

Homily 23 December 2025
Funeral Mass of Sr. Mary Diane Roche, OP
5 February 1925 - 21 December 2025
Monastery Pius XII, Fátima Portugal

A year and 10 months ago, many of us here celebrated Sister Diana's 100th birthday. Today we are celebrating her birth into heaven. Today we give thanks to God for the gift of her life. A life that from an early age was offered to God and to the Church. Not in the visibility of the apostolate but in the fidelity of daily life, that Yes that is said every day because one loves.

In the Gospel, Jesus thanked the Father for revealing the mysteries of the Kingdom to little children. This is what we conclude when we approach a monastery. Here, more than talking, we listen, we welcome God's gift, like a little child, that is, being humble and joyful, generous and available. Jesus also said in the Gospel: Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart. Our Christian life is based on discipleship and learning. We are disciples of Jesus, each one following him in his or her own way of life, trying to imitate him and spending our whole lives learning from Jesus, who is meek and humble of heart.

Sister Diana was also a disciple. A disciple and spouse of Christ. Her consecration to religious life as specific as that lived in this monastery, a religious, contemplative, and Dominican life, was a constant learning process. Like Mary in the parable of Martha and Mary, Sister Diana chose the better part: to live with Jesus and for Jesus in silence and prayer, in study and, above all, praying for the world, which interested her so much.

She came to Fatima with the first founding sisters of this monastery, where she lived, studied, contemplated, and preached. Yes, preaching also takes place in monasteries. Much through life, much through witness, and much also through the work that the sisters do to earn their living. And here let me highlight such simple things as the way she welcomed us, her smile, her friendliness... the way she brought Fatima to the world, both through the newsletter from this monastery that reaches so many places around the world and also through the English translation of Sister Lucia's memoirs, which she, together with two sisters, produced. Our Father St. Dominic was right when he called the monasteries *Sancta praedicationis*. Because, as I say, even in a Dominican monastery, one can preach in many ways. Throughout all these years, Sister Diana was always very close to God, whom she

contemplated in prayer and adoration, in the work of governing the convent, and also in her writing. She was always little, always cheerful, always humble. Now she sees God as He is. Now she contemplates Him in the joy of heaven.

As I have said many times when I have come here, this monastery is closely linked to Fatima and its message. What Our Lady asked for here, penance and prayer, is lived out in this monastery. Here, prayers are said every day for the Holy Father, here the Eucharist is prolonged in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, here the prayer of the Rosary is contemplation of the mysteries of Christ. And Sister Diana lived and spread this message of Fatima until the end. She never dispensed with community activities. She burned until the end. The sisters told me that the last words heard from Sister Diana were in a prayer to the Heart of Jesus... Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine. Eucharistic life, Marian life, Dominican life.

Compassion for the world is part of Dominican spirituality. Sister Diana, as I said earlier, was very interested in what was happening in the world. Not as an escape from the rigor of the monastery or because she had a worldly spirit, but to have material for prayer, to have compassion for our world, which sometimes seems to be in a bad way. Contemplation does not distance us from the world; on the contrary, the concrete world, with its daily problems and joys, makes us pray to God more effectively and with a spirit of intercession.

With every Dominican who dies, the last words of our Father St. Dominic seem to echo in us: do not weep. I will be more useful in heaven than I was here on earth. The same is true of our sister Diana. The communion continues.

Now she sees face to face the One in whom she believed, loved, contemplated, and served. And as we sing in *O Spem mirans*, today we also say to Sister Diana: be helpful to us from heaven and intercede for us. May it be so.

P. Filipe José Rodrigues, OP

Vicar of the Master of the Order for Monastery Pius XII