

**✠ VERY REV. MICHAEL JOSEPH ECKERT, O.P., P.G. ✠**

The Province of St. Joseph suffered a severe loss when on March 26, Father Michael Joseph Eckert passed to his eternal reward after a lingering illness. The cheerfulness and courage that characterized his long missionary career remained with him throughout his long months of patient suffering and he yielded his soul to God in peaceful sleep.

Joseph Eckert, the second youngest child of John and Cunegunda Eckert, was born on a farm near Dublin, Ontario, Canada, October 8, 1875. His primary education was obtained at the McKillop district school No. 8, and his classical studies at St. Jerome's College, Berlin (now Kitchener), Ontario. Father Eckert's favorite story of these younger years concerned the fact that despite his German parentage and his Polish educators at St. Jerome's College, he had somehow acquired an Irish brogue from his Celtic neighbors which he retained all his life.

After the completion of his classical studies, Father Eckert entered the Dominican Novitiate at Springfield, Kentucky, Nov. 16, 1899. In the following year, Brother Michael Joseph Eckert pronounced his vows; then at St. Joseph's Priory, Somerset, Ohio, for four years he pursued his theological studies. On December 17, 1904, he was ordained to the holy priesthood in the Cathedral of Columbus, Ohio, by the Most Reverend James J. Hartley, Bishop of Columbus.

Father Eckert began his priestly career assisting the pastor at Circleville, Ohio, for a short time. He was then assigned to the Western Mission band with headquarters in Minneapolis, Minn. Here he began his long and active missionary labors that were to know scarcely an interruption for thirty-three years. His work on the missions in the West brought him to most of the important cities and towns in that region and gained for him an enviable reputation as a tireless worker for the cause of the Church and his Order. In 1917, Father Eckert was transferred to the Eastern Mission band. He continued his work throughout the East with the same enthusiasm and unbounded trust in Divine Providence which marked his work in the West.

A man of great physical proportions and stamina, Father Eckert knew well how to use the gifts that God had given him. He followed closely in the footsteps of his brother, Father Stephen Eckert, O.M. Cap., who died in the odor of sanctity after a long and fruitful career

as a missionary among the Negroes. Fiery earnestness, mingled with a spirit of kindness and understanding, made Father Eckert beloved by all with whom he came in contact. Clergy and laity alike sought him out and found him a sure guide and staunch friend. He was especially popular among the Novices to whom he loved to recount old experiences and give helpful hints for the future.

In 1933, Father Eckert's excessive labors began to tell on his strong physical constitution. That same year he was transferred to St. Pius Church, Chicago, where despite his failing health he continued his work in the pulpit amid the scenes and friends of his earliest labors. A sudden relapse in 1938 caused his retirement to a sanatorium where he awaited the final call of his Master. In January, 1939, Father Eckert received notice that he had been awarded the degree of Preacher-General in recognition of his great work on the missions.

On Sunday morning, March 26, Father Eckert received his final assignment to his everlasting home. His body lay in rest in St. Pius Church. Funeral services were held Wednesday morning, March 29, at the Church of St. Pius. The solemn requiem Mass was sung by the Very Rev. R. L. Rumaggi, O.P., P.G., celebrant; Rev. J. V. Picc, O.P., deacon, and Rev. V. F. Kienberger, O.P., subdeacon. The Mass was attended by a large number of the Fathers of the Province, the Students from the Dominican House of Studies, River Forest, a number of the Monsignori and many of the local clergy. A beautiful tribute was tendered the departed missionary by the Very Rev. V. R. Burnell, O.P., P.G., pastor of St. Pius.

To the relatives and countless friends of Father Eckert, DOMINICANA extends expressions of deepest sympathy. May he rest in peace!  
—U.F.