



Very Rev. L. F. Kearney, O. P., S. T. M.

The Very Rev. L. F. Kearney, O. P., S. T. M., Ex-Provincial

By BRO. JOHN McGOVERN, O. P.



It is with sad hearts that the Dominicans of St. Joseph's Province announce the death of one of their most conspicuous and beloved brethren, the Very Rev. Lawrence Francis Kearney, ex-Provincial and Master in Sacred Theology. He passed away after a short illness from pneumonia, on November 25, 1924, at Zanesville, Ohio.

All who knew Father Kearney will testify that he was a man of many talents. In him were combined to a remarkable degree the qualities of an able theologian, of a gifted preacher and retreat-master, and of a wise, energetic and kind superior. But those who knew him best, the people of St. Thomas parish, Zanesville, to whom he ministered for thirty years, loved him above all, for those qualities of soul which made him a zealous priest and a great-hearted, kindly father to them. Marked as were his gifts and attainments, Father Kearney ever retained that simplicity and humility which distinguish the truly great.

The achievements of Father Kearney's life were so many and so important that it is impossible to do justice to them here. This sketch must be confined to a mere recital of deeds and dates. Father Kearney was born near Lexington, Ky., on January 3, 1861. He began his education in the schools there, and later, entered the Dominican College, St. Rose, Ky. When only sixteen he entered the novitiate attached to this convent, and made his profession as a member of the Order of Preachers the next year, August 15, 1878.

He began his studies for the priesthood at St. Joseph's House of Studies, Somerset, O., and in 1881, his marked ability led his superiors to send him to the Dominican College at Louvain to complete his course. Here he was ordained priest, September 9, 1883, a dispensation being necessary as he was only twenty-two years old. In July, 1885, he received the degree of Lector in Sacred Theology, and in September of the same year, he returned to the United States.

His first office was that of Novice Master at St. Rose's; December, 1885. He also taught philosophy and classics there, and acted as chaplain to the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine's Academy. His reputation for learning and eloquence spread rapidly, and he was frequently called from his convent to fill various pulpits.

He was next assigned to the post of Novice Master in the House of Studies at St. Joseph's, March 1890, where he also taught philosophy. A year later, he was chosen Prior of the community of St. Joseph's, and pastor of the parish attached to the convent.

His superiors appointed him pastor of St. Thomas Church, Zanesville, O., in December, 1894, where he passed the remainder of his life. In October, 1897, Father Kearney was chosen Provincial, the highest office in the Province. Later, in 1901, he received the degree of Master in Sacred Theology, the greatest distinction the Order of Preachers can confer.

This same year he was reelected Provincial. During this term, he accomplished his greatest work, the erection of the magnificent Dominican House of Studies at Washington, D. C. The corner-stone of this structure was laid in August, 1903, and the building was ready for occupancy in August, 1905. Father Kearney was made Provincial for the third time in 1905. This was the first instance in the history of the Province that a Provincial served three successive terms. During this term, in conjunction with Bishop Hartley, he established at Columbus, O., St. Patrick's High School, afterwards known as Aquinas College. He was elected Provincial a fourth time, in 1909, but as the Order generally allows this office to be held for only one term, the Master General refused to grant any further dispensation.

After completing his final term as Provincial, Father Kearney was attached to St. Thomas Church, Zanesville, where he acted as pastor a great part of the time. During his charge here, he completely renovated the church twice, on the last occasion, installing a new set of stained-glass windows of Belgium manufacture. A year or so before his death he completed the building of a new rectory and a modern school, besides thoroughly renovating the Sisters' residence. These improvements, amounting to several hundred thousand dollars, have been almost completely paid for by the congregation.

What time Father Kearney could snatch from his other duties were devoted to the giving of missions, lectures, and retreats for priests, so that he had little opportunity for continuous writing, though he contributed many theological articles to ecclesiastical magazines.

Among Father Kearney's surviving relatives are his sister, Mother Francesca, first Mother General of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Sienna, Springfield, Ky., now at St. Agnes College, Memphis; another sister, Sarah; and two brothers, Rodger and William, all of Lexington, Ky.

Father Kearney's funeral, held at St. Thomas Church, Zanesville, on November 29, was attended by many of his brethren, and by numerous representatives of the secular clergy. His last resting place is in the Dominican cemetery of St. Rose's Priory, Springfield, Ky.

In the death of Father Kearney, the Church in America has lost a devoted champion; the Dominicans, a brilliant and beloved member of their Order; and the people of his parish, a revered and zealous pastor.

