



MOST REV. M. S. GILLET, O.P.
Seventy-Ninth Master General

DOMINICANA

Vol. XIV

DECEMBER, 1929

No. 4

MARTIN STANISLAUS GILLET, O.P. LXXIX MASTER GENERAL

BRO. MARCELLUS NUGENT, O.P.



ON September 21, a General Chapter of the Order of Preachers met at Rome, for the purpose of electing a new Master General, and selected Most Rev. Martin Stanislaus Gillet, O.P., S.T.M. Fr. Gillet's election is the highest possible sanction his Dominican Brethren could place upon a career that has been notable in its realization of Dominican ideas and ideals.

Fr. Gillet was born at Louppy-sur-Loison, in the diocese of Verdun on December 14, 1875. After finishing his collegiate studies he entered the seminary at Verdun. He had not finished his first year there however when he decided that his vocation was to the religious life and under the standard of Dominic. Accordingly he received the habit of a Friar Preacher at Amiens where the novitiate of the Province of France was then located. Having completed his canonical novitiate, he pronounced his simple vows on November 7, 1898. He was then sent to Flavigny where he began his philosophical and theological studies under the illustrious Fr. Gardeil, who was then Regent of Studies. . . . One of his classmates there was the scholarly Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, at present, professor of theology at the Angelico in Rome. Here Fr. Gillet met a trial which was destined to prove the sincerity of his religious vocation, and to prepare him for the priesthood. In 1901 the French Government passed laws confiscating all property belonging to religious and expelling them from the country. Accordingly Fr. Gillet, exiled from his native land, in company with his brethren, was sent to the Dominican Fathers of the Belgian Province of St. Rose to continue his studies.

At the completion of his theological course Fr. Gillet received the degree of Lector in Sacred Theology. Recognizing the ability of the young friar, his superiors sent him to the University at Fribourg in Switzerland, where after distinguishing himself in advanced philosophical studies he was made a Doctor of Philosophy. The title of his doctorate thesis, *Du fondement intellectuel de la Morale d'après Aristotle*, is a fair indication of the intellectual heights to which his young mind had attained.

In 1905, Fr. Gillet was sent to Louvain where he taught the Moral of St. Thomas to the students of the Province of St. Rose. This was but the beginning of an activity which has embraced almost every type of endeavor within the wide scope of a Dominican vocation; an activity which has fitted him well for the exalted position to which the suffrages of his brethren have raised him. Fr. Gillet has had experience and has won exceptional distinction, as teacher, author, preacher, administrator, and as a director of souls. Robert Garric, in *La Revue Hebdomadaire*, speaks of the General as "the zealous and persuasive orator, the professor devoted to his lectures, the indefatigable author of twenty works, the well-beloved director of youth to whom he always extended a helping hand." "This greatness of intellect," he continues, "was his strength, this warmth of heart drew towards his friar's cell all classes of men, students and professors, statesmen and actors"—and, we may add, such eminent litterateurs as Paul Claudel and Henri Massis.

It was not long before the young professor at Louvain, by his untiring and able efforts, by his evident contentment with his work, showed the wisdom of his appointment. In 1909, when the Province of France was restored, he was appointed to the chair of Dogmatic Theology at Le Saulchoir. His lectures were interrupted by the Great War of 1914, but were resumed again in 1919. In 1921 he was appointed to the chair of Moral Philosophy at the Catholic Institute of Paris. Hitherto his direct influence had been upon the youth of his own Order in Belgium and in France; at Paris it was to be felt and appreciated by the youth of France generally.

The lecture room has not been the only medium of Fr. Gillet's teaching. He is perhaps better known to his countrymen as an author. It is certainly in this capacity that his influence has spread beyond the confines of his own country. Nearly all of his works have been translated into one or more foreign languages, notably into Italian and Spanish. His first works and those which have found perhaps the most favour among directors of youth, were those pub-

lished while teaching at Louvain. A few of this period are: *L'Education du Caractere*, *L'Education de la Conscience*, *L'Education du Coeur*. The first mentioned work has been translated into English.

Not less influential have been his works published in the interests of all classes of society. Among these the principal contributions upon which has been built his reputation as a Catholic sociologist are *Conscience Cretienne et Justice Sociale*, and *La Morale et les Morales*. Of equal importance are his *Religion et Pedagogie*, *L'Eglise et la Famille*, *Le Credo des Artistes*, and *Innocence et Ignorance* which has been published in English. In 1925 he began, in collaboration with others of his Province, a French translation of the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas, a work for which he had been well equipped by his years spent in teaching the wisdom of the Angelic Doctor.

In the work of preaching, Fr. Gillet has gained international distinction. In the pulpit, the lecture hall, or over the radio, his sound thomistic doctrine and unwavering apologetic has been presented with touching eloquence in many lands. In 1925 he gave a series of conferences in Argentina and lectured in Uruguay. At Montreal, returning from the Eucharistic Congress of Chicago in 1926, he spoke upon *L'élite intellectuelle de la jeunesse de France à l'heure présente*. The oratorical ability of Fr. Gillet and the high regard in which it is held by his countrymen are best expressed in the words of a Paris journalist: "Thanks to precious gifts; a lofty and clear intelligence united to an ardent piety, an authority and a profundity of language, which have made him a master of Christian oratory, Father Gillet opens up new avenues of light. One feels that this man of tradition has a passionate love for his own times. One feels his constant care to adapt Eternal Truths to the manifold and contradictory needs which torment souls today in their search for peace."

Though the future Master General achieved his principal administrative success as Provincial of the Province of France, he early began to manifest that executive ability which has won for him the highest honor and greatest responsibility in his Order. This phase in his exceptionally active career may be said to have been begun when he became editor of *Revue des Jeunes*. The flourishing condition of this periodical at the present time is a tribute to the talents of his guiding hand. Not less important and also revealing his ability as an organizer is his work in the formation and direction of *L'Association du Theatre Cretien*, an organization similar to our own Catholic Actors Guild. On July 22, 1927, Fr. Gillet was elected Provincial of

the Province of France. With admirable ability, he exercised this office until his recent elevation to the exalted position which he now holds.

As is the custom in the Order, immediately following the Mass of the Holy Ghost and just prior to the election, the Capitular Fathers were addressed by one of their number. It is a happy, as well as a striking coincidence, that this exhortatory message was delivered by one upon whom the suffrage of his associates afterwards placed the mantle of Dominic. In a masterly fashion Fr. Gillet outlined the qualities which a Master General should possess and the duties which would be incumbent upon the one soon to be chosen. A Master General, he said, must apply himself to the clear, prudent, and efficacious solution of the questions which may come before him. He can do this only by renewing in himself the light of Faith and the spirit of St. Dominic's charity. Many tasks will come before him during his administration. They will be but applications of his principal duties, which are devotion to the Church of Christ, to the salvation of souls, and to the glorious progress of his Order. These are, very briefly, the thoughts which the Provincial of France, in his exordium, brought before the Chapter. These are the ideas and ideals upon which our Order was founded and upon which it has flourished.

On September 25, the new Master General together with the members of the Chapter were received in special audience by the Holy Father. Both to Fr. Gillet privately and to the members of the Chapter, His Holiness expressed his joy and appreciation at the selection of the Fathers. In approving the new Master General, Pope Pius said, "If you consider the approbation of the Pope to be a sign of the divine approbation, you have that fully and entirely." It is with a heart full of gratitude to God that DOMINICANA, in the name of the Fathers, Students, and Novices of St. Joseph's Province, extends to Fr. Gillet its sincerest congratulations. Reviewing his past achievements, we could not have aught but the fullest confidence that he will maintain and continue to spread the ideals of his illustrious predecessors, especially those of that glorious exemplar of us all—St. Dominic.