

INTRODUCING A MARIANIST EDUCATOR

by **Fr. Paul Landolfi**

February is usually the month focused on Schools. It is College-Awareness month as High School seniors decide where they may be going next year. It is good for us this month to ask another Marianist Educator whose Cause for Sanctity has been introduced to the Church to help us.

Accompanying this introduction is a short biography of Rev. Domingo Laxzaro, SM, who was very active in the lives of our Spanish Martyrs, but who himself was not martyred. Nevertheless the more we learn about him, we find a Marianist Educator who fulfilled his vocation in a different way. We thank Bro. Michael Galvin for translating this excerpt on Fr. Doming Lazaro.

May Fr. Lazaro inspire all teachers and administrators to read the signs of the times, help others to discern what the Lord is speaking in our day, and then pray for us as we follow God's lead with generosity and love. Fr. Domingo did much good. He has much to teach us about networking; he is a good forerunner for Marianist sponsorship. His foresight and action preserved the Marianist charism in Spain, when the Revolution threatened to destroy all.

DOMINGO LÁZARO S.M.

By **Rev. Enrique Torres, SM**

translated by **Bro. Michael, Galvin, SM**

Marianist life in Spain has in Fr. Domingo Lázaro one of its most precious embodiments - as a teacher and educator, as a man of the Church, as a partner with other congregations dedicated to education, as a model of openness to the renewal of education and catechetics, as a witness to his faith, as a follower of Jesus, as a Marianist and as a person of profound spirituality. The sterling witness that he has left to us has prompted Spanish Marianists to promote the study of his character and his intellectual and spiritual legacy. At the same time they initiated ecclesiastical proceedings to petition the diocese to declare that Fr. Domingo is a model of saintliness. Subsequently, the cause in his behalf has been submitted in Rome.

The Marianist Province of Madrid has created a canonical foundation whose basic aim and objective is to guarantee the continuity of Marianist education and ensure the future academic and management roles of secondary schools. Having placed the foundation under the aegis of Domingo Lázaro, the Society of Mary has transferred the direction of eight educational centers to the "Fundación Educación Marianista Domingo Lázaro (FEMDL) - (The Domingo Lázaro Marianist Education Foundation). Recently, Colegio Santa Ana y San Rafael and the Colegio of our Marianist Sisters in Madrid were incorporated in the FEMDL. Father Domingo Lázaro abides then as a model in the FEMDL as its pedagogical and spiritual inspiration and reminds us of the rich heritage of so many committed religious and lay collaborators that have gone before us in Marianist education in Spain.

His tomb is in the Gothic church of Colegio Nuestra Señora del Pilar in Madrid. This place of prayer is redolent with his message and spirit. It was here that he was director of the school. It was from here that he administered the Province of Spain and from where he helped to found the "Federación de Amigos de la Enseñanza (FAE)" (Federation of Friends of Education).

Biography

Background and Studies (1877-1905)

Domingo Lázaro y Castro, fifth child of Julian and Petronila, was born in San Adrián de Juarros (Burgos), on May 10, 1877, into a modest family of farmers. His mother, a woman of profound Christian convictions, was the first shaper of his faith.

From early childhood he gave evidence of lively intelligence and a marked affinity for things spiritual. In 1889 he entered the Marianist Postulate that had just opened in Vitoria. In 1890 he was assigned to the Postulate at Pontacq in France. He made his novitiate in Moissac, France, where he professed his first vows in 1893. He then moved to Besançon for studies in the Scholasticate. Before returning to Spain in 1895, he was assigned to Cannes, where he served as a teacher and prefect. In those five years in France, he mastered French, the language in which he would always write his correspondence with the general superiors in Belgium.

He made final vows in Escoriaza, August 15, 1898. Eventually, he studied theology at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), where he was ordained a priest on August 5, 1906. His first assignment as a priest was as chaplain of Colegio Santa María in San Sebastian, Spain. A year later, he was appointed director of the school.

Fr. Domingo Appointed Provincial of Spain in 1916.

Promoter of the Marianist Mission (1916-1924)

The first Marianist community in Spain was established in 1887. A few years later, in 1895, an autonomous province was erected. From then until 1916 Provincials were appointed from among the French Marianists. Once the new province was consolidated and had established a reliable pattern of vocational recruitment, the General Administration discerned that the moment was ripe for the appointment of a Spanish Provincial. On August 15th of 1916 in Vitoria, the Superior General, Fr Joseph Hiss, installed the new Provincial of Spain, Fr. Domingo Lázaro, who was 39 at the time. After his installation the new Provincial took up residence in Madrid. Marianist presence in the capital had begun in 1904 with religious who were studying and living in student residences. The SM presence was consolidated in 1907 with the establishment of Colegio Nuestra Señora del Pilar. This school began its journey in a number of buildings scattered throughout the barrio of Salamanca. This was the situation when Domingo Lázaro began his service as Provincial.

In his first year in office, while he had to attend to the needs of the individual religious and communities of the Province, he had to oversee the arrangements for an event of singular importance: the centenary of the foundation of the Society of Mary in 1917. The full weight of preparation for the celebration fell upon his shoulders, since, because of the war in all of Europe at that time, no one from the General Administration could join them for the

festivities.

There was an urgent need to find and acquire a building with adequate space to meet the needs of the growing Colegio Nuestra Señora del Pilar. On the 25th of January, 1921, amid much hesitation and uncertainty and after difficult negotiations with the heirs of Doña María Diega Desmaissières y Sevillano, Duchess of Sevillano, Fr. Domingo signed the deed for the purchase of what was to be "the most beautiful colegio in Spain" on Calle Castelló, the new home of Colegio Nuestra Señora del Pilar. The neoGothic building became the base of the first Marianist educational complex in Madrid and also served as the seat of the Provincial Administration.

It also fell to Fr. Domingo to take the first steps along the arduous road to the establishment of the non-profit, educational foundation endowed by Doña Ana Bertodano, Marquise of Bárboles. It was only after years of legal wrangling that the Society of Mary was able to take charge of Colegio Santa Ana y San Rafael, which from the outset was an unambiguous commitment to the poorest and most needy of the city. In the same vein Domingo Lázaro promoted the establishment of educational centers in depressed and heavily populated areas - for example the school in Spain (at Villarrín de Campos-Zamora) and in Morocco (the school at Alcazarquivir). He also established in Ciudad Real a community at the service of the "Instituto Popular de la Concepción," which later would evolve into the Colegio Nuestra Señora del Prado. It was precisely because of his commitment to serve the most needy that he sent Brother Carlos Eraña to be the Director of the Instituto Popular. Brother Carlos was a key figure in the establishment of the Marianist mission in the region of la Mancha. He was a witness to the Faith and a model Marianist educator. Carlos Eraña was beatified by the Church in 1995 along with Brothers Jesús Hita y Fidel Fuidio, magnificent educators all three of them.

**Director of Colegio Nuestra Señora del Pilar of Madrid (1924-1935).
Educator in Things Christian and Things Human**

At the behest of his superiors, Fr. Domingo resigned as Provincial in 1924 in order to assume the direction of Colegio Nuestra Señora del Pilar in Madrid. Fr. Domingo was the first Spanish Director, succeeding Luis Heintz, the founder and first Director of the school. If as superior Fr. Domingo dedicated great attention to the community, he did likewise as Director of the school. He was greatly concerned about two complementary aspects of the enterprise: the religious and the human. Both dimensions can be symbolically integrated in the slogan that he had inscribed on the arch over the central staircase of the school:

“La verdad os hará libres,” (The truth shall make you free), a saying of Jesus (Jn 8:32), and a watchword that came to mark the spirit of the school. His insistent concern for truth and living a life of witness to truthfulness was such that some dubbed him “el padre verdades” (Father Truth).

As a Christian educator, he was concerned primarily with the religious formation of his students - in its twofold perspective: doctrinal and practical. With respect to the doctrinal aspect, he soon ascertained the absolute inadequacy of the religion textbooks in use on both the elementary and secondary levels of instruction. This depressing finding spurred his great initiative and creativity. On the primary level he introduced intuitive procedures, which facilitated a better understanding of the catechism. At the same time he provided the teachers with abundant literature on catechesis and catechetical pedagogy.

He was equally innovative in proposing change on the secondary level. Dissatisfied with the existing school religion textbooks, he acted in the purest Marianist tradition - he wrote his own textbook - “Doctrina y vida cristianas” - (Doctrine and Christian Life), a classic among textbooks, which proved to be a harbinger or bellwether of what, years later, would be produced by one of the most important religious publishing houses in Spain: Ediciones SM.

If we now move away from teaching materials to consider the practical dimension, we will note Fr. Domingo's considerable impact on the religious formation of the students: his presiding at school-wide events, his explaining the celebration of the Eucharist, his homilies at Sunday Mass, his being available for many hours in the confessional, etc.

He took special interest in the First Communion celebrations. Heeding the new directives of Pope Pius X, during the school year of 1910-11 at San Sebastian, he had already initiated new programs of early catechesis at San Sebastian. To promote the spirit and the practice of prayer he put together a “Manual of Prayers,” an idea that caught on later in Marianist schools and which blossomed into some very interesting innovations and adaptations in the '50's and 60's, e.g. “Hijos de Dios” - (Children of God).

Another important facet of Domingo Lázaro's apostolic activity was the attention he dedicated to La Congregación mariana (the Marian Sodality) which he organized at the school. (This group existed exclusively in secondary schools until 1950, when it took a leap in the adult world with the creation of the “Congregación Estado de María Inmaculada” (CEMI). (State Sodality of Mary Immaculate).

Here, as was his practice in working with groups, he was determined to guarantee the future of this group. Therefore, he developed a “Manual for

Members of the Sodality," which subsequently also served as a guidebook for other schools. We see clearly here that Fr. Domingo continuously expressed his ideas and followed up on his initiatives with written materials that would serve in the future as pedagogical and catechetical guides ...

Fr. Domingo did not limit the scope of his initiatives to his students, but rather he reached out to their families; he worked with alumni associations and was active in society at large. This was his practice early in San Sebastián and later in Madrid. His reputation as a wise scholar, competent educator and upright religious spread rapidly, with the result that many people of the city flocked to his educational and religious talks and conferences, which in turn stimulated great interest and served as a catalyst for what was to come.

Founder of the “Federación de Amigos de la Enseñanza (FAE)” (Federation of Friends of Education)
Educator and Churchman
(1930)

Upon arriving in Madrid, Fr. Domingo made contact with the leaders of other religious institutions and with outstanding figures in philosophy and Catholic education (the philosopher, Zubiri had been his pupil, and then later a personal friend). He was also very attentive to the new currents of philosophical thought and teaching practices in Spain at that time. He was particularly impressed with the forcefulness and dynamism of la Institución Libre de Enseñanza -ILE - (the Free Institution of Education) and its impact on the country through its Instituto Escuela (School Institute).

At that time there began a great movement among the forces of education in Spain. And while on the one hand he was well aware of the great differences between the ILE and the Catholic Church in many ideological and religious perspectives, he was nonetheless intrigued by the profoundly innovative nature of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza. Thinking as a pragmatic Spaniard ("en cristiano"), he wondered about the possibility of a project to renovate education in the context of Church: Could Colegio Nuestra Señora del Pilar, be a Catholic "Instituto"?

Through his interactions with thinkers, politicians and Catholic educators, Lázaro became aware of the enormous deficiencies of the official educational system and the problems and dangers looming over the religious schools. Moreover, he was cognizant of the lack of coordination among the teaching orders and lamented the fact that education was the principal concern of nobody:

not the government, not the politicians, not society, not even families. What could be done? He responded with his usual clairvoyance and practicality: a) fight for academic freedom. b) rouse the consciousness of Catholics in this regard, and c) create a cadre of Christian educators with their "special forces" for training teachers.

Thus arose the "*Federación de Amigos de la Enseñanza (FAE)*" (Federation of Friends of Education) which was designed to support educational initiatives, encourage more and better teacher preparation, and defend the interests and rights of Christian teaching. At the outset, Fr. Domingo was joined by Brother Antonio Martínez, S.M, a coach at Colegio del Pilar, who was another outstanding figure of Marianist education in Spain. Their initial strategy was executed immediately. They gathered the directors of the teaching institutions in order to coordinate efforts. Then, a call was made to gather the most committed Christian, lay teachers. It was no small task, nor an easy venture to bring together divergent views and preferences. There were moments of hesitation and temptation to abandon the project, which some deemed too complicated.

Fr. Domingo was commissioned to prepare a report and to present it together with the Jesuit, Enrique Herrera Oria (brother of Angel Herrera, Director of the publication "*The Debate*"), and the Primate, Don Pedro Segura. It was the month of March, 1930. Statutes were drafted and the first Board of Directors was selected. They named Pedro Poveda Chairperson of the FAE. It was he, together with another member of the FAE, Josefa Segovia, who founded the *Institución teresiana*. Fr. Poveda was a magnificent priest, dedicated to education, to the promotion of women's rights, and to social work for the improvement of the circumstances of the most poor. He was recently declared a saint of the Church,

In the beginning the FAE included all Catholic schools in Spain, not only the schools run by religious orders, but also diocesan institutions and schools administered by lay Christians as well. That was the original idea of Domingo Lázaro. So when years later when the FAE became the "*Federación de Religiosos de la Enseñanza (FERE)*," (Federation of Teaching Religious), one of Domingo Lázaro's dreams was in one sense consolidated, but in another it was diminished. The full realization of his dream came about in 2004 with the integration of FERE with "*Centros Católicos (CECA)*" (Catholic Schools Association).

Step by step and at a brisk pace, his ambitious projects were taking shape. The next step was the appearance, the magazine "*Atenas*" (April, 1930) offering information and guidance for teachers. Domingo Lázaro was soul and spirit of this publication.

Beginning in 1932, every year there were gatherings called "Semanas de Educación" (Education Weeks), with a view to closer cooperation and unity among religious schools and especially among teachers. Some Marianists were regular collaborators in these meetings.

In 1934 el "Instituto Pedagógico" (Pedagogical Institute) was established (later it became the "*Escuela superior de Educación*" (*School for Higher Education*), for teachers, inspectors and graduates.

Along with this, and in the same vein Fr. Domingo always provided effective assistance to Catholic associations of all kinds, particularly groups of parents, teachers, Catholic Action Youth Groups, etc..

The End of a Life and the Beginning of the Great Crisis in Spain (1931-1935)

Father Domingo's life came to its end at the beginning of one of the most dramatic periods in our contemporary history, i.e. from the advent of the Second Republic to the conclusion in the confrontation among Spaniards in the Spanish Civil War. The days that followed April 12, 1931 were progressively fraught with more and more anxiety and agitation. The Church and the world of education suffered enormously in the storm.

In the magazine, "Atenas," Father Domingo recorded and warned about the march of events: the adoption of the new Constitution (1931), the dissolution of the Society of Jesus (1932), and the shocking announcement of the "law of religious congregations" (1933) that suppressed all religious education. The situation was so strained as to convulse all Marianist life. It was a time of persecution arising from the process of forcible "secularization" of religious life and legal transformations in the status of all schools.

But while people were suffering and life's normal rhythms were deteriorating, we, like the early Christians, took measures which produced fruits: Spanish Marianists founded Marianist works in Argentina, and there was a concerted effort to improve educational training among the professed religious (university degrees, etc.).

As for Colegio Nuestra Señora del Pilar, which remained the Marianist heart in Madrid, every precaution was taken to avoid the serious threat of government confiscation which loomed over the coveted building. The loss of Pilar would mean the ruin of the Society of Mary in Spain. To deter the government seizure, the Marianists, with the advice of competent experts, requested a

declaration of bankruptcy in a court in Madrid on the grounds that they were unable to repay a debt of \$60,000.00 contracted with the Province of Cincinnati (cf. Fr. Yeske, Bro. Sauer and Bro. George Deck). The declaration was in fact a legal artifice designed to protect the Colegio from possible confiscation by the Spanish government.

During the school year of 1933-34, Don Mario González-Pons, a layman, was named the new Director of the school and several graduates were chosen to take charge of classes. The staff was made up of twelve laymen, and twenty-four Marianists, half of whom slept in buildings scattered across the city. Fr. Domingo continued to work on the projects of the FAE. He was just preparing the "Cuarta Semana de Educación" (the Fourth Week of Education), when he was stricken by influenza, which within several weeks deteriorated into pneumonia. Aware of its severity, he summoned the subdirector and the administrator to bring them up to date on matters dealing with the school and the administration of the province (work that had been assigned to him). From that moment on, he devoted himself completely to prayer. His confessor, Father Miguel Leibar, (who was later beatified as a martyr in 2007) organized turns for the brothers to pray with the patient.

On February 21, 1935 he received the anointing of the sick, and then wanted to renew his religious vows while reading the formula for religious profession: He addressed the entire community: "Be faithful to the spirit of your calling, and all of you together with your superiors and with God, go forward! No matter what happens, work under the protection of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother."

As evening fell on the 22nd, he was visited by his brother, Mariano, a priest, coming from Burgos. They embraced and bade each other good-bye. Shortly later Fr. Domingo breathed his last at about eight o'clock in the evening.

The next day all the students joined in the funeral procession through the chapel. Parents, alumni, friends and acquaintances came to the school, attracted by the fame that he enjoyed as a holy man and one of great integrity. Both the funeral celebration in the parish of La Concepción and the burial were a great tribute of affection and gratitude.

The Spanish Marianists saw in Fr. Domingo the embodiment of what it means to be a religious and spiritual father of the province. All looked upon him as a wise man and as a model of Christian virtues.

**And his friends and those who knew him
gave eloquent testimony to his qualities:**

"How many religious, priests and laymen have had the benefit of his influence! Without fail people would feel elevated to a better world on whose summits there seemed to dwell the precious soul of Fr. Lázaro, brilliant in thought, indefatigable in action and fervent in ministry, selfless, generous and self-sacrificing in the service of others." (Juan Zaragüeta, Professor of Pedagogy at the University of Madrid, alumnus of San Sebastián and a priest).

"Steeped in philosophy and theology, with his experience in education and international relations, he was exceptionally well acquainted with the problems of teaching, especially those of secondary school teaching, an area in which he was a world authority." (Rufino Blanco, Regent of the Escuela superior de Magisterio, and outstanding authority in pedagogical literature)

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The Timeliness of Domingo Lázaro Education For The Family And In The Family

The figure of Domingo Lázaro, Christian educator of youth, acquires renewed relevance in our times. Doña Carmen Gayarre, spiritual daughter of Fr. Domingo and pioneer in special education in Spain, declared in her deposition as part of the process of Beatification in behalf of Fr. Domingo:

"Domingo Lázaro is a true model for Christian educators in these times when educators are so necessary and in these moments that so much resemble the time in which he lived."

We will pause in these lines to reflect upon an insight that is central to Fr. Domingo's thinking: the importance of the family in education. It was a recurrent theme in his pedagogy already in the days when he was Director in San Sebastian. It was the topic to which he dedicated a series of articles which was published eleven years after his death in 1946 in the book "Forjando el Porvenir," (Forging the Future).

Here, we will cull a number of thoughts from this book:

"The family is by its very nature an educational center and it should be the principal center of education ... Parents, while recognizing their limitations and to some extent their insufficiency, are nonetheless 'more competent than others' ...Education that takes place "outside" the home is very incomplete and frequently it works 'at cross purposes with' the family."

"In The motherly approach there is the kernel of all pedagogy -a role animated by the spirit of self-sacrifice, enthusiasm and love. Educators that are truly faithful to and successful in their trade owe all of their art to mothers."

"Schools can do little in terms true education, and the little that can be done is accomplished only when the parents are educating their children at home and... at school, through their influence, through the lingering recollection of their love, and their dignity. The school can do little, very little, unless something of the shadow of the father is there, or unless something of the radiation of the warmth of a mother's heart glimmers thereThe family is the true center of education. When the school acts in concert with parents, the school can work miracles; without them the school can do almost nothing."

"It is necessary that parents be concerned about - I am tempted to say "obsessed with" - the education of their children. This means that they must repeat to each other often: '... the education of our children is our primary professional duty, our essential personal duty and the fundamental and inescapable dimension of our parenthood.' On this point there is no room for indifference. Indifference is an abdication and abdication is malfeasance. Parents may have many types of aspirations - humanitarian, economic, political, artistic, etc., but the primordial aspiration has to be the education of their children. Each morning when they awake they should profess an act of commitment to this sublime mission."

I think that these words of Domingo Lázaro are very timely, even though some expressions of his time may seem quaint today. We live in times when the family feels threatened from without and within and when parents experience difficulty in transmitting values and in inculcating principles of faith. Educational centers - both public and private - also feel themselves to be immersed in crisis- crisis that is easy to identify but very difficult to cope with in the day to day task of education.

Isn't this the moment to find inspiration and support in the example of educators who like Domingo Lázaro, Servant of God, have spent their lives of service in the Christian education of children, adolescents and young adults?

Our "saints" are our models and our intercessors before God. Let us entrust to Fr. Domingo our family difficulties and all of our concerns and

apprehensions with regard to the education and formation of our children.