

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE DOMINICAN ORDER

JORDAN FANNING, O.P.



URING the nineteenth century great losses were suffered by practically all the religious orders and societies in Europe. The anti-clerical movements and other political disturbances in the various countries wrought havoc among the religious, causing a reduction of members and of property. The Order of Preachers was no exception and felt the effects of the upheaval to a very great extent. About the middle of the century a band of Dominicans under the leadership of the great Lacordaire introduced a movement of restoration. The revival took its greatest impetus from the noble efforts of Father Vincent Jandel, a follower of Lacordaire, who was Master General from 1855 to 1872. He founded new convents and restored provinces. Those already existing he strengthened by renewing the regular observances and extending the fields of labor. The missions had been the first to suffer from the decay and Father Jandel began immediately to restore them to their former position. The effects of the revival have been lasting and the increase in numbers has been gathering momentum during the seventy-five years since Jandel began his work. These gains are best shown by an inspection of the various editions of the Dominican *Catalogus*, a directory of the membership of the Order.

In 1910, a *Catalogus* was issued by Father Cormier—the first in thirty-four years. The plan was then formed of issuing one each six years. The World War made it impossible to obtain any adequate census of the members, and it was not until 1921 that the next *Catalogus* appeared. Father Theissing, then Master General, called attention to the increase in numbers despite the fact that many of the brethren had been lost to the Order through the War.

This year a new *Catalogus* has appeared. Father Gillet, Master General, offers it with the following words: "The size of the volume itself shows a notable increase (over that of 1921) which with God's blessing the Provinces have made during these years; some of them have doubled and the number of brethren in the whole Order has increased by almost two thousand, although many (who were listed in 1921) have since died.

PROVINCE OF	Number of men		MISSION FIELDS	Number of Mis- sionaries
	1921	1931		
Spain	375	405	Peru; Central America; Mexico	74
Toulouse (French)	130	168	Brazil	33
France	267	353	Mossoul (Mesopotamia); Oslo (Norway)	20
Lombardy	54	115		
Rome (Italian)	85	136		
Naples (Italian)	46	84		
Austria Hungary	147	151		
Germany	227	337	China, Fukien	12
England	136	179	Granada; Transvaal; Persia;	24
Aragon (Spanish)	73	131	Chile; Argentina; Indo-China	33
Bohemia (Czecho-Slovakia)	82	110		
Dalmatia (Yugoslavia) ...	63	85		
Trinacria (Italian)	55	79		
Betica (Spanish)	124	170	Canary Islands; Venezuela; Cuba; Mexico	34
Holland	360	427	Bornholm Island (Denmark); Curacao; Porto Rico.....	71
Ireland	172	196	Australia; Trinidad	38
St. John Baptist (Peru)...	55	60		
St. Antoninus (Colombia)..	85	120		
Lyons (French)	158	220	Indo-China	15
St. Catherine, V.M., of Quito (Ecuador)	95	116	Canelos y Macas (Ecuador)....	16
St. Lawrence, M. (Chile)..	54	55		
Holy Rosary (Spanish)...	525	556	Philippines; China; Indo-China; Japan	267
St. Peter, Piedmont (Ital- ian)	133	206	Constantinople; Beyrouth; Smyrna	21
St. Rose (Belgium).....	219	314	Belgian Congo	42
Argentina	80	59		
St. Hyacinth (Poland)....	119	163		
St. Joseph (United States)	322	570	China	12
Malta (Italian)	77	95		
St. Dominic (Canada)....	144	262	Japan	10
Holy Name (United States)	65	75		
Congregation of St. Mark, Florence (Italian)	59	91		
Congregation of St. Dom- inic (French)	58	73		
<i>Filii</i> of the Master General	49	76		
Totals	4724	6237	Total	722

"Therefore, We give thanks to God, from Whom is every perfect gift, humbly praying that He turn not His most merciful blessing from the Dominican family, and that our Order may labor more perfectly in striving for its end, pledging itself wholeheartedly to the service of Holy Church, and to caring for the constantly increasing needs of souls.

"It is our hope that while the present *Catalogus* makes known to you the state of the Provinces, it may arouse in you an understanding and a feeling of the unity of the Order, that unity of which We have spoken to you so often, and which We ardently desire to be firmly rooted in your hearts, to be the breath and the life of all your actions."

Many interesting facts are presented by the *Catalogus* and we propose here to consider some of these. The book is arranged in the following order: a list of all the Masters General from St. Dominic to the present time; a list of the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops who are members of the Order; the detailed enumeration of the Provinces, listing the houses and missions of each, with the members assigned to each; an alphabetical index of the places where Dominican convents, houses or missions are established; an alphabetical list of all the members of the Order; a summary of the membership according to Provinces; six maps showing the locations of Dominican foundations in every part of the world; and a table which lists the mission fields of the Order.

The accompanying table is a combination of parts of the two summaries in the *Catalogus*, with the figures of the 1921 *Catalogus* and the addition of the number of foreign missionaries in each Province.

The figures given include all the members of the First Order—members of the hierarchy, priests, students, novices and lay brothers. There are twenty-four Dominicans in the Hierarchy, 3406 priests, 1270 students, 332 novices, and 1205 lay brothers.

The Provinces are listed in the order of their foundation. A province, in the Dominican Order, is established only when there are at least three formal convents, canonically erected, and at least thirty members with the right to vote in chapters of the community. There have been close to sixty provinces instituted throughout the history of the Order. Some of these have ceased to exist for various reasons, such as the paucity of the brethren, the suppression by civil authority, or the passing of the territory into the hands of infidels. A few have been combined with other stronger provinces. At present there are thirty provinces. The Congregations are special divisions of the Order, governed by a Vicar whom the Master General appoints, and

enjoying the rights of a province except that they have no representation in the General Chapters. Ordinarily they are not confined by territorial limits and they are governed by special regulations. Each member of the Order belongs to that province or congregation to which he was affiliated at the time he received the habit, or to which he has since been transferred with the approval of the Master General. There are, however, some members of the Order who belong to no particular province. They are subject to the immediate jurisdiction of the Master General and are known as *Filii*, or Sons, of the Master General. There are also a number of convents in various parts of the world which are under the direct supervision of the General and for which he appoints Vicars.

A glance at the table shows that in every province, but one, there has been some gain during the past ten years. The Province of Argentina shows a loss of twenty-one members. This loss may be explained in part by the fact that two of its convents have been taken over by the Province of Aragon. A few of the Provinces now small in numbers were at one time among the leading provinces. The Province of St. John the Baptist, in Peru, for example, was reduced from a flourishing state by the numerous revolutions in the country. Convents were taken over by the different rebel governments and the members dispersed, until the number of convents was reduced to three and these have been held only with the greatest difficulty. The English Province presents a most interesting history. Founded in 1221, it traces an unbroken history right to the present time. Though at times it was reduced to as few as six members, there were always members of the Province to continue the Dominican line in England.

The fact which is of primary interest to us as members of St. Joseph's Province is that our Province is now the largest in the Order. While this gives us reason to rejoice and indicates the advancement of the Order in this country, it must be taken in connection with various modifying circumstances. The United States, a large country territorially, embraces only two provinces, while several European countries, much smaller in extent, include more provinces within their boundaries and count more Dominicans in the country as a whole. Thus Spain easily leads the others, with a total membership of 1262 men, in its four provinces. France, with three provinces and one congregation, has among its citizens 814 Dominicans. Italy, including six provinces and one congregation, counts 806 men. The two provinces of the United States total 645 members which places us fourth among the countries of the world.

From another point of view we may consider the numerical

relation between the various provinces and other religious bodies in the different countries. *The Catholic World Atlas* gives totals for the religious priests in each country and if we compare the number of Dominican priests with the number of priests of other orders and societies, we get the following results. In Holland, the 283 Dominican priests constitute 15% of the religious priests of the country. In Spain, there are 722, or 10%; Canada, 8%; England, 7%; Poland, 6%; Unites States, Ireland, Yugoslavia, 5%. This comparison is not intended to show the relation between our Order and the other religious organizations, but merely to show the relation between the various parts of the Order, to show where the Order may be regarded as most flourishing, relatively speaking, of course. The *Atlas* gives no figures for the religious priests in France. While the Italian provinces have 383 priests, these are about 3% of the total number of Italian religious priests. In the South American countries, Dominicans are much more numerous because in some instances Dominicans are the only religious established in those countries.

The number of missionaries in the table has been obtained by an actual count of the members in each province assigned to those places considered by the province as mission regions. A writer in *The Torch* quotes *L'Annee Missionnaire* as giving the number of Dominican missionaries as 269 which figure he says is two hundred short, at a conservative estimate.¹ Our total of 722, then, would seem to be exaggerated but we think it is still conservative. Some territories, generally considered as foreign missions, are not so considered by the *Catalogus*, and the men engaged in those places are not included in the table. If we restrict foreign mission fields only to those countries where the faith is preached by the missionaries to the heathen and infidel, then the foreign mission countries are greatly reduced in number. The more natural basis on which to determine whether a man is a foreign missionary or not seems to us to be that he leaves the country of his birth and goes to a distant country to preach the Gospel of Christ and spread the kingdom of God. Thus we may consider those men foreign missionaries who go to the West Indies or to the Phillipines to teach in schools, although they come into contact only with natives who already have the faith. Certainly the same sacrifices are made by both those who go into pagan countries and those who go to countries already partly Christian. These sacrifices may differ in degree, but both classes endure the hardship of leaving family and home and the hardships connected with life in a strange

¹ Kevin O'Hannan, O.P. "The Story of the Dominican Foreign Missions," *The Torch*, XVI (1931), No. 3, p. 16.

climate, surrounded by new customs and ideas. The 267 missionaries of the Holy Rosary Province must be included among the foreign missionaries—most of them are actually laboring in the mission fields of China, Indo-China and Japan, while some teach at the University of St. Thomas in Manila. We might even include the seventy members of this same province who are in this country, most of them students preparing for the foreign mission fields, but they have already left their native Spain and are foreign missionaries in intention. However, they are not included in the list.

About twelve per cent of the total membership of the Order therefore is actively engaged on the foreign missions. Most of the 722 foreign missionaries are priests, so that a more evenly based comparison is that between the total number of priests in the Order, 3406, and the number of priests on the foreign missions, 631. That is, 18½% of the priests in the Order are foreign missionaries, or almost two out of every ten.

There were at the time of Father Jandel's death, December 11, 1872, about 3500 Dominicans in the world. From that time to 1921 there was an increase of 1224 men, while in the period from 1921 to 1931 the gain was 1431 men. In the past ten years there has been a greater increase in membership than in the fifty years preceding. Surely, this is a sign that God has blessed the work of Father Jandel, who labored so earnestly to restore the ideals of St. Dominic.

The considerations here offered are not made in any spirit of boastfulness. Numbers are after all of much less importance than the amount of work done for the honor and glory of God, but it is reasonable to assume that more effort will be made when there are more men to make it. Whether the results obtained show a corresponding increase God alone can judge. We can only pray to God that His judgment may be favorable. The Master General expresses this thought in the closing words of his letter :

“May God grant that a spiritual increase of virtues and actions proceed in proportion to the increase in numbers, an assurance of which is the blessing which We impart to you from our heart.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Constitutiones Fratrum Sacri Ordinis Praedicatorum*, (Rome, 1926).
Catalogus Generalis Fratrum S. O. P. (Rome, 1921).
Catalogus Omnium Conventuum et Domorum, Provinciarum et Congregationum, Sacri Ordinis Praedicatorum, necnon Fratrum in eisdem Commorantium, (Rome, 1931).
The English Dominican Province, (1221-1921), (London, 1921).
 Raymund Devas, O.P., *The Dominican Revival in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1923).
 F. C. Streit, *Catholic World Atlas*, (Paderborn, 1929).