

Dominicans

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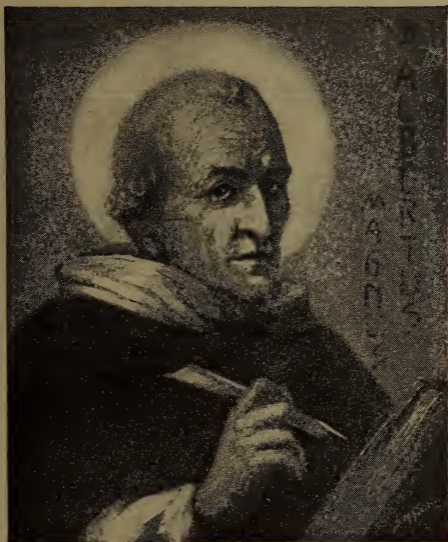
LIFE SKETCH AND NOVENA

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ST. ALBERT THE GREAT

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St. Albert the Great



ALBERT THE GREAT is unique in the annals of the world for having made the best synthesis of all knowledge which his predecessors had succeeded in gathering. He evaluated critically the discoveries of his intellectual forebears, and made observations of his own that served as hints to future explorers and investigators. Unlike most other intellectual leaders he was intimately bound up with the political affairs and movements of his day. And he did not stand off from the rich religious and ecclesiastical activity of the times. Despite these absorbing social and intellectual interests and activities he found time to lead an intensely spiritual life. Not for nothing has the world accorded him the title "Great" for what he did. The Church has canonized him for what he was. And lest we think falsely that his knowledge was not according to God, the Church has placed upon his head the aureole of her twenty-eighth Doctor.

Where the green gray Danube makes a broad bend in its course in the stretches of Upper Suabia, about thirty leagues from Augsburg, where the countryside is peopled with the elves and fairies of the exuberant German imagination, at Lauingen, a quiet little town, which soon was to win the rights and privileges of an imperial

city, Albert of Bolstadt was born in the last decade of the twelfth century, in 1193, following the oldest and most reliable chronologists. His father represented the authority of the Hohenstaufen in the locality, living in a stately palace on the market square of Lauingen and possessing at Bolstadt, about three leagues away, an imposing manor from which the family took its name. Thither Albert and his brother Henry, perhaps also two sisters, repaired in summer when the small gentry of the neighborhood and the affluent citizens betook themselves to nearby Faimingen, whose sandy beach had attracted the better classes since Roman days for sport and rest.

Fond of the Great Outdoors

In his Commentary on St. Luke Albert speaks of every phase of the moral instruction and upbringing of the young, and in lieu of any positive facts on these heads about himself, we might rightly consider these statements as refreshing reminiscences written down in the troubled days of his episcopacy when he fled for a few hours of silence to a villa on the Danube-Donaustauf—owned by the See of Ratisbon. But there are picturesque accounts of fishing and swimming exploits in his works on natural science which refer to these days. He tells us the course of the fishes; how by diving for them, as they lay lazily in the

small grottoes along the shore, one could catch them by hand; how harpoons are used in whaling and how the blubber is extracted from the whale. He describes the flight of birds; how he went hunting with falcons; how the falcons were sent on high and the birds brought down; how young birds fed a blind old swan and then hustled it off to safety; how barnacle geese are born; where eagles nest. In a word, the lad was fond of the great outdoors and moved about with eyes open for a thrill or a pretext for an expedition. From his father's ranger, from the huntsmen and fishermen of the environs, Albert gathered much lore about field, forest and river, and soon began testing out for himself the fantastic tales which had been retailed to him over the groaning table at Bolstadt or on winter evenings before the fir fires at Lauingen.

Early Studies

As a full grown young man he turned his face toward Padua to finish the studies which had been given him at home by his mother, the Chaplain of the manor and, perhaps, private tutors from one of the nearby monasteries. At Padua he followed the arts course, also law and medicine, evidently seeking to satisfy his own intellectual curiosity by such an almost all-embracing curriculum or else endeavoring to

find his intellectual level. He kept up his outdoor hikes for from his writings we know that he was familiar with some of the natural wonders of the locality; that he witnessed the asphyxiation of a man by the fumes of a closed over well; that he observed marvels in the marble that was being quarried for the completion of the Cathedral of Santa Juliana; that he noted the idiosyncrasies of an earthquake in 1222 at Venice. That these outdoor diversions broke down his academic morale would seem to follow from the taunt leveled at him later by Roger Bacon who said that he never took his degrees at Padua.

Perhaps this academic indifference was due to the preaching of Jordan of Saxony who, following his custom, came annually to preach a course of Advent sermons at Padua to which the University students flocked. Albert must have been glad to see a fellow countryman and, impressionable youth that he was, he must soon have fallen victim to the charm of Jordan's personality or else been impressed by his academic prestige, not only in Scriptural but also scientific knowledge, especially mathematics. Albert like so many of his fellow students had made up his mind to join this new kind of monks who were the first to make study an integral and essential part of their religious vocation. But his idea of the religious state was exalted and he hesi-

tated about joining. His uncle, who acted in some legal capacity for the Hohenstaufen at Padua, after the peace effected between them and the clergy a few years previously, seeing the perplexity of the lad had wrung from him a promise to keep away from the sermons of the Preaching Friars for the space of a year. On listening to one of the first sermons of Jordan after the expiration of the year Albert was surprised to hear an accurate description of his state of mind and heart. Seeing in this revelation of his own vacillation and hesitation a direct call from heaven he approached Jordan after the sermon—and soon put on the white woolen habit which, perhaps, the convent tailor, to satisfy the great crop of vocations following upon the sermons of the Master General, had sat up all night to make.

Ordination

In the solitude of the novitiate Albert was formed so thoroughly according to the authentic Dominican model that the distractions of a life-time and the honors which later came to him could never efface or tarnish his ideals. About the year 1233, he was ordained and sent back at once to his native country to teach in Cologne where a race of preachers and professors was being prepared to people the Dominican Convents which were increasing as if by magic. Evidently his teaching at Co-

logne on the Sentences of Peter Lombard must have been extraordinary. for before the year 1237 he acted as professor at Hildesheim, Freiburg, Ratisbon and Strasburg, for no other purpose than to put studies on a solid basis and to set a high standard for those who were forming the leaders of the future. And he displayed a deep interest in matters which most of the clergy overlooked but which he described in detail for the obvious purpose of arousing the intellectual curiosity of his students who by their scholastic eminence would have to establish solidly the prestige of their Order. Thus in Saxony he noted the passage of a comet and made some shrewd observations about it; he traveled on foot to the mines of Freiburg in Saxony and Goslar in Hanover, to examine the structure of stones and metals; at Cologne he made archæological excavations in the foundations of the Cathedral to which a sacristy was being added after a conflagration. At Paris he received from one of the two sons of Frederic III. of Castile, a pearl found in the belly of a fish and showing the form of ten serpents so clearly that one could detect the individual eyes. And about 1244 he saw the greatest marvel of the age,—the young Neapolitan Count, who, liberated after a year's captivity in his father's castle at San Giovanni because of his having put on the habit of a Friar, was

sent to Cologne to be preserved from the importunities and molestations of his enraged mother, the Countess Theodora. Thomas Aquinas and Albert soon became fast friends and their friendship is as idyllic as any of those historic Christian friendships—the two Gregorys at Athens, Francis of Assisi and Dominic Guzman at Rome, which Gozzuoli has immortalized—which prove so well that piety does not kill off humanity or the love of God force men to misprize the love of friends.

Successful Teacher

In 1245 Albert was sent to Paris to complete his teaching preparatory to taking his master's degree in the most famous theological school in Christendom. Once more he proved the superiority of his teaching, for students flocked to his chair in such goodly numbers as to arouse the envy and jealousy of the secular professors. Aside from his commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard and the Bible Albert sponsored the method of Aristotle which was under suspicion because of the faulty and vitiated versions which had been taken over by the Christian professors of the Occident from the Jewish and Moslem commentators in Spain. As Albert displayed what was considered undue interest in the natural sciences it was easy enough to trump up a case against him. But the Archbishop of

Paris trusted him enough to invite him to sit as one of the judges in the trial about the supposed abduction by the devil of the daughter of the Count of Schwanenberg and to determine the fate of the Talmud which the denizens of the Paris Ghetto were circulating stealthily. In 1248 Albert was formally received as the first German amongst the Paris doctors after a public examination which caused profound amazement and soon became legendary.

Mediator

Fresh from his triumph at Paris Albert took the road to Cologne late in 1248 where he became the director of studies in the new Dominican Studium, or University, decreed by the General Chapter at Paris of the preceding year. The prestige he gave this school and the academic spirit he breathed into it continued for one hundred and fifty years when the Dominican Studium became the University of Cologne. This functioned until the Reformation and was resurrected in our own day by Cardinals Schulte and Fischer. During the six years of his regency (1248-1254) Albert produced many of his written works; preached incessantly to the people; received and entertained King William of Holland, on January 6, 1249, in the convent conservatory abloom with flowers, which gave rise to a cycle of the most fantastic legends

which Goethe has borrowed from; obtained from Conrad of Hochstaden, Archbishop of Cologne, precious privileges for the people.

This latter concession whetted the desires of the people for more privileges and for a dozen years, on at least seven occasions, Albert used his good offices to preserve the balance of justice between liege lord and his liegemen. And almost every treaty during the days of Conrad and his successor, Engelbert of Falkenberg, reproduced almost verbatim the decisions which Albert had made in the tangled cases. So just were his decisions that he retained the confidence of both parties to the protracted quarrels who in turn came to him to enlist his services. Again he arbitrated between Cologne and Utrecht regarding commercial relations and imposts. He settled long standing and intricate quarrels between the Abbey of Heitersbach and William of Auvergne, between the Chapter of the Twelve Apostles at Cologne and the Cistercians of Bartscheid.

Alexander IV. intrusted him with the execution of a dispensation between John of Brandenburg and Jetta, daughter of Albert, Duke of Saxony; with supplying a successor for the see of Brandenburg; with executing marriage dispensations for Conrad von Hohenlohe and Berthelda his spouse. Up to the very end of his life Albert was called upon to iron out difficulties

for bishops and their peoples, for princes, parishes, and monasteries,—there are several hundred documents which show forth how unintermittently he acted as peacemaker and arbiter with no reward for himself save the good will of the people whom he loved passionately.

Provincial of German Province

In 1254 his brethren elected Albert Provincial of the German Province. This meant that he was obliged to visit over four hundred establishments, in which dwelt over one thousand friars, from the confines of Austria to the North Sea. He traveled by foot in his visitations establishing discipline everywhere; made a half dozen new foundations; established a community of Nuns at Paradise, near Soest; promoted study; wrote books along the way which he left behind as tokens of his affection and an inducement to the brethren to dispense the treasures of wisdom. In 1257 he went to the Chapter of Valenciennes where, with Thomas Aquinas, who had been his pupil for four years, and Peter of Tarentaise (later Pope Innocent V.), Buonhomo and Florence Hasdin he drew up the Curriculum of Studies for his Order—a pedagogical document of the highest importance in the history of education. He also went to Anagni to defend the Franciscans and Dominicans before Alexander IV.

against the assaults of William of St. Amour and a handful of Paris professors who resented the admittance of the Friars to the teaching body of the University. Incidentally he vindicated the monastic ideal against those who would have banished it from the Catholic economy. The Pope compelled him to remain at the Papal Court to lecture on the Gospel of St. John in the Curial University established for the time. And Albert searched the countryside for manuscripts, succeeding in the discovery of one of Aristotle's most important works. During this time he refuted the pantheism and monopsychism of Averroes thus striking a blow at those false teachers throughout subsequent ages, even our own, who by seeking to multiply man's personality degraded his dignity psychologically—the Theosophists, Vedantists and Freudians.

Bishop of Ratisbon

On the expressed command of Alexander IV. he submitted to consecration as Bishop of Ratisbon and immediately set about the reform of the clergy, the religious and people; the promotion of works of piety and beneficence; the removal of a heavy debt of five hundred pounds gold incurred through the negligence and worldly-mindedness of his predecessor. This zeal brought him not only the ill will of the nobles whose high-handedness Albert re-

proved and from whose frivolous amusements he remained away but also the opposition of the common people whose lukewarmness he sought to dispel by word and example. Because he traveled afoot, in the coarse shoes in usage amongst the Dominicans, he was referred to as the *Episcopus cum magnis sotularibus*, which might be rendered in the ribald language of our day as "Boots the Bishop." The fine fruits of his episcopacy, besides the reform of the diocese, are the seventy-eight Sermons of the Year, the fifty-nine prayers on the Sunday Gospels, the fifty-nine Sermons on the Saints and the thirty-two Sermons on the Eucharist. Did he have himself in mind when writing in his Commentary on St. Luke (composed during these troublous months as an escape from worry) that the true Dominican is like one of the dogs which licked the sores of Lazarus? Even, then, the Dominicans, by a play on their name, were called the "Dogs of the Lord" and never so much so as when by their preaching they brought healing to the souls of men filled with the ulcers of sin.

Spiritual Works

The Sunday prayers afford a wondrously attractive picture of Albert's piety and spiritual physiognomy where there is nothing bitter or subtle, nothing over-refined or condescending. They with his other

spiritual works played a great part in the foundation of German mysticism along the Rhine. His Eucharistic sermons put him in the front ranks of those who during the Christian ages have promoted a love of the Hidden Christ and are the finest products of their kind in that age, worthy to stand beside the dogmatic treatises of Thomas Aquinas. During these days he began collecting and setting in order his notes and reflections on the Blessed Virgin and his *Mariale* is the outpouring of his tender heart which cannot forget the highest theological speculation on the prerogatives of Mary.

Urban IV. accepted the resignation of Albert in May, 1252, but prevailed upon him to remain at the Papal Curia at Orvieto where he acted as advisor of the Pope. Having been Patriarch of Jerusalem Urban knew the sad plight of affairs in a land where Christian heroism had seemed for a short space to have put an end to Moslem abominations. Albert was sent to preach a Crusade in favor of the Holy Land as earlier in his career he had been sent by the Pope to Bohemia and, perhaps, Russia, to save the works and institutes of Christendom. During one month he received more than twenty rescripts from the Pope giving him the fullest power and attesting to the high hopes which the Pontiff had set on the Crusade. He enlisted the services of Bert-

hold of Ratisbon, the most famous preacher of German history, a Franciscan, beside whom Albert did not have to blush either for zeal or holiness or for eloquence.

Varied Activities

But the Pope soon died and the Christian Occident, troubled with worries closer home, had no ear for the cries coming from the moribund Kingdom of Jerusalem established by Godfrey de Bouillon. Albert, therefore, returned to his convent and for fourteen years (1263-1277) answered any call for help from the Brenner Pass to Anvers, and from Poland to Lyons. He taught intermittently in the schools of his own Order and hastened from one convent to another to breathe new life and enthusiasm into professors and students; on two occasions he met the committee which had been convened by the General to examine into the scheme of studies drawn up at Valenciennes; he fostered Sisterhoods, especially the many local communities, like the White Ladies of Cologne, who, because lacking internal organization, were falling into abuses—these he affiliated with the Dominican family; he ordained priests; consecrated altars and churches at the request of the Archbishop of Cologne; he acted in any capacity in settling quarrels between prelates and peoples; he preached wherever he went and spread about the

fragrance of his sanctity; he attended the Council of Lyons in 1274 and pleaded for Papal recognition in behalf of Rudolph of Hapsburg the father of that line of Kings which has done most for the people by favoring the works of religion; he finished many written works; retouched others; amplified others with extensive notes; he made large excerpts of the more popular parts of his books and circulated them as tracts or brochures amongst the people; he composed ardent prayers, filled with orthodox theology, for general circulation amongst the people in order to foster their piety; he encouraged art in the building of a sacristy to the Cologne Cathedral and made possible the erection of a choir for the recitation of the Divine Office adjoining the Dominican Church of the Holy Cross in Cologne, thus giving an impetus to Gothic architecture in the Rhineland; he carried on a large correspondence, especially with his old pupil, Ulric of Strasburg, now Provincial in Germany, encouraging every manner of good work or enterprise; as an old man he hastened from Cologne to Paris to defend the orthodoxy of his pupil, Thomas Aquinas, some of whose propositions Stephen Tempier, Archbishop of Paris and Chancellor of the University, in collusion with Richard Kilwardby of Canterbury had quite unwarrantedly singled out for censure and condemnation.

Death at Cologne

Then, effacing himself he awaited death at Cologne. This intervened at the twilight hour on November 15, 1280, as the brethren knelt around him, sitting in a huge wooden chair with a robe thrown over his lap, singing the "*Salve Regina*" to the accents of which every Dominican hopes to die. Miracles and visions soon made his tomb glorious necessitating three successive translations of the body. By popular acclaim he was called blessed. The Church ratified this cult in 1859 and in 1931 gave him the final honors of the altar and the doctorate.

One can scarcely imagine how a man whose time was so broken up by the most diversified kinds of work, found the opportunity to produce works which filled thirty-eight quarto volumes with at least ten more in manuscript form still unpublished. His profane works cover the entire field of natural science as envisaged by Aristotle—that is, ten books on logic, twenty-five treatises on the natural sciences, a commentary on the metaphysics of Aristotle (together with another smaller treatise), and another on the ethics and politics of Aristotle. His main concern in writing these books was to make the entire body of Aristotle's teaching understood in the West. Hence he was the first to comment on all

the known works of Aristotle. In many places he frankly and with design paraphrased the Stagirite since thus he could best give his genuine thought and brush away the oblique interpretation of the Jewish, Arab and Moslem commentators. He utilized every known author to fill out gaps in Aristotle or to make his meaning clearer. He added in the form of monographs or dissertations, observations of his own and these are highly interesting as showing the originality of his mind and his scientific temper.

The Natural Sciences

In the sections dealing with the natural sciences he described his own experiments or gave accounts of experiments conducted by trustworthy experimenters. From his own works we know that he established a school of experimentation although this scientific method of proceeding brought him the malodorous name of a magician. He set up an embryonic laboratory in which by his experiments he developed formulæ which are taken for granted today. In chemistry he discovered the law and first called it affinity; in botany he was the first since Theophrastus to proceed scientifically in discovering many peculiarities of plants, in giving them their German names and in classifying them for the first time in the modern fashion; in zoölogy he made a scien-

tific classification of animals, laid the foundations of comparative zoölogy, carried on anatomical operations, established the characteristics of animal psychology, gave German names to beasts and left behind descriptions of wild animals which have since disappeared; in mineralogy he made room for an explanation of the action of gases and vapors on stones and metals, knew how to transform metals by acids; he believed in the rotundity of the earth and the inhabitability of the antipodes; he wrote learnedly on climatology, the cause of tides, earthquakes, storms; in biology he anticipated the moderns, even to the matter of terminology, in what he had to say on temperament and the physical bases of character.

It is interesting to note that a copy of his works, owned and annotated by Columbus, is still preserved in Seville, thus establishing the thesis of Mandonnet that the popularity of Albert in Spanish Dominican schools prepared Diego Deza for a friendly reception of the great navigator's dreams which had been woven out of Albert's works. He wrote treatises on falconry, agriculture, hunting, weaving, precious stones, old age, in which he not only gathered the best which had been said by his predecessors but in which he always tested what he accepted, rejected or at least stated hypothetically what he could not try out

to his own satisfaction, and enlarged and expanded from his own observation and experimentation. He encouraged his pupil, Thomas Aquinas, to write on bridge building and aqueducts; Ulric of Strasburg on clock building as exemplified in the famous clock of the Twelve Apostles at Strasburg; John of Freiburg on the theory of the rain drop; Vincent of Beauvais and Thomas of Cantimpre on medicine and veterinary lore.

No wonder that for his wide knowledge he was called the *Doctor Universalis* and for his success in experimentation the *Doctor Expertus*. No wonder he was looked upon as an expert in black magic by people who had only the most rudimentary knowledge of the laws of nature and their manifold operation in the world around us. He mentions having written a treatise on mathematics but so far no trace of it has been discovered. He composed, as he himself states, works on music, geometry and astronomy but these do not appear in the two complete collections of his printed works—one in twenty-six folio volumes by Jammy and another in thirty-eight quarto volumes by Borgnet.

Philosophical Works

These works on the natural sciences have brought Albert the greatest renown as a *savant*. His own age—mad beyond any other for speculative knowledge—insisted

rather upon the worth and importance of his rational and dialectical works. He wrote two distinct courses of Rational Philosophy and here, as in all his philosophical investigations, introduced the authentic Aristotle into the Occidental world. Before Albert's age the Stagirite had been translated at various times, in part, with varying degrees of faithfulness to the original text. But what was supposed to be the original text had been defaced by the pantheistic commentators in Spain. Now Albert tells us that he had taken long voyages in search of the genuine original; had spared no pains or trouble to find the best translations as he himself had but the most rudimentary acquaintance with Greek. It is demonstrable that from Albert came the first suggestion of the new translation from Greek of Aristotle's text by William of Morbecke, once a Dominican Bishop of Corinth. If, as it is generally admitted, the actual demand upon William was made by Thomas Aquinas it is legitimate to infer or conclude that Thomas, who was never very much concerned about textual criticism, borrowed the idea from his master, Albert, with whom these questions were a kind of besetting mania. He was a born critic though the science had not as yet been founded with anything like genuinely workable rules and canons.

Critical Accuracy

It is really remarkable to find with what critical incisiveness Albert judged of texts and versions and variant readings. Having made sure of his texts, as far as the state of learning at the time permitted, Albert set resolutely to work paraphrasing in eleven books the logic of Aristotle and his metaphysics in thirteen books. Especially in the latter department did Albert improve immensely on Aristotle for, in some of the basic questions which the Stagirite scarcely touched upon, the great Latin Schoolman introduced argumentation drawn from the Fathers of the Church who were utilized here not so much for their authority as theologians as for their success in solving philosophical problems which had escaped the Greek. He rounded out and reënforced the Stagirite on such questions as God, the soul and its faculties, creation, Providence, the destiny of man—those basic questions which the world had been asking itself the more intently because Aristotle had brought them upon the intellectual horizon. In many of these questions Albert leaned heavily upon Plato whose outlook was more spiritual than that of Aristotle. Whilst Albert gave his first allegiance to Aristotle he did not hesitate to correct him with Plato or any other writer. This does away once and for all with the

taunt that Albert was a mere echo of the Stagirite—the “Ape of Aristotle” as some of the sour critics of the day called him.

In Albert’s treatment of Aristotle’s ethics, embracing as it does studies on economics and politics or statecraft, Albert abandoned the method of paraphrase and reproduced the thought of the Greek under topical heads deriving logically from the first principles and postulates. This is, perhaps, the most significant specimen of the philosophical speculation of Albert as it gave him a free hand to show his own native powers of reasoning. Besides it was grateful work for a practical-minded man like Albert whose every day almost was interrupted by the importunities of his friends seeking answers to actual questions concerning the conduct of life. Aquinas, who excelled in these questions in his Second Part of the *Summa*, attended these lectures of Albert taking down notes in his own crazy handwriting and intricate shorthand. And Albert revised the notes of his pupil carefully. More than any of his predecessors Albert gave a rational basis to ethical discussions—a distinct departure from the canonico-legalistic method of treatment which had long obtained in the Christian schools.

Albert contemplated writing two courses in theology but never finished either of them. What we do possess, however, is

sufficient to give us a fair idea of his theological competence. Just as he made Christian philosophy walk on its own legs by giving it Aristotle and the Fathers to lean upon, so he used the Aristotelian method in at least one of his courses of theology. Even in his Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard he began introducing the Aristotelian method of dependence upon the argument from reason to support the dogmas of the faith. For the benefit of the faithful he turned each of the propositions of the Lombard into a prayer in which the doctrine was explained in an unctuous manner. He was the only man in the Middle Ages to undertake a commentary of the four separate books and the Letters of the pseudo-Dionysius, one of the most abstruse and difficult books to unravel. In these commentaries Albert revealed the deep mystical bent of his mind, and laid the foundation for the mysticism of the *Gottesfreunde* of the Rhine.

Commentaries on Scripture

Closely allied with his strictly theological books are his commentaries on practically the entire Scriptures. His Commentary on St. John is the most grandiose exegetical product of the age whilst his Commentary on St. Luke affords really valuable historical sidelights on the times. He holds an intermediate place in Scriptural interpreta-

tion between Hugh of St. Cher, his friend and Thomas Aquinas, his pupil. He was one of the first to treat certain portions of a book of Scripture under one dogmatic head thus initiating a method which such modern Anglican exegetes as J. P. Lightfoot and B. F. Westcott see fit to use even in our own day of specialized Biblical exegesis.

Personal Character

From Albert's prodigious exterior activity and his marvelous intellectual energy under the most trying circumstances and conditions it appears clearly that he possessed the characteristics of his race: poise and reflectiveness, persevering energy and a quenchless assurance of success. Rather small of stature, with tremendous shoulders, distinguished especially for a mole on his right eyelid, quick of foot, swift in action he was the type of man to attract attention anywhere. He was sanguine in his outlook on life; a sworn enemy of extravagance and singularity, of pettiness and fussiness in any department of life and thought; jovial, communicative, courteous, chivalrous; direct of speech, sometimes almost brusque; honest to a fault; kindly and considerate; hating all sham, bluff, pretense, all subtlety of speech or conduct; quick to forgive; a hopeless optimist. He made friends everywhere and kept them al-

ways close to his heart. He was magnanimous, magnificent, munificent in every fiber of his being. He paints unconsciously a picture of himself when working over Aristotle's definition of magnanimity—the Greek's "*motus gravis*" becomes maturity in Albert's picture; the "*vox gravis*" becomes a sense of security in the guidance and findings of reason; the "*locutio stabilis*" is metamorphosed into the confidence that comes from a knowledge of possessing the truth.

This temperamental optimism Albert drew from his love of God and his tender devotion to the Humanity of Jesus, the Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin. In the shining light of his supernaturalized character his life takes on consistency; his universalist temper becomes easily explainable; his prodigious activity appears as the only outlet for the love which was in his heart. He was tender as a mother; helpful as a friend; simple as a child in the presence of his father. He was undoubtedly one of the greatest lights of the world but there was nothing cold about the light he cast about him: for it stole through his eyes and diffused itself through his hands and feet and bearing from a glowing heart within. Perhaps for all his intellectual greatness he was greatest for his genuine humanity paired with his undeniable sanctity.

Novena to St. Albert the Great

First Day

ST. ALBERT THE GREAT AND FAITH

The least sign of appreciation a man can show for a gift given him by a friend is to examine it carefully, explore its hidden beauties, seek to discover its unseen perfections. To do less than this would be the shabbiest exhibition of ingratitude and misprizement.

Now the greatest gift of God to man is faith. Man has no personal claim to it nor any right to expect it from the hand of God. It is a pure gift which the Almighty in His infinite wisdom bestows as He sees fit. The least a man can do, therefore, is to appreciate this ineffable gift at its proper worth, search into its latent beauties, investigate its many relations to his every day life.

That St. Albert appreciated the gift of faith is plain from the sustained interest he showed in it not only in preaching it to the unbeliever and seeking to strengthen it among believers but also in studying its every phase, aspect and implication. With the exception of St. Thomas Aquinas, his

favorite pupil, no theologian has ever studied so thoroughly and profoundly the mystery of faith, the nature of the act of faith with all it implies and connotes. If he devoted so much time to a study of the natural sciences that he won for himself the enviable distinction of being called the Great, it was for the sole purpose of defining clearly the limits of science, lest it impinge upon the supernatural domain of faith. Centuries ago Albert drew clearly the lines between revealed religion and the positive sciences, establishing the fact, so frequently denied in our own superficial age, that there is no conflict between them.

PRAYER

St. Albert, who didst appreciate so highly the unmerited gift of faith, as every act of thy life plainly shows, obtain for me from God the grace of setting proper value upon this pure bounty of God's goodness to me. Do thou help me to understand more fully the mysteries of my holy religion which, whilst I may never hope to fully explore, I can always more clearly grasp. Help me to begin in this world what I hope to carry to perfection in the world to come; namely, a constantly increasing insight into the loving condescensions of the heavenly Father towards the creatures of His hand. Make faith a living, vital and energizing thing in my everyday life so that, having

developed the theological virtue of faith given me in baptism. together with hope and charity, I may live more fully each day in the light of this same faith, performing my every act and conforming my every thought to the high demands which it makes upon my intellect and the ordering of my life. Do thou shield me from the blighting influence which a proud so-called science may exercise over my mind. Let me see in the discoveries of modern science only a partial revelation of that truth which is vouchsafed to me on God's own authority in the faith which I profess.

Second Day

ST. ALBERT AND ZEAL

Every upright man wishes to share with his less fortunate fellows the riches of truth he may possess. The worst miser is that man who deliberately shuts off from the ignorant or misinstructed the light shining unflinching in the heavens.

The light of faith was given man so that he might walk in it on the narrow road leading to his eternal home beyond the stars. For man has a supernatural destiny and in order to attain it must use supernatural means. These supernatural means come to man through faith and its practical translation into every day life. Our Savior bade His Apostles spread the Gospel

in every corner of the world. Every Catholic has the obligation in conscience of seeking to extend the kingdom of God by giving testimony through word and example to the truth he possesses.

St. Albert possessed an ardent zeal to spread the Gospel. Not only did he preach it constantly to believers for the purpose of strengthening their faith but on occasion he went to the pagans on the far-flung frontiers of Europe to spread a knowledge of Christ and His Church. He preached the Crusade so that thus the truth of Christ might be brought to the Mohammedans and unbelievers of the Orient. He multiplied books so as to arm the accredited teachers of the faith with weapons against its enemies. The great ambition of his life was to save souls and as many as he could.

PRAYER

St. Albert who like another St. Paul wert eaten up with zeal for spreading a knowledge of the truth, help me by thy intercession before the throne of God to give a reasonable account of the faith which I profess. By the example of thy holy life help me to provide the world with the best argument for the truth which I possess and which by its own intrinsic powers can compel others to enter the fold,—the perfect fulfilling of the law of Christ. Stir up within my mind an ardent thirst to know

more profoundly the mysteries of my religion so that I may be able to explain them to all who are seeking to come to a knowledge of Christ. Do not ever permit me to overlook an occasion of contributing my part to the spread of Christ's kingdom in this world. Obtain for me the courage to profess my faith fearlessly before men and the perseverance to translate its every law into daily practise so that men, seeing the manner of life I lead, may be impelled to investigate for themselves the truths which my Savior Jesus Christ made known to me and which are taught me without hesitation by the Church He established in this world. Give me something of thine own zeal for souls so that by laboring for the salvation of others I may make more certain my own election.

Third Day

ST. ALBERT AND THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

A wise man seeks to benefit others in a lasting way. He may on occasion afford temporary relief but, even in the act of assuaging pain or lightening poverty, he dreams of doing something which will have permanent effects. Parents strive after this world's goods in order to leave a rich inheritance to their children. The state makes wise laws in order to benefit future generations of citizens.

When Christ preached His Gospel and established His Church He had in mind not only the people of His own age but of all the ages to come. So that there might be no step-children in His family of the redeemed He left Himself truly and substantially to the world in the real presence of the Blessed Sacrament, so much so, indeed, that we of this late day and hour may feel that the Savior is as near to us as He was to the men and women who looked upon Him in the flesh during the days of His earthly sojourn. Truly our God is with us in all His humanity and divinity, His body and soul, in the august and adorable Sacrament of the Altar. He is not only our Friend whom we may visit and consult in times of stress, our Immaculate Lamb who is slain for us mystically in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the remission of our sins, but also our soul's Food in Holy Communion for the long journey to eternity.

The devotion of St. Albert to the Hidden Christ colored his whole life and all his actions. Not only did he seek to penetrate as far as the human mind can hope to do into the august Mystery of the Altar, but he spent long hours of the night, after days of weary toil, in the presence of the Unseen Guest. He celebrated Mass with the love of a seraph and preached the wonders of the Eucharist to the people with irresistible power. He contributed as much as any

man of his age to a spread of deep and fiery love for the Eucharistic Christ.

PRAYER

St. Albert, chosen friend of the Eucharistic Master, help me to understand in some poor way something of the love which impelled my Savior to leave Himself behind in the tabernacle, really and substantially, as a trusted Friend, a divine Victim and the supernatural Bread of my soul. Teach me to find delight in visiting the Eucharistic Christ in order to learn from Him practical lessons for the guidance of my every day life. Give me something of thine own ardor when receiving into my soul the Body of my Lord. Instruct my lips to preach always and everywhere the condescensions of a Savior who finds His delights in being with the children of men so that this dark, dank place of pilgrimage may, by reason of the Real Presence, be an image of that heavenly home where I shall see my Savior, no longer veiled, darkly, but face to face as He is.

Fourth Day

ST. ALBERT AND THE PASSION OF CHRIST

Even the hardest heart is moved by the sight of a sacrifice which does not spare the giver. Words of sympathy may be very welcome in moments of sorrow, but, on

consideration, they seem utterly cheap unless accompanied by acts of real compassion and commiseration. When a man empties himself in any way whatsoever for the sake of his fellows, then we may be certain that the most stubborn heart is on the point of submitting to what is noble, generous and magnanimous. Self-sacrifice reveals the best in man and elicits the finest qualities in the heart of the onlooker.

St. John tells us that Christ knew what was in the heart of man. With all his faults and propensities to evil there is always in the human heart a strain which, by the sight and exhibition of sacrifice, can be brought in accord with what is beautiful. It is for this reason that we read in the Holy Scriptures: "If I be lifted up I shall draw all things to myself." Jesus hanging on the Cross subdued the thief on His right, the Roman Centurion, the countless men and women who were struck by the regal generosity of His Passion. The Cross of Christ, if it be but allowed to exercise its appeal over the human heart, is irresistible.

Like every experienced teacher of souls St. Albert knew the power of the Cross and never ceased to preach its saving mercies. In the sermons he preached almost every day he never failed to speak of Christ's mercies as shown forth by that symbol of pardon which is the Cross. He

inculcated devotion to the Five Wounds of Our Lord and made men understand that, howsoever great and numerous their sins, there was abundance of redemption in the cleansing Blood of the Redeemer. When he preached to the pagans along the frontiers of Russia it was always the Cross which he held up to their eyes. Accustomed to all kinds of cruelties these people were subdued by the rigors to which Christ submitted for the weal of the world. Like another St. Paul, Albert preached Christ and Him crucified and thus won countless souls to the Church.

PRAYER

True lover of the Cross, St. Albert, do thou obtain for me the light to see in the saving wood a pledge of mercy and salvation. Help me to realize that by my own sins I have made my Savior undergo the bitterness of the Passion and the cruel agony of the death on the Cross. As thou wert filled with sorrow for thine own few sins by a study and contemplation of the Cross, so do thou help me to weep over my own countless offenses, like Mary Magdalen, in the shadow of the Cross. Bring my wandering feet to this fountain of pardon so that, through a true sorrow for my sins, I may merit fellowship with the redeemed. Let me never be ashamed of the

Cross nor fearful of preaching its saving mercies to a world which seeks to avoid it. As thou didst take up thy Cross daily in order to make thyself more conformable to thy crucified Master, so do thou help me to accept in good spirit the crosses which my heavenly Father sends me for my soul's purification. And do thou teach me after thy own example to perform voluntary penances and mortifications so that I may never get out of step with those followers of Christ who go after Him on the road of suffering to the mount of crucifixion.

Fifth Day

ST. ALBERT AND MARY

A mother's love is greater than any other love in this world. It counts no costs or labors and finds supreme delight in multiplying itself in countless ways to come to the assistance of those who owe their life to her generosity and sacrifice. The only man about whom the world has a right to despair is the unfortunate one who has killed off in his heart love for his mother. And, perhaps, the most touching thought at sight of such an ingrate is the assurance that, though the child erase from his mind the memory of the mother from whom he took life, she never forgets, she never repels, she never refuses to spend herself for her own.

In order to reach the human heart quickly and surely Our Savior came to us in a human way. Through the operation of the Holy Spirit He took flesh in the virginal breast of Our Lady and permitted her to exercise in His regard all the tenderest offices of real motherhood. His love for her was oceanic and no man can hope to measure it by earthly measures. Her love for Him staggers the imagination. And that we might feel the blessed influence of her tender regard for us, Jesus on the Cross handed us over to the tender keeping of His Mother in the person of His beloved disciple St. John. The love which Mary lavished on Jesus during the days of His earthly life she now pours upon us who in the words of St. Paul may look upon Him as our "elder brother." The virtuous Mary solicits by the example of those virtues which shine forth from her life. Those who have strayed far afield she brings back to Jesus by the tenderness, understanding and pity which she, as the Refuge of Sinners, never fails to manifest.

St. Albert's devotion to the Blessed Virgin was part and parcel of his spiritual life. From tenderest youth he looked upon her and treated her as his mother. He preached with special delight upon her glories and prerogatives and her countless claims on the hearts of the faithful. He wrote the finest book of his age on the various offices

of the Blessed Mother, both as regards Jesus and all those creatures who were redeemed by His love. And in the closing years of his life he spoke of her as a child who was homesick for a sight of a long lost mother. In the fervor of his love he broke forth in hymns and canticles in her honor as he, a broken man, shuffled up and down the long shady cloisters of the convent at Cologne. And as his soul was leaving the body the soft strains of the *Salve Regina* brought to his face the smile which made it winsome even in death.

PRAYER

St. Albert, faithful son of the heavenly Mother and powerful preacher of her beauty and glory, help me to appreciate the gift which Jesus gave me when, dying on the Cross, He handed over to me His Blessed Mother. And as thou didst manage to follow over the way which Jesus pointed out because of thy devotion to His Blessed Mother so do thou obtain for me the grace to practise my faith in everyday life, because thus I shall please her who brought into this world the Savior of the peoples. Help me to imitate the virtues of Mary, to sing her praises, to promote her glory, to instill into the hearts of all with whom I come in contact a deep devotion to the heavenly Queen. Let me comport

myself in life like a true child of Mary so that when the final hour comes I need not fear that my Blessed Mother will not be present to receive my soul in order to present it at the throne of her heavenly Son, Jesus Christ, my Lord and God.

Sixth Day

ST. ALBERT AND LOYALTY TO THE CHURCH

There is no more repugnant sight in this world than a rebel who turns against the country which has afforded him opportunities of all kinds. A traitor against his fellow man is considered the worst of all outcasts. A chronic critic who vents his lack of allegiance to his country goes without honor at home and abroad and is shunned by upright men everywhere.

Our Lord established a visible society in this world to continue His work until the end of time. He promised to abide with it forever, that it might echo His genuine thought and body forth His real spirit until the consummation of the world. He sent His Church the Holy Spirit who will never depart from her. The Church is nothing else than the continuation and extension of Jesus Christ down the centuries to the end of time. In a real but mystic manner every phase of His life is reënacted at some time or other, in one corner or other of the world, in the vicissitudes which

befall the interior and exterior life of the Church. Therefore, disloyalty to the Church is nothing else than frank disloyalty to Christ Himself.

St. Albert's love of the Church was manly and courageous. A forthright, straightforward man, St. Albert gave unconditional allegiance to the Church and her authorities. His loyalty prompted him to believe everything which the Church taught and also to think and feel with her in all questions outside the realm of dogma. The critical word was never on his lip nor the vacillating thought in his mind. As soon as Rome spoke Albert was satisfied. And with the native courage of his heart he sought in every possible way to promote the reign of the Church in the world. He preached the Crusade because the Pope saw in these holy wars a sublime undertaking for the spread of the faith. He preached to the pagans on the confines of Europe so that they might come under the benign rule of the Mother Church. In his written works he confounded vehemently those who in any way laid unholy hands upon the dogmas of religion or the pious practices fostered by the Church.

PRAYER

Loyal son of Holy Mother Church, St. Albert, do thou obtain for me a spirit of undivided allegiance to Rome. Help me to

stop my ears against those who criticize her words and mistrust her guidance. Obtain for me the light to understand my religion more profoundly so that I may love it more deeply. Make my heart strong against those who in their pride arrogate the right to find fault with the spiritual guides whom God has appointed over me. Make me feel that in this age of apostasy I can have no higher calling than to be like thee, a loyal and fearless champion of that truth which Christ left behind in His Church and which she has preserved unsoiled until this day and will maintain untarnished until the end of time. Make me believe in my Church and, like a dutiful and loyal child, share with her all her joys and sorrows.

Seventh Day

ST. ALBERT AND WORK

A man who believes that he has no work to do in this world must necessarily lead an aimless, pointless existence. He has no noble ambitions. He has nothing to call forth his latent talents. There is no zest in his life. There is nothing on which he can concentrate his powers. He is of all beings the most pitiful and despised. No wonder that so many of the idle rich, filled with ennui for their purposeless existence, commit suicide.

Our Savior made it very plain that, as a consequence of the sin of our first parents, every man must labor in the sweat of his own brow for an honest, decent living and existence. He Himself gave the example of a laborious life not only at Nazareth where He worked in a carpenter shop but during the three years of His Public Life when He spent His physical powers in preaching the Gospel both in the cities and in the back-water stretches of the land. At Nazareth He was never too tired to come to the assistance of St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother. During His Public Life He was never too fatigued to go out of His way to preach the truth or perform a miracle. He did not even disdain to steal hours from His sleep in order to instruct a single man, Nicodemus, in the great mysteries of the faith. And He left it as an inheritance to His followers that they must be up and doing during the hours of the day for the night cometh when no man can work. He made it abundantly plain that the glory of man's eternity would be conditioned by the amount of consecrated labor performed in life.

St. Albert realized well this universal law of labor. There was never an idle moment in his life. Not only did he teach long hours in the classroom, not only did he preach daily to the people, not only did he sit for hours at a time in the confes-

sional but he deprived himself of sleep in order to compose that vast library of books which are the admiration of the ages and are even yet a storehouse of valuable erudition and suggestive thought. When traveling by foot as Provincial of his Order, Papal Legate to Poland and Russia and Preacher of the Crusade, he recited the psalms when not actually engaged in spiritual conversation with those who gladly joined with him. At the age of eighty he undertook the composition of a second *Summa* of theology in which he meant to gather up his best thought for the benefit of coming generations. His death was the result of a life of ceaseless consecration to the tasks of his state of life.

PRAYER

St. Albert, thou tireless worker for the good of souls, do thou help me to realize that so long as I am about my daily tasks I am about my Father's business. The duties of my life were meant by a loving God to be the means of my spiritual purification. Even as Adam and Eve were forced to labor in the sweat of their brows as a medicinal remedy against the soul sickness brought about by the first sin in Eden, so I have been charged to apply myself to my daily tasks as a sure means of winning a heavenly crown. I can sanctify the mean-

est of my daily tasks by the good intention of doing all "whether I eat or drink or whatever else I do" for the glory of the Name of Jesus. Give me the courage to return to the monotony of my daily labors with the firm determination of always doing my best. Obtain for me the grace of perseverance so that I may carry through my tasks always for the glory of God, the good of my own soul and the salvation of those with whom I live. Let me understand that in work there lies the cure for the native sloth of my mind and heart and the sure remedy against the temptations of the devil. But do thou help me never to forget that in all I do I must seek to please my Lord and Master.

Eighth Day

ST. ALBERT AND SUFFERING

Man by nature involuntarily shrinks from suffering. He casts about on all sides for means and methods of avoiding or escaping it. If it overtake him he proves himself remarkably resourceful in finding means of relief and easement.

Our Divine Savior preached the Gospel of the Cross. He did not shirk labor with all its fatigue, its monotony and its exhaustion. Though He might have redeemed the world without undergoing the Passion He did embrace it eagerly not only

to save us from our sins but also to show Himself a model for us in the time of affliction. He did not complain during the Passion nor seek any way to escape its rigors. He did not refuse to accept His Cross but gladly embraced it. He did not recoil from the bitterness of death but drank the chalice to the dregs. And He laid it down as a fundamental principle that all who wish partnership with Him must take up their Cross daily and follow Him. He sent His Apostles to martyrdom. He condemns His saints to suffering. He invites His followers to share in His own pains. His Gospel is a gospel of hard sayings. His religion is a school of penance and mortification. He assured His followers that only by losing their life could they find it. A crossless Christian must ever fear that he will one day be a crownless Christian.

Gladly St. Albert submitted himself to the penitential laws of the Church. He observed the fasts and abstinences and took upon himself penances of his own. As a Dominican he embraced the rigors of the rule and added to them incessant labor for the good of souls. Although a sufferer for years from chronic rheumatism he crossed Europe in all directions on foot, even up to his eightieth year, for the sole purpose of making known the kingdom of God. Nowhere in all his works do we find the least

reference to this chronic affliction from which he suffered constantly. As Bishop of Ratisbon he endured silently the opposition of those against whose worldly ways he inveighed so vigorously. Because he was a man deeply acquainted with suffering he compassionated those whose bodies were upon the rack, seeking always to make them see in their afflictions a loving dispensation of Divine Providence bent on purifying their souls in the crucible of suffering.

PRAYER

True disciple of the crucified Master, St. Albert, do thou help me to understand that if I am to have a portion some day with Christ in heaven, I must needs submit myself in this present time to the refining influence of suffering borne for the love of God. Let the example of thy life teach me not to be too indulgent to the flesh lest thus I imperil my own soul. Give me the courage to rise superior to the effeminate appeals of my own unmortified body so that, even in the acme of affliction, I may not curtail the work of my own soul's sanctification and the sanctification of others. When my body is racked with pain and my spirit is troubled with worries, help me to keep my eyes fixed in the direction of Mount Calvary. Obtain for me the grace to crucify my flesh now, whether by volun-

tary mortifications or by a resigned acceptance of sufferings sent me, so that I may entertain the certain hope of rising glorious from the tomb to enjoy with thee in heaven the light of my Master's face.

Ninth Day

THE INTERCESSION OF ST. ALBERT

Real lovers can never be persuaded that death is the absolute end of all. It is only those who have criminally wasted life or misprized it who look for final extinction. Death does not separate hearts forever but binds them more closely together. It is for this reason that those who really love, hope one day to be reunited in the land where separation is unknown.

When Our Divine Savior was about to depart from this world He promised His own that He would be of more assistance to them in the eternal Session at the right hand of His heavenly Father than in His physical converse and communion with them. Because His love for the Apostles was so great Our Savior inspired them with the hope that quite unseen He would be with them always until the end of time, whispering in their ears words of consolation and courage, of light and love. So thoroughly convinced were the Apostles of the nearness of Jesus after His Ascension that, "rejoicing," they went back to Jeru-

salem and immediately began the work of converting the world. And if they succeeded in doing one thing it was to convince their converts that, though unseen by bodily eyes, Christ walked with men down the path of life until that turn in the road where all earthly substance should fall away and they see Him face to face.

During his lifetime St. Albert revealed an uncommon capacity for friendship. Those with whom he came in contact were easily admitted to the secret cell of his soul. For him to part with them would have been a trial beyond words had he not had the hope and assurance that death would not put them beyond the pale of his love and help. If he had assisted them by his preaching and teaching in this world then, surely, in the world to come he would minister to them by pleading for them before the throne of heaven. It is not strange, therefore, that almost immediately after his death Albert appeared in glory to at least four persons who have since been canonized by the Church. The power of his intercession was so great that, within a hundred years of his death, there was question of enrolling him amongst the saints because of the many miracles he had wrought. Down to our own days he has shown himself the friend of all those who invoke him. If he was the kind and compassionate father of souls during the days

of his earthly life then Albert has shown himself the friend of all those who call upon him for help. True friend of Jesus and Mary in life he can obtain almost anything from them now that he is in their blessed company in heaven.

PRAYER

St. Albert who dost not forget in the heavenly mansions those exiles in this world who call upon thee for help, look down with favorable eyes upon me who have recourse to thee in the many tests and trials of this life. During thy earthly life thou didst so order thy days that thou wert found worthy of being admitted into the divine presence. Now that thou dost enjoy such great power before the throne of God make intercession for me so that, through God's mercy, I may receive those things which will work for my eternal salvation. Since God does not despise thy prayer fill me with confidence in the power of thy intercession so that I may come to thee whenever I feel that I am not sufficient for myself in the great struggle to win a heavenly crown. Pray God for me that I may follow the example of thy life and thus be found worthy to enjoy with thee the beatific vision.

LITANY OF ST. ALBERT

(Sixteenth Century)

(For Private Use)

Lord, have mercy on us! *Christ, have mercy on us!*
Lord, have mercy on us! *Christ, hear us!*
Christ, graciously hear us!

God, the Father of Heaven, *have mercy on us!*
God, the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us!*

God, the Holy Ghost, *have mercy on us!*
Holy Trinity, one God, *have mercy on us!*

Holy Mary,
Holy Mother of God,
Holy Virgin of Virgins,
St. Albert,

Man after the heart of God,
Zealous client of Mary,
Worthy son of St. Dominic,
Mighty defender of the Faith,
Solid rock of hope,
Burning Seraphim of love,
Enlightened Cherubim of wisdom,
Valiant defender of justice,
Sure norm of prudence,
Bright mirror of temperance,
Unshakable pillar of fortitude,
Living model of humility,
Shining example of poverty,
Pure lily of chastity,
True model of obedience,
Precious vessel of all virtues,
Zealous imitator of the Apostles,
Bright gem of bishops,
Singular ornament of doctors,
Special glory of thy Order,
Golden treasure of thy Fatherland,
Certain protector of thy clients,
Albert the Great,
In anguish and in need,
In tribulation and in persecution,
In the hour of death,

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *spare us O Lord!*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *hear us, O Lord!*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *have mercy on us, O Lord!*

Christ, have mercy on us!

Lord, have mercy on us!

Pray for us St. Albert,

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ!

Pray for Us

PRAYER

O God who didst richly adorn St. Albert with Thy heavenly gifts and didst decorate him with all virtues, grant us, Thy servants, that we may follow in his footsteps, may persevere in Thy service until death and securely obtain an everlasting reward through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord. Amen.

