



Caleruega

The birthplace of Saint Dominic of Guzman



GEOGRAPHIC SITE

Caleruega lies on the southern region of the province of Burgos. It may be considered to be a link between the river Duero and the hills, 900 meters over sea level, mostly applied to farming and pasture, including some vineyards. It is 175 kilometers away from Madrid; 75 from Burgos, 80 from Burgo de Osma and 24 from Aranda de Duero.

Caleruega is surrounded by several outstanding spots regarding history and art: Clunia (roman town), Silos (Benedictine monastery with an important romanesque cloister), Covarrubias (historical and artistical complex including excellent samples of gothic style), Lerma (noble and conventual city, an example of the "herreriano" style), Gumiel de Izán, Aza, Peñaranda de Duero and Peñafiel. All of these towns assemble important samples of their medieval past, such as coffered ceilings of arabian influence, renaissance palaces, baroque doorways and neoclassical altarpieces.

HISTORICAL SYNTHESIS

Caleruega was historically founded between 912 and 1085 due to the reconquest of the Duero valley from Muslim rule. The "Torreón" (Tower), the parish tower, and the walls are Caleruega's birth certificate built

on stone, which proves it was a feudal estate of the Castilian nobility that turned into an organized village.

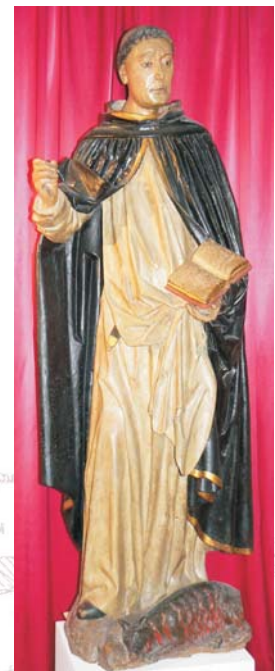
Besides the "Torreón", certain ancient documents state the existence of Caleruega: the Cartulary of San Pedro de Arlanza (1062) and the Diplomatic Collection of Oña (1084).

Around 1173, **Saint Dominic of Guzmán** was born in Caleruega, son to Félix of Guzman and Juana of Aza. He spent his childhood there, and in Gumiel de Izán. He studied in Palencia, lived in Osma, and later started for France where he founded the Order of Preachers (1216). On a visit to Spain, he returned to Caleruega in 1218. Saint Dominic died in Bolonia in 1221.

After his canonization (1234), and on his brother Manes's request, Caleruega built a church on the very place of his birth (1237).

In 1266, Alfonso X the Wise turned the manor house which had belonged to the Guzman into a church and monastery, bringing there the nuns from San Esteban de Gormaz (1270).

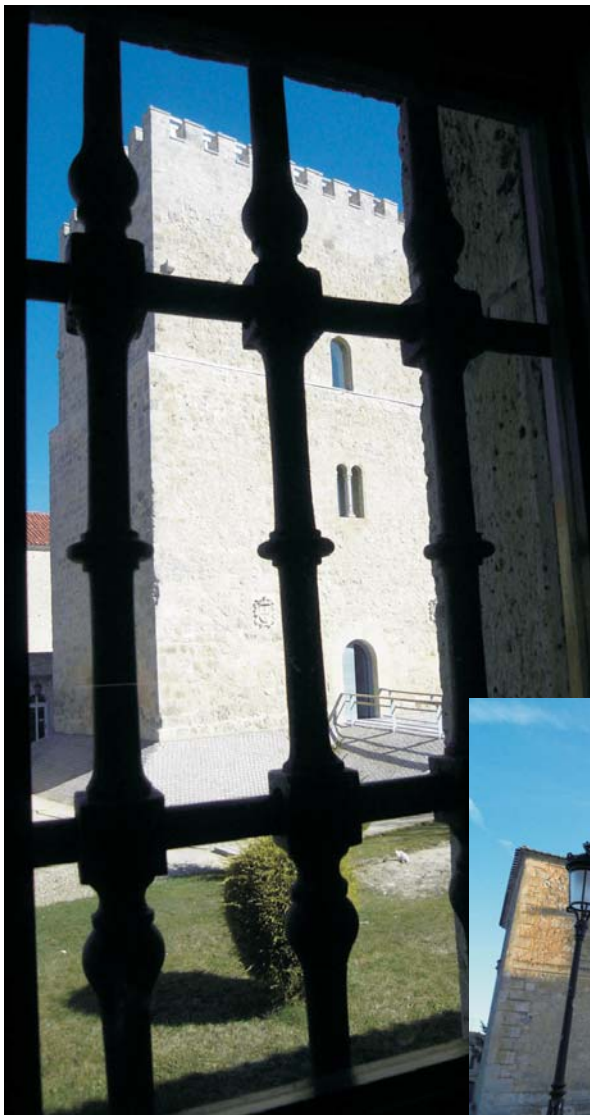
By the end of the 16th century, on demand,



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project and endowment from the Provincial Friar of the Mexican dominicans, the church built by Blessed Manés was replaced by another one, larger, in the shape of a cross, attached to the one built in the 13th century by Alfonso X the Wise, and which became the Choir of the sisters' community.

After several centuries of silence, in 1952, under the patronage of Master General Friar Manuel Suárez o.p., and the prompting of Friar Venancio Carro o.p., a new phase started, that which intended to enforce Caleruega as Saint Dominic's birthplace, as well as to the service of the Dominican Family and the Church. To that purpose a convent of friars was built as a novitiate, pilgrimages were fostered, and a House for Spiritual Meetings was set up. The latter has been remodeled in 1991.



DOMINICAN PLACES

History is more important than art in Caleruega, however, there are some outstanding artistical examples there.

The "Torreón" (Tower)

It is the most ancient monument, part of a chain of fortresses built on the 10th century around the banks of the river Duero.

Its walls, which measure 2m. wide and 17m. high, stand over a base of 14 x 9 meters. The "Torreón", together with the massive parish tower and the ancient walls, formed the stone cuirass which, during the medieval past, protected Caleruega.

It has been lately arranged as an exhibition room, divided into three storeys. On the first, the most important one, there is a window within a Mozarabic arch.

Parish Church

Built at the beginning of the 12th century, it was attached to the massive tower which already existed. The tower, part of the entrance door, and a twin column window are the only remnants of the first Romanesque structure from the beginning of the 12th century. It has undergone two restaurations. Inside, three spots attract our attention: the apse-shaped presbytery -totally renewed- with a beautiful Romanesque Christ over the altar table; Blessed Juana's first burial place and the baptistery where

Saint Dominic was christened. The font was transferred by Alfonso X the Wise to the nun's monastery for custody, where it remained until 1605, date in which it was

taken to Valladolid to baptise Felipe IV in it.

The transfer of the Court from Valladolid to Madrid meant a new removal of the font in order to christen royal children in it, a custom which has prevailed till present times. Nowadays, the font is kept in the monastery of Santo Domingo el Real, a nunnery in Madrid.

Blessed Juana's wine-cellar

The entrance of the convent leads directly to it. According to tradition, this was the place where Dominic's mother worked the miracle of the multiplication of the wine she used to give out to the poor. An alabaster relief by sculptor Andrés M. Abelenda reminds the event. The wine-cellar, a rectangular room under a stonework vault, is part of what used to be the ancient manor house wine-cellar.



Nunnery

The first convent was built at the request of Alfonso X the Wise. The king granted the nuns the domain of Caleruega, with the purpose that they may live in it as well as perform their duty as guardians of Saint Dominic's birthplace.

Works started by putting up a new church next to the one Blessed Manés had built and which would change the fortress manor house of the Guzman into a monastic residence.



Sixteenth century church

On the 16th century, during the reign of Felipe II, a new church was attached to that known as Alfonso the Wise's building.

The masonry stone façade shows a geometrical and compact outward appearance. The inside latin cross ground plan has only one nave, peculiar to conventual churches. The dome, decorated with baroque stuccoes and medallions carrying the coat of arms of the Order, stands in the middle of the transept supported by pilasters and round arches.



Within this austere decoration, the high reredos painted by Blas de Cervera (1594-1643) stands out. It pictures some scenes of Saint Dominic's iconography, as well as that of the Dominican Order. The reredos is crowned by a carved wood calvary, a work of some artists belonging to the school of Gregorio Fernández. The stone altarpiece of "Santo Domingo en Soriano" on the side of the epistle, as well as that of Blessed Juana of Aza, a gift from the Dominican Missionaries of the Rosary on the right side of the transept, are also interesting.

The altar table is situated under the vault which coincides with the saint's birthplace.



Vestry and crypt

In the vestry we find two funeral chests where the mortal remains of Venerable Félix and Venerable Antonio, Dominic's father and elder brother, are revered.

The vestry leads to the crypt where "The Pocito de Santo Domingo" is. Tradition and history tell us that this Well sprang out when the faithful removed some earth as a relic, on



the very place Blessed Manés pointed out to be Saint Dominic's birthplace.

Three altars stand around the well, and on each one, a mosaic altarpiece by Friar Domingo Iturgáiz o.p., portrays Saint Dominic's modes of prayer, the five members of the saint's family and the three saints from the Guzmán-Aza lineage, including the dreams about the dog and the star.



In the crypt we may also find the tomb belonging to the former Master of the Order, Friar Manuel Suárez. The stately sepulcher, of great artistic value, has been made of granite and alabaster by R. Lapayese.

Thirteenth century church

On the other side of the grille, we find the choir, which used to be the old church built by Alfonso X the Wise. Attached to the present construction, they now constitute a whole building. The nave has preserved its original appearance, except for its pointed-arched windows. The choir floor does not tally with the old church level, so it hides the base of the columns, as well as part of the beautiful church doorway on the northern wall.

Cloister - Museum

Three different phases may be traced back in this architectural work since the 13th century. At the beginning, it only had one ground floor with arcades supported by double columns, on which, later on, a new brick storey was built.

When performing a new restoration, some very interesting details have been discovered which take us back to the old 13th century church: two romanesque double-arched windows which gave light to one of the principal rooms in the house of the Guzman, or of the ancient convent; ogival doors of the same style as those in the so-called "Palace" of the Guzman; and a gothic doorway.

The museum, put up in a gothic room, shows some objects of artistic and historic interest, among which we may point out the polychromatic stone carvings of the Virgin and the Annunciation Angel and two sculptures of Saint Dominic (one of them in alabaster from the 16th century, and another in polychromatic wood). The museum has recently been enlarged by adding a big room on the northern part of the cloister. It bears the name of "Palace" or "Medieval Hall".



Archives

Except for some documents displayed in the museum, the historic treasure is kept in monastery archives. Papal bulls, letters and royal privileges, sealed documents, letters signed by Saint Raymond of Peñafort and many other important papers are preserved here.



Dominican Friars Convent

The building of the convent-novitiate started in 1952 and the first community of friars settled there in 1957. On the pavilion corners there are attached seven turrets which give the building the appearance of a monastery-castle, in accordance with the "Torreón de los Guzman" set in the middle of the cloister. Inside, some artistic objects of different value are preserved, although all of them are related to the history of the Order.

The convent chapel is presided by a gothic Christ. The cross as well as the images painted on the crosspiece are Romanesque. A worthy 16th century carving of the Virgin and another baroque image of Saint Dominic enhance the sacred place. Outdoor light is tinged by the stained glass windows of Friar Domingo Iturgáiz o.p. depicting the nine modes of prayers of Saint Dominic, as well as the historical growth of the Order.



Spirituality Centre

The spirituality centre is open to everyone, and particularly meant for persons and groups pertaining to the Dominican Family, as well as for institutions belonging to the Church or having cultural aims.

In 1991 the friars' convent and the House were entirely renewed. At present the House provides with ample rooms for spiritual retreat, chapter meetings, congresses, assemblies, celebrations. It has sixty-six rooms that may house eighty-five persons within a dominican surrounding which favours reflection and companionship.



Dominican communities of nuns, friars and sisters living in Caleruega invite people to share their life and prayer in Dominic's birthplace which is also that of the Dominican Order.

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