

✠ MOST REVEREND MARTIN STANISLAUS GILLET, O.P. ✠

## TITULAR BISHOP OF NICEA

### 79th Master General of the Order of Preachers

On September 5th, his Dominican brethren throughout the world were shocked and deeply saddened to learn of the death of Archbishop Gillet, former Master General.

Stanislaus Gillet was born of deeply religious parents in Louppy-sur-Loisan on December 14th, 1875, and entered the Minor Seminary at Verdun after the completion of his preliminary education. Perceiving in himself the grace of a religious vocation, the young student remained at Verdun for but a year before entering the Dominican Novitiate at Amiens, where he received the habit of St. Dominic on October 28th, 1897. After completing his spiritual training in the prayerful atmosphere of the Novitiate, Brother Martin—thus was he known among the sons of Dominic—was sent to the Dominican Studium at Flavigny where he soon distinguished himself as a profound student of Thomistic doctrine. The late renowned Dominican theologian Père Antoin Gardeil was then lecturing at Flavigny, and he had among his pupils that year two who were to win renown in intellectual pursuits—Brother Martin Gillet, and Brother Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. The anti-religious laws of 1901 sent the students from Flavigny to the Belgian Province of St. Rose to continue their studies. On September 28th, 1902, Brother Martin became Père Martin Stanislaus Gillet, O.P.

Following his ordination Père Gillet received the Lectorate of Sacred Theology and went on to still further prominence in the field of Philosophy and Theology. After completing the necessary studies he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1905 from the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. He then returned to Louvain and was professor of Moral Theology there from 1905 to 1909. In the latter year, with the restoration of the Province of France, he went to La Saulchoir as professor of Dogmatic Theology. His term as professor was interrupted by the First World War, but, resuming his classes in 1919, he continued to teach at La Saulchoir until 1921 when he was appointed to the chair of Moral and Social Philosophy at the Catholic Institute of Paris. In 1923, after eighteen years of expounding the doctrine of St. Thomas, Père Gillet received the degree of Master of Sacred Theology.

During these eighteen years of teaching and the four years which followed, the young priest embraced other forms of the apostolate of truth. He composed many erudite works embracing the fields of morals, sociology, and education. Among his more famous works of this period are: *Valeur educative de la moral catholique* (1911); *L'Education du coeur* (1911); *Religion et pedagogie* (1914); *Conscience cretienne et justice sociale* (1922); *La morale et les morales* (1925); as well as *L'Eglise et la Famille*, *Le Credo des Artistes*, and *Innocence et Ignorance*. Many of his works have been translated into Italian, Spanish, German, and English.

As a preacher he proved himself an able follower and imitator of St. Dominic. He gave courses of sermons at Notre Dame and many other churches of Paris. He was famous for his conferences to religious men and women. Pulpit, lecture hall, radio—all were utilized to the fullest by this eloquent proponent of Catholic Truth.

During all these labors Père Gillet ever remained a guide of men. Robert Garric writes of him in *La Revue Hebdomadaire*: "... his warmth of heart drew towards his friar's cell all classes of men, students and professors, statesmen and actors . . ." Among his close friends were such literary figures as Paul Claudel and Henri Massis.

In a sense one might say that the year 1927 brought to an end his life of teaching and saw the beginning of his life as an administrator. On July 22nd, 1927, he was elected Provincial of the Province of France. Yet during his years as Provincial, followed by those spent as Master General of the Order, and even in the twilight of his life as Archbishop, his pen was never idle. During his term as Provincial he wrote *Paul Valey et la metaphysique*, and also undertook the spiritual direction of *L'Association du Theatre Cretien*, an organization somewhat similar to our Catholic Actors Guild. It was also while he served as Provincial that he became editor of *Revue des Jeunes*. His last book *Saint Thomas d'Aquin* was written while he was Archbishop.

September 21st, 1929, marked the beginning of his term as Master General. A striking incident occurred at that elective chapter of 1929. 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, Père Gillet outlined the qualifications which a Master General should possess and

the duties which would be incumbent on 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 Dominic's charity. In the years to follow, Père Gillet exemplified these qualities to an intense degree in his own life.

For seventeen long, war-ridden years he led the Friars Preachers. His heart grieved as he saw one by one the convents of his Order close in the countries that had been overcome by enemies of Christ. Of the seven encyclical letters which he wrote during his tenure of office, four were written during the tragic days from 1942 to 1946: *The Study of Saint Thomas For Our Times* (1942); *Dominican Preaching At The Present Time* (1944); *Dominican Spirituality* (1945); and, *Renewed Devotion And The Apostolate Of The Rosary* (1946). As Master General, Père Gillet kept always before himself the needs of the Church and the Order. His paternal solicitude for Dominican Nuns, Sisters, and Tertiaries was also evident. In 1929 he addressed a circular letter to the Second Order Nuns, and in 1930 edited their Constitution. In 1933 he wrote an encyclical letter to the secular Third Order.

During his tenure of office he was also prominent as a member of the Leonine Commission editing the works of St. Thomas. He erected Historical and Liturgical Institutes and founded the School for Dominican Novice Masters.

On September 21st, 1946, the elective General Chapter chose the Most Rev. Emmanuel Suarez to be Père Gillet's successor, and he was relieved of his great burdens at the age of 71. On September 30th of that same year he was notified that he had been raised to the titular Archbishop of Nicea, and on November 17th he was consecrated by His Eminence Cardinal Carlo Raffaele Rossi, Secretary of the Consistorial Congregation.

From his consecration until his death he devoted all his tremendous energies to the special welfare of the Church entrusted to his care. His robust health, however, was greatly weakened by a serious illness which eventually necessitated surgery. After careful medical care, however, he regained some of his former vigor.

Having returned to France for a visit, as was his custom, he died after a short illness on September 5th at the age of 76. *May his soul rest in peace.*

4th.