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# DOMINICANA

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## THE MASTER GENERAL

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*BRO. BRENDAN CONNOLLY, O. P.*



HE chosen leader of an Order which for seven hundred years has been blessed by so many men who are today held up by Holy Mother Church as men whose lives we are encouraged to imitate, holds an office which carries with it not only many grave responsibilities, but also presupposes many qualifications. To this office the Very Rev. Father Bonaventure Paredes has been elected, and these few pages are an expression of obedience, respect and reverence of the novices of this Province for both the office of the Master General and the personal qualifications of the newly elected General who so eminently meets the qualifications demanded by history.

The aim of every Dominican, is to imitate the saintly life of our holy Founder St. Dominic, to cherish his wonderful works and deeds and to pass down to the ages his high ideals. The realization of this aim falls with tremendous responsibility on the exalted office of Master General of the Order.

When in 1216, the little band of thirteen friars gathered around St. Dominic and pleaded with him to become their leader, he, accepting, became the first Master General of the Order of Preachers. During his lifetime, the Saint keenly recognized the needs of the age and executed his plans with sureness of insight, firmness of resolution and tenacity of purpose. Through seven hundred years of its existence, down to our last Most Reverend Father Theissling, the office of Master General has been entrusted to many of the most illustrious of Dominic's sons.

Saints, scholars and diplomats have directed the destinies of the Order as Generals. Jordan of Saxony was endowed with rare powers of persuasion; St. Raymond of Pennafort was the greatest canonist of his age; John of Vercelli was the great promoter and preacher of the Holy Name. These noted Masters,

and their successors have done their utmost in the discharge of their duties and in meeting the numerous problems then facing both Church and State. Literary geniuses were not wanting among the Master Generals of history. The work of Humbert of Romans "*De Vita Regulari*," shows forth what the Order and all Christian society ought to be. The work "*Legenda Aurea*," written by James of Voragini, about 1260, is universally known. "The success of this book," writes Poncelet, "was prodigious" and was translated in all the vernaculars of Europe. The Generals have been worthy successors of St. Dominic and worthy of their charge; they have been not only men of knowledge and executive ability, but men who imitated Christ and St. Dominic in piety as well.

To elect a successor to the office of Master General, made vacant by the death of the Most Reverend Louis Theissling, was the purpose of the general chapter which opened May 22 in Ocana, Spain. From all the provinces of the Order came the provincials, their *socii* and the definitors. After Solemn Mass of the Holy Ghost, celebrated by the Vicar General, Most Reverend Father Serapio Tamayo, with the respective provincials of Spain and Toulouse acting as ministers, the chapter formally opened. While the electors assembled in the chapter room, the community of the convent awaited outside for the signal, that would announce to them that a new Master General had been elected. The honor fell to the Very Reverend Bonaventure Paredes, Prior of the Convent of the Most Holy Rosary in Madrid. After dinner a delegation left the Convent to escort the new General from his convent in Madrid to Ocana. Upon his arrival, the Community, being assembled in choir, Father Louis, the provincial of France, led the entire community to the entrance of the convent church to receive Father Paredes. As soon as he crossed the threshold, the cantors intoned the "*Te Deum*," which was taken up and sung to the end by all. Then the community assembled to the chapter room where the newly elected General spoke to all in a most touching manner, asking them to release him from the responsibility they had placed on him. "I am not worthy," he said, "never have I so perceived my worthlessness as I perceive it now." The Reverend Father Getino, Provincial of Spain, then addressing the General asked him in the name of St. Dominic to accept the office and to impart his first blessing upon the community assembled.

Father Paredes was born at Castaneda de Valde in Asturias, Spain, on April 19, 1866. At the age of seventeen, he received the habit of St. Dominic. Three years later he pronounced solemn vows at the Royal Monastery of St. Thomas in Avila. After having a brilliant course in Philosophy and Theology, Father Paredes was designated by his Superiors to prepare for the degrees of Ph. D., Litt. D. and LL. D. He successfully passed the required examinations and his dissertation on the "Teoria de la Belleza" was published in the bi-monthly review "Ciencia Tomista" of the Spanish Dominicans. It was not long before his keen intellectual qualities were widely recognized. In 1900 he was sent to Manila, P. I., to take charge of a daily paper, "Libertas," published in defence of the Church, and in diffusion of knowledge of the True Faith. In 1902 he was elected Rector of the College of St. Thomas in Avila, which office brought him back to his native Spain. While there he founded the College of Second Institution at Sancta Maria de Nieva, Segovia, Spain, and acted as its first rector.

When the Provincial Chapter met in Manila, P. I., in 1910 to elect a provincial of the Province of the Most Holy Rosary in the Philippines, the choice of the electors fell upon Father Paredes. The work accomplished there while he was Provincial was noteworthy, and despite the pressure of executive duties he found time to give expression to his literary and historical talent. At this time the Order was celebrating both the Seventh Centenary of its confirmation by Pope Honorius, and also the third Centennial of the University of St. Thomas at Manila. To commemorate these great events, and to show forth the glorious achievements of his province in the Philippines and its mission fields of the Far East, Father Paredes published three beautifully illustrated volumes which serve as valuable historical records and stamp their author as a man of unusual literary ability. The Dominican College at Rosaryville, Ponchatula, La., was erected by Father Paredes as a house of studies in the United States for young Spanish Dominicans preparing for work in the Philippines and on the Missions to the infidels.

When his term of office expired Father Paredes went back to Spain where he was appointed superior of a convent ceded to the Province by the Marchionesse of Lapilla at Madrid, where he was living at the time the news reached him of his election as the seventy-eighth successor of St. Dominic.

The Order at the time of St. Dominic's death counted some sixty establishments, and was divided into eight Provinces, namely, Spain, Provence, France, Lombardy, Rome, Teutonia, England and Hungary. Today the Order is spread throughout the entire world embracing not only Europe and America, but also the Missions of the Far East. Planting the seed was St. Dominic's work. Cultivating and caring for it is the task of the Most Reverend Father Paredes. We thank God and His Blessed Mother that the sacred heritage is in such capable hands. To the Most Reverend Father General Paredes, the Novices of St. Joseph's Province, bound by ties of filial love and obedience, extend joyful congratulations, and promise continued prayers. May the Spirit that guided and strengthened St. Dominic, St. Raymond, Blessed Jordan and other great leaders of the Order be always with Most Reverend Bonaventure Paredes.

