

# DOMINICANA

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## SAINT DOMINIC'S SEVENTY-SEVENTH SUCCESSOR

**O**N August 4th, the feast of our holy Father Saint Dominic, a cablegram was received by the Dominicans of this country announcing the election of the Most Reverend Louis Theissling, O. P., S. T. M., to the office of Master General. He was chosen to succeed the Most Reverend Hyacinth Cormier, O. P., who had completed his twelfth year of office, the sixtieth year of his priesthood and the eighty-fourth of his life.

The Dominican Provincials, with two delegates from every province throughout the entire world, with one exception, convened at Fribourg, Switzerland. Despite war conditions of Europe, representatives of every quarter of the globe were given passports and were successful in reaching the place where the Fathers were to make a choice of a successor to the saintly Father Cormier. England alone, stood out as the exception in denying passports to the Fathers of the English and Irish Provinces. While Germany at first hesitated and even denied passports to the Fathers of Belgium, subsequently leave was given and the Belgian Fathers participated.

As an indication of the high esteem in which the new General is held by all the Capitular Fathers it may be remarked that he was elected on the very first ballot by a large majority.

Father Theissling was born on January 31st, 1856, at Alkmaar, Holland. His classical studies were made at the College of Nijmegen and immediately after his graduation he entered the

novitiate of the Order of Friars Preachers. At the completion of his novitiate, he made his profession in the religious life, September 24th, 1874, being then but eighteen years of age, and at once commenced his philosophical and theological studies. He was ordained to the priesthood on the Feast of the Assumption of our Blessed Lady, August 15th, 1880. His theological studies were continued for two years after his ordination, thus covering in all eight years of philosophy and theology, which gave him a most complete training, the foundation of a brilliant career in the sacred sciences.

We next find him teaching. He was successively professor of physics, philosophy and moral theology. At the beginning of his professorship in 1885, he received the degree of Lector of Sacred Theology, having defended his theses in a most brilliant manner before a distinguished gathering of scholars.

Soon after his superiors appointed him to the office of sub-novice master, and those who were under his direction bear witness, in their intellectual and religious formation, to his keen and penetrating intellect, his broadness of mind, his prudence, and to the attractiveness of his lovable character, ennobled by that charity which understands how to bring out, while purifying it, the human element in others.

He was elected, successively, Prior of the Convents of Huissen and Nijmegen in 1894 and 1896, and while serving his term of office in the latter place was

elected Provincial of the Holland Province. For three terms he served as Provincial covering a space of twelve years. Under his wise guidance, the Holland Province made great progress. The bold venture of founding a Dominican Seminary in Venezuela, is a proof of his exceptional activity, and although it was established after trying political disturbances, this did not discourage him from founding a similar one at Peru. During his term of office he gladly accepted for his province a foreign mission in the West Indies.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of Father Theissling as Provincial was the reestablishment of the Convent of Saint Thomas at Zwolle. This Convent was first established in 1486 but after nearly an hundred years existence it was abandoned during the troublesome times of the Reformation. It was Father Theissling who formulated the plans, collected the funds and began the construction of a new convent and college on the historic site. His efforts were rewarded on December 12, 1901, when the new edifice was dedicated. It is one of the most stately buildings in control of the Order and is used as a House of Studies for the Dutch Province.

In his relations with civil authorities he has shown admirable tact and diplomacy, and he has always achieved distinction in whatever position he has been placed. Having more than ordinary energy, he unites to this a prudence and mildness of character which enable him to avoid conflicts with those with whom he deals. His adaptability to any condition, his kind humor and extreme amiability, all make him a man one loves to approach.

At the expiration of his term as Provincial, Father Theissling was sent to Chile as Superior of the Dominicans there. After one year there he returned to Rome where he was ap-

pointed by the Master General Visitor of the Provinces throughout the world. He visited as representative of the Master General the following Provinces: Russia (twice), Trinidad, the Indies, Peru (twice), Canada, the United States, Austria Hungary and Poland. While in Peru he suffered an attack of yellow fever and hovered between life and death for months. But Providence reserved this man of the Order of Saint Dominic for a greater work and a more glorious apostolate.

There is probably not a priest in the world who has had greater opportunities to know men and to see the Church in more countries of the world than Father Theissling. His scholarship and priestly attainments are of the highest order. As a linguist he will be, considering his many other extraordinary qualifications, a great acquisition even in the Eternal City. His native language is Dutch. He speaks with great fluency German, French, Spanish, Italian and English. As a Latin and Greek scholar he has few superiors in the whole Church. He has the general knowledge of the Oriental languages of Scriptural students and a reading knowledge of many other languages. But, by far, the greater part of our new General's success has been due to his solid religious piety, his staunch loyalty to the ideals set by Saint Dominic, his remarkably keen intelligence and deep sympathetic appreciation of human nature.

Only two years ago Father Theissling was in the United States. At that time he was enthused over the great opportunities for Dominican progress here. We promise to show our appreciation of his enthusiasm and joy at his election by striving to realize, to the fullest extent, the ideals he is sure to point out to us. May God grant us the inspiration of his piety and zeal for many years to come.

—Edmund Rogers, O. P.