



MOST REVEREND EMMANUEL SUAREZ, O.P.

# † In Memoriam †

THE MOST REVEREND EMMANUEL SUAREZ

Master General of the Order of Preachers



AS THE SUN was shining upon a new month, a shadow of sadness was cast on the Dominican world. On July 1st of this year, the news reached the many members of St. Dominic's family that their fatherly leader was dead. In their sorrow they did not forget to thank Almighty God for having given the Order of Preachers such a saintly and talented Master General; nor did Dominicans neglect to pray for their beloved departed, and to ask that a man endowed with like gifts succeed him.

About 5 A.M. on June 30, 1954, Father Emmanuel Suarez, Master General of the Order of Friars Preachers, was killed in an automobile accident while traveling to Spain, where he was to preside at a provincial chapter. The Dominican Secretary General, Father Aureliano Martinez, who was accompanying him, also met his death. The scene of the accident was a bit beyond the village of Salcin, France, and thirty miles from the Spanish frontier. The previous evening the Master General had left the French frontier on his way from Italy and continued through the night across southern France. Father Suarez had just successfully completed a difficult part of the road with dangerous curves and entered on a straight stretch. Then for some reason, probably a heart attack, the car suddenly swerved off the road and crashed head on into a tree. A truck driver heard the crash, came to the spot and at once fetched a priest and a doctor. The Bishop of Perpignan, who knew the Master General well, identified his body, and then the sad news of his death began to spread.

After the bodies were taken to the Spanish frontier, they were transferred to Madrid on July 3rd accompanied by the four Provincials of Spain, and the Provincial of Toulouse. Among those waiting to meet the bodies were: Bishops Reigada, O.P., of Cordova, Casimiro Morcillo of Bilbao, and Lahiguera, Auxiliary of Madrid-Alcala; representatives of all religious orders in Spain; Dominican Sisters with their pupils; members of the Third Order of St. Dominic and the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary; the brother and other relatives of Father Suarez; the President of

the Spanish Courts, Stephen Bilbao, along with the Foreign Minister, Dr. Martin Artajo, and the Ministers of Justice and Education; and also the Rector of the University of Madrid, and the Director of the Institute of Spanish Culture.

As soon as the remains of the Master and Secretary General reached Madrid, a Low Mass was offered for the happy repose of their souls in the Basilica of Atocha by Father Joseph Aguilar, O.P., the Prior of the monastery there. After the Holy Sacrifice, *The Libera* was sung, at which Bishop Lahiguera presided. Then the bodies were placed in the *camera ardente*, where the people showed their reverence. His Excellency, the Chief of State, Generalissimo Franco, was present, accompanied by the chiefs of his civil and military houses, the Marques de Huetor de Santillan, General Franco Salgado and several other generals. After paying his respects to the late Master General, General Franco expressed to the Dominican Fathers the deep sorrow of Spain at the death of an illustrious son.

The solemn funeral Mass was celebrated on July 6th in the Spanish capital. It was attended by the four Dominican Provincials of Spain, three from France and others from England, Holland, Belgium, Ireland, Germany, and Italy; by a large group of regular and diocesan clergy, and several representatives of government, including the ambassadors of Portugal, France and many South American countries. Father Esteban Gomez, Socius for Spain, represented the Rome general-headquarters of the Dominicans.

Requiem Masses were offered for Father Suarez throughout the United States. The principal Mass for the Province of St. Joseph, whose Provincial, Father Terence S. McDermott, is the interim superior of the entire Order, was held on July 5th at St. Vincent Ferrer's Church in New York. In accord with an ancient tradition, the Mass was celebrated by a Franciscan, Father Terence McNally. Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Flannely of New York gave the absolution after the Mass.

Fathers Suarez and Martinez were buried on July 7th in the Church constructed at the birthplace of St. Dominic at Caleruega, Spain. The funeral cortege, which had driven the hundred miles north from Madrid, was led by an inconspicuous hearse. In the first car were the Master General's brother, sister, and relatives. Then came an unending line of cars carrying bishops, members of the regular and diocesan clergy, and the faithful. At Alanda, about twenty miles from Caleruega, all the clergy and people of

the district were assembled. The procession halted; the local clergy sang the *Libera* and blessed the coffins. The final Requiem was said by Bishop Velasquez, O.P., a former Vicar-Apostolic in China, from which he had been expelled by the Reds. Besides the Archbishop of Burgos and the Bishop of Osma, there were present the Dominican Bishops of Cordova and of Salamanca, and also the Abbot of Silos. The Military Governor of the Province and the local government officials were also present. The two bodies were laid to rest in a specially constructed tomb in the Church only a few yards from the actual spot where St. Dominic was born.

Father Suarez was elected the 80th Master General of the Dominican Order on September 20, 1946, at the General Chapter held in Rome. He was the fourteenth Spaniard to be so honored, and at the time of his election was the Rector of the Angelicum in Rome. The following brief sketch of Father Suarez's life should provide us with a deeper appreciation of his extraordinary personality. In 1897 Emmanuel Suarez was born in the village of Campomanes, Spain. His first studies for the Order were made at the College of Corias between the years 1909 and 1913. He began his fruitful life as a Dominican by receiving the habit at Padron (La Coruña) where he also made simple profession on August 30, 1914. After completing his philosophical studies at Cangas de Narcea (Asturias), Brother Emmanuel began his theology at the famous college of St. Stephen in Salamanca. In 1921 "the day which the Lord has made" arrived, and Brother Emmanuel became Father Suarez. Immediately following ordination he was sent to Rome to further his studies, and in 1925 he received the high degree of J.U.D. As doctor of both canon and civil law, he returned to Spain, having been named professor and vice-rector in Corias College. In 1927 he was sent once again to Rome, where he was made professor of Canon Law in the Pontifical Institute of the Angelicum.

A further insight into the great gifts of Father Suarez is gained from his reputation as a canon lawyer in continual service of the Church. He solved successfully several cases for the Roman Rota, even in face of opposing opinions from other esteemed canonists. Because of his profound knowledge, and especially his prudent judgment, Father Suarez's decisions enjoyed extremely high authority, and commanded the deepest respect. He was invited to take the examination for the highest scholastic degree in the Dominican Order, the S.T.M. (Master of Sacred Theology),

and again his efforts were rewarded with success by the "Giver of all good gifts." He was the first religious to obtain, after his studies of canon law, the title of lawyer in the Tribunal of the Supreme Roman Rota. His scholastic merits were crowned by his appointment as "Rector Magnificus" of the International Institute and University of the Angelicum on June 20, 1941. He was entrusted with several other responsible positions in the Church. Some of these offices were: Promotor of Justice in the General Curia of Rome; Consultor for the Sacred Congregations of Sacraments and of the Oriental Church; member of the Commission of Matrimonial Cases and of Vigilance over the Tribunals; lawyer of the Sacred Roman Rota Tribunal. Father Suarez's talents were also recognized in his native country. He was made a member of the Superior Council of Scientific Investigations in Spain. At the command of General Franco, the Foreign Minister, Martin Artajo, conferred upon him at Rome in 1950 the cross of the Order of the Catholic Isabella.

But lest we lose sight of the Christian charity that motivated his activity, let us listen to an incident out of the Spanish Civil War. He was in Spain for a visit in 1936 when the war broke out. Father Suarez narrowly escaped death at the hands of the Communists. For two and one-half years he disguised himself as a longshoreman to help his countrymen escape from the red-controlled areas. Finally he himself escaped on a British freighter and made his way back to Rome.

Thus far we have caught but a cursory glimpse of a man of God, who in serving the Church through his Order has made an outstanding and lasting contribution to the Catholic Church. It would be wise to read what one who lived and worked with him has written. The following letter was sent to us by Father T. M. Sparks, O.P., the Master General's North American Socius. His words should help us appreciate more deeply Father Suarez's Christ-like personality.

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Convento S. Sabina (Aventino), Roma (8-48)  
July 9, 1954

To the Members and Friends of the Dominican Family  
in North America:

Since you have shown a sense of so deeply a personal loss in your messages of sympathy here on the occasion of the tragic

deaths of the Master General and the Secretary General, it seemed good to add to our expression of gratitude a word about the events of these last few days.

Father General had had a very busy week-end in Sicily returning to Rome by air Sunday night, June 27th. He was up the next day at 2:00 A.M. to finish some urgent work for the Holy See. He labored that whole day and the entire night until his Mass next morning at 3:00 A.M. Immediately he set out for Spain where he was to preside at a Provincial Chapter yet that week. That evening he left the Italian driver at the frontier, and continued on through the night until 5:00 A.M., Wednesday, June 30th (obviously in his usual thoughtfulness for others not wishing to disturb the Lay Brother ready at Nice to drive him to the Spanish frontier where another driver awaited him). Then the accident occurred, not far past the village of Salcin, beyond Perpignan, and 30 miles from the Spanish frontier. It is quite possible, a doctor on the scene testified, that Father General suffered a heart attack from overwork.

Perhaps you have already seen the photograph taken of Father Suarez in death: his face shows great serenity, and even the trace of a smile.

The bodies were first placed in the village church where the parish priest immediately said Mass for their souls. Quite by accident they were placed beneath a statue of St. Dominic with his hand outstretched in benediction. Later the Bishop of Perpignan, realizing that one of the victims was the Master General, got in touch with the Holy See and with the Dominicans at Toulouse. The bodies afterwards lay in state in the Chapel of the Dominican Sisters (Albi) at Perpignan until they were taken to Madrid with stops enroute at our churches in Barcelona and Saragossa for a *Libera*.

You have read about the Solemn Mass here at Santa Sabina on July 3rd sung by the Franciscans (they have already asked to celebrate also the Solemn Month's Mind); about General Franco's insistence on being present for the Mass when the bodies first arrived in Madrid; how Masses were said in the "camera ardente" each day from 4:00 A.M. until noon; how there were present among the Dominicans at the funeral on July 6th not only members of the Curia from Rome—Father Gomez, Vicar of Father McDermott (who as Provincial of the Province where the last General Chapter was held governs the Order in the interim), Father Tindal, and the undersigned—but also Provincials—all of

Spain and France; from Germany, England, Ecuador (who was in Europe), Belgium—as well as other representatives including Father H. C. Graham and four Adrian Sisters.

On July 7th the funeral cortège drove 100 miles north to Caleruega for the burial. At intervals all along the road soldiers stood at attention: honors paid to Father Suarez inasmuch as he was Master General of the Dominicans and thus a grandee of Spain. All of us who were privileged to be along this day felt we were also making a pilgrimage to Our Holy Father St. Dominic, to Blessed Jane his mother, and to Blessed Mannes, whose memories are so fresh at Caleruega. We were sad indeed, but also confident that from heaven these three were looking down propitiously on the whole Order in its tremendous loss.

At Caleruega, where the project of restoration (adjoining the Second Order Monastery), so dear to the great, apostolic, Dominican heart of Father Suarez, is making good progress, we all were convinced that even in death he was urging us—all of us living Dominicans—to be anxious indeed that Our Holy Founder's birthplace be a worthy shrine, but also, and above all, to be anxious that we are ever intensely mindful of that unique Rock whence, by the grace of God and Mary Immaculate, we are hewn.

Please continue to pray for our dear departed, for Father McDermott, for us all.

Sincerely yours in Our Lady and St. Dominic,

T. M. SPARKS, O.P.

North American Assistant