

## THE MASTER GENERAL'S VISITATION IN THE ORIENT\*

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Dominicana has recently chronicled the return of the Master General from a visitation of the Order's Missions in the pagan East. A brief account of his travels and of these missions will, we hope, prove not uninteresting to our readers.

Japan was first visited by the Very Reverend General. The story of the introduction of Christianity into this country by Saint Francis Xavier is well known. The heroic Jesuit was eagerly followed by others, who labored with great success till the middle of the seventeenth century, when persecution completely destroyed the missions. In the meantime, many martyrs had dyed the ground with their blood. Of these, 205, over half of them Dominicans, were added to the list of the Blessed, in 1867, by Pope Pius IX. The seed they had sown fell on good soil. When, two hundred years later, Christian missionaries again entered the forbidden country, they found the Faith still alive among the descendants of these converts.

On May 22d, 1917, the Master General, with his socius, Father Gabriel Horn, of Saint Joseph's Province, arrived at Kobe. Thence they proceeded southwards to the large island of Shikoku, which since 1904 has been intrusted to the Dominicans. Laboring here to spread the Gospel of Christ Father Theissling found seven priests, under a Vicar Apostolic. The mission has four principal centres: Kochi, Tokushima, Matsumama and Uwajima. The Christians number only 400. A small beginning, but the grain of mustard-seed gives promise of growing into a large and fruitful tree.

Formosa, contiguous to China, but a dependency of Japan, was next visited by the General. As in Japan, so here, the first missions of the Order had been destroyed. They were restored in the middle of the last century and are now flourishing. Scattered about in thirty-five towns, are 3523 Christians, under the care of ten Fathers, in charge of a Vicar Apostolic. These are assisted by thirty-one catechists and nine lay-teachers. Invaluable auxiliaries in the work of this, as of the othr missions, are the Dominican Sisters and Tertiaries, who by the Christian training of

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the young are laying the foundations for the future success of the missions.

Having examined the conditions of the Formosa mission, the Very Reverend Visitor, toward the end of June, arrived at the port of Emoy, the centre of the missions in China. Here he was met by the Vicar Apostolic with a number of missionaries and prominent laymen. Every courtesy was shown him by the French consuls, as directed by their Government, which, though persecuting the Religious Orders at home, still retains the title of Protector of the Missions.

The first permanent Dominican foundations in the Flowery Kingdom were laid in 1631 by missionaries from Formosa. They established themselves in Fukien, whence their labors spread to the neighboring provinces of Chekiang and Kiangsi. Most famous among the many martyrs who here shed their blood for the extension of Christ's Kingdom are Blessed Francis Capillas, the proto-martyr of China, and Blessed Peter Sanz and companions. At the present day, our mission in China is restricted to the single province of Fukien, having a total population of 25,000,000, of whom 55,329 have embraced Christianity and 14,340 are catechumens. The churches and chapels number 256, and are attended by sixty Dominican and twenty-eight Chinese priests. There are 185 catechists, while the lay teachers, Tertiaries, and Sisters, both of our own and other Orders, total 194.

Escorted by a guard of soldiers placed at his disposal by the "tatoi," or civil prefect of Emoy, the zealous General began his visitation of the two Vicariates Apostolic into which Fukien is divided. With customary despatch he visited the more important centres, noting the progress of Christianity, conferring with the missionaries, inspecting churches, schools and seminaries for the training of native priests. Everywhere he was joyfully received. The foundlings, cared for by the good Sisters, welcomed him with Chinese songs and pantomimes. There are nine orphanages, or Asylums of the Holy Infancy, as they are called, in Fukien, which during 1916 collected 6771 infants abandoned by their pagan parents.

Early in July the Master General arrived at Hong-Kong, where a delegation waited to conduct him to the missions in Indo-China. The Tongkinese mission was undertaken by the Dominicans in 1676. It has now a Prefecture Apostolic at Langson, and is divided into three Vicariates Apostolic, known at East, Cen-

tral, and North Tongkin. In its long list of martyrs stand forth the names of the Bishops Ignatius Delgado and Dominic Henares and their companions, martyred in 1838, and added to the roll of the Blessed by Leo XIII. In the number of its converts, this is the largest of the missions. The Christians are grouped in communities not unlike those of the first ages of the Church. Thus, all live under the vigilant supervision of the missionaries and are kept firm by continual contact with one another.

The visitation of the three Vicariates, facilitated in every possible way by the French and Chinese authorities, was completed in three weeks. The following recent statistics will give some idea of the actual state of the Tongkinese missions: Total population, 6,560,000; Christian population, 360,000; communities of Christians, 1313; Dominican priests, 57; native priests, 192; seminaries, 5; schools, 3; students, 1575; catechists, 598; Christian Brothers, 7; Sisters, 27; Dominican Tertiaries, 658; Asylums of the Holy Infancy, 34; infants of pagan parents baptized, 34,336; infants of Christian parents baptized, 15,008; adults baptized, 1189; marriages solemnized, 4237.

Such is the precious offering which these laborers in the vineyard of the Lord yearly lay at the feet of the Divine Master and His Blessed Mother, the Patroness of their Province, for by far the greater number of them belong to the Philippine Province of the Most Holy Rosary.

On his return to the United States, the Master General expressed himself as greatly edified by the truly apostolic lives of these missionaries, who in poverty and suffering are living up to the spirit of Saint Dominic and the illustrious traditions of their Order. It is the earnest hope of many that the American Dominicans will soon share in this glorious work of enlightening "them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."

—Thomas M. Gabisch, O. P.