

The Master's address on the opening of a museum in Santa Sabina

What are we doing when we inaugurate a museum?

Perhaps we should first say what we do not want to do. To create a museum is certainly not a way in which to "preserve" a heritage as a memory of a time gone by. Neither is it a drive to hoard things; this would turn us into "guardians of the temple", enclosed and sheltered from the world along with our treasures.

To open a museum is rather a manner in which to present a heritage and share it with others. It is a gesture through which to share the beauty that humans can create when inspired by the mystery they contemplate. To open a museum is somewhat like opening history in order to tell each visitor that he is welcomed, that somehow it is his history, the history of a part of humanity, of a time in the human adventure, in which he could feel worthy of being one of the heirs.

A visit to this small museum gives us a chance to meet memories of the Dominican tradition. It is evident that each work is a testimony of a moment and a dimension of the history of art, and we can be proud to offer this to be admired by the visitors. In doing this we are presenting a part of our tradition. The life of our brothers and sisters, their spiritual adventure, the context in which they lived and which was that of their faith, their prayer and their preaching do not only invite our admiration but also the joy of being able, on our side, to leave our own imprint on the course of humanity. In this it belongs to a museum to be an act of tradition that connects the visitor to his capacity to play his part in his own time. This proposal is made when we challenge the capacity of human beings to be moved by beauty. What are we saying? That we trust that humans are capable of beauty, and we confess that it is one of the ways through which humans "participate" in life itself as given by God. To admire, in order to let them realize their own capacity for beauty and for interpreting beauty.

This museum has been thought out as part of a journey for a better knowledge of the life of the Order of Preachers. In a certain way, Dominic not having left us many writings and having even fairly quickly left the scene, we have to discover the diversity of this Order, the place each one can occupy in it, the joy with which each one can feel attracted by this marvelous task of evangelizing the Word of God in the world.

In fact, all the works that we can admire today are so many ways of saying something of the good news of the Gospel in the history of humanity. They are signs of the preaching of the friars and sisters of the Order, of the place of prayer and contemplation, the fading away of human words in order to give place to the mystery of the presence of the God of grace and mercy. Have you noticed the many expressions of gentleness that emanate from so many faces? It is as if one of the first witnesses that we can render to the grace of our God is the gentleness of His presence. And it is important for us to remember this, we who love to pray to Saint Dominic and to call him "preacher of grace"... During this Advent time, a time in which we wait for the coming of the Saviour, it is important to remember this. It is also important, at this time in the history of humankind in which gentleness and goodness are, maybe, the most unexpected preaching, and with God's grace, the most fruitful.

On inaugurating this museum, I have to thank Bro Francesco who is its promoter, and also all those women and men who helped us to make it a reality. I express my hope that the visitors to whom this tradition is offered will find in it the invitation to welcome the mystery which is presented under the sign of beauty, and that this would bring them joy!