-prayer>