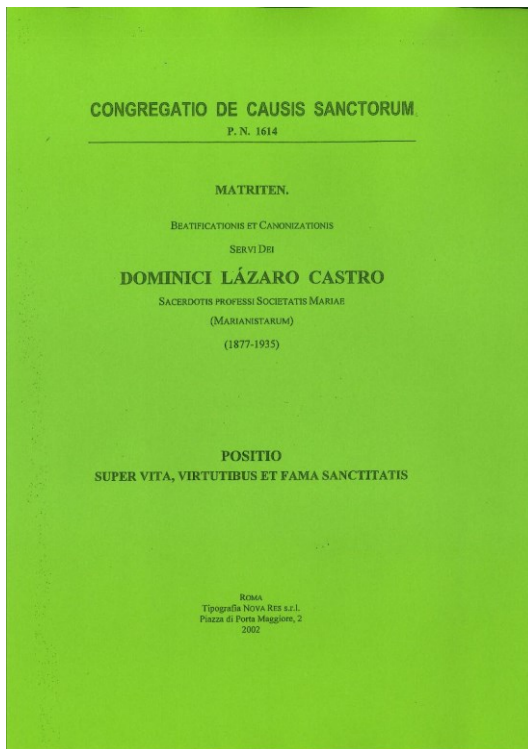


Fr. Domingo Lázaro, a hopeful pessimist?

It is curious to see that, in the *Positio* of the cause of Fr. Domingo Lázaro, after the development of the virtue of hope, there is an excursus about his pessimism. Many people who knew him considered him to be a pessimistic person, due to the black outlook with which he described certain situations. He himself knew it, and on occasions he came to sign some writings ironically with the pseudonym of "the pessimist".

Fr. Domingo was a man of great intelligence and insight, who knew how to analyze reality in depth and always claimed the need for a realistic look at the world. He would say: "my pessimism is rather realism". Alluding to the report he had sent to the General Chapter of 1920, he wrote in one of his letters: "My 29 pages of heavy prose will perhaps seem too pessimistic to you. They are sincere." He was not content with a superficial look and was never fooled by appearances. In a letter from 1932 referring to the situation in Spain he stated: "And all this comes to prove me right in my usual pessimism about the formula 'Catholic Spain' (...) And now we feel among ourselves the superficiality of the optimism of dear Fr. Provincial."



We know that Fr. Domingo suffered from fragile health throughout his life, and that, perhaps for this reason, he often felt psychologically weak. He wrote, for example, in 1917, in his second year as Provincial of Spain: "Another matter that concerns me is the state of my own health. My poor nerves, not very strong, are excited by the varied shocks of the office. The liver does its thing; digestion goes wrong and sleep flees from me. For all these reasons, this is not precisely what is required to bring delicate matters to a successful conclusion, nor to solve the very

serious problems of the personnel...". Fr. Domingo was not a person of natural, energetic and enthusiastic disposition.

Where, then, is the hope of this venerable brother of ours? Fr. Domingo shows us clearly what is and what is not the hope of which we speak. It is not a superficial optimism, nor a look that hides or does not want to see the complexity of reality with its negative elements. It's not a psychological mood or a feeling.

Hope is an attitude, a virtue, a permanent disposition, a way of life that springs from the relationship with God. It is a trust in God's presence and action which, far from exempting us from our responsibility in life, impels and sustains it. A layman, a close collaborator of Fr. Domingo in the field of Catholic education, expressed himself in his statement for the cause of beatification: "The Servant of God faced difficult situations for Catholic teaching not only in a spirit of heroic faith, but also in the search for solutions. He was aware that he had to put his trust in God and also in the Blessed Virgin, to whom he was very devoted. He was aware that he had to use all the means he had at his disposal, as if received from God. The confidence that he had, that problems could be solved, he instilled in us."



Fr. Domingo himself manifests this attitude in his letters, both referring to his personal situation and to that of society in general. Newly appointed Provincial, he wrote: "Of my new situation I would limit myself to saying that humanly speaking it is horrendous and that, not being able to speak without murmuring, it is preferable to remain silent. Pray a lot for me, so that the Hope of the helpless [the Virgin Mary] may enlighten me and lead me out of the quagmire into which the Good Lord has put me." In 1920 he wrote to the Superior General: "Times are difficult for everyone and this naturally obliges us to recognize more and more the smallness of men and to place ourselves filially in God's hands."

Fr. Domingo Lazaro shows us that the question is not whether we are optimistic or pessimistic, or whether reality is favorable to us or not. It also tells us that hope is never naïve, nor is it passivity. Our brother encourages us to live in the present with lucidity and proactivity, always trusting that "nothing can separate us from the love of God manifested in Christ Jesus". This is the hope that does not disappoint.