



Rev. Fr. J. J. O'Connell, Rev. Fr. J. J. O'Connell, and Rev. Fr. J. J. O'Connell

## FATHER NADRA BENEDICT JOSEPH, O.P. PROCURATOR GENERAL OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS

Nadra John Joseph was born January 17, 1919, at Clarksdale, Mississippi, the son of Mary Chamoun and Naaman Sader, a merchant. Both parents were born in Sareen, Lebanon and had come to this country over fifty years ago. He was given the name Nadra at Baptism after a noted Lebanese statesman. Because of language difficulties, he adopted the use of Joseph for his last name instead of Sader.

Since there were no Catholic schools in Clarksdale at the time, Fr. Joseph received his complete education in the public schools, and graduated from high school in 1937. Then he attended Draughon's Business College in Memphis, Tennessee, with the intention of becoming a Certified Public Accountant. He graduated in November, 1939.

While in Memphis, he became acquainted with the Dominican Fathers at historic St. Peter's. Fr. Paul Curran, O.P., China missionary, then pastor, guided and assisted him in entering the Order. He was admitted to Providence College as a student for the Order in 1940 and two years later received the habit at St. Rose Priory, Springfield, Kentucky, taking the name Benedict in religion. He pronounced his first vows there on August 16, 1943.

Fr. Joseph then studied philosophy for three years at St. Joseph's Priory, Somerset, Ohio, and theology at the House of Studies in Washington, D. C. He was ordained to the priesthood June 9, 1949. A year later, when he completed his theological studies, he received the lectorate in sacred theology.

His first assignment was to Rome as secretary to the Most Rev. Procurator General, then Fr. Paul A. Skehan, O.P. He arrived in Rome August 15, 1950, the middle of the Holy Year, and was told by the Provincial, Fr. T. S. McDermott, O.P., to study for the doctorate in sacred theology.

After two years, he was acting Procurator General when the Procurator General was absent from Rome. On August 6, 1962, Fr. Aniceto Fernandez, O.P., newly elected Master General, appointed him to succeed Most Rev. Mariner Theodore Smith, O.P., as Procurator General.

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The Procurator General is the official liaison between the Order and the Holy See. He handles and presents all cases and petitions for the Order, its provinces, houses and individual members when these require direct contact with any of the Sacred Congregations in Rome. His appointment is made directly by the Master General and has an indefinite duration.

### **FATHER ANICETO FERNANDEZ ALONSO, O.P. EIGHTY-SECOND MASTER GENERAL OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS**

Father Aniceto Fernandez Alonso, a Spanish successor to our Spanish founder and Father, St. Dominic, now has supreme jurisdiction over the entire Dominican Order, the first of the mendicant orders.

Fr. Aniceto's religious vocation was the fruit of a true exemplary Christian education. After living on the family farm in Pardecivil, Leon (he was born on May 17, 1897), for sixteen years, he received the Dominican habit, and a year later (1914) pronounced his simple vows in the convent of Padron (La Coruna). Finishing his philosophical and theological studies at Salamanca with singular honors, he was ordained a priest in 1920. Before pursuing graduate studies, the young priest was appointed superior of the international shrine of the Virgin of La Peña de Francia. Here he developed the talents of an administrator, which later became so important. After two years, Fr. Fernandez was sent to Madrid to the Central University where he pursued studies in the physical sciences and obtained the licence degree in 1925. The same year, he was sent to teach philosophy at Corias (Asturias).

His prestige in the Order was growing. He was called to Rome, earned his doctorate in philosophy and was appointed chairman of the department of natural philosophy at the Angelicum. In 1946, he was named assistant Provincial for the Spanish provinces in the General Curia of the Order. Almost immediately he was designated Vicar General to the late Fr. Emmanuel Suarez, his classmate, then Master General. During his term as Vicar (until 1950), he was also consultor to several of the Roman Congregations.

In 1950, Fr. Aniceto was called from his high position in Rome by

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the capitular Fathers of the Spanish Province who elected him Provincial that year. Immediately, he set to work with his customary efficiency. After four years, he was re-elected, and in 1958, was unanimously postulated by the Provincial Chapter. No other provincial has been retained in office by three successive chapters in the Province of Spain since its inception in 1222.

Fr. Fernandez's work as Provincial of Spain has been forward and decisive. He was responsible not only for the Spanish Province itself, which numbers 1080 religious (the largest in the Order), but also the vicariates of Mexico (since 1961, the Province of St. James) and Central America, and the missions of Peru.

A few of the projects on the Iberian peninsula alone which he accepted and staffed with adequate personnel are the Labor Institute of Corias (Asturias), the Labor University of Cordoba, and the Labor Institute of Vergara (Guipuzcoa). At present, the Labor Institute is still being built as is the newly founded Major College of Atocho (Madrid). He has rebuilt La Peña de Francia, begun a new house for the Student Fathers in Salamanca, and one for the Student Brothers in philosophy at the convent of Las Caldas de Besaya (Santander). There is a high school under construction in Oviedo, another in La Coruna, as well as a minor seminary in Leon, and the shrine of the Virgin del Camino. Almost as a posthumous task of his provincialship, Fr. Fernandez just this summer signed the papers for the reconstruction of the old convent in Estella (Navarre) which will serve as a novitiate and training school for Laybrothers.

Yet, above all the bustle of office, Fr. Aniceto's predominant trait prevails—his goodness, a goodness of character shown day by day that makes him loved and respected by all who know him. It was this quality, together with his integrity and self-assurance, his capacity for work, and keen intelligence that brought the wave of assent from his brethren when he was raised to the Generalship of the Order.

In the name of all the Dominicans of the United States, DOMINICANA offers Fr. Fernandez heartiest congratulations and a promise of prayers.