

FATHER EMMANUEL SUAREZ

1895-1954

THE tragic death in a motor accident, on June 30, of Father Emmanuel Suarez, seventy-ninth successor of St Dominic as Master General of the Order of Preachers, is more than a matter of domestic sorrow for the Dominicans whom he ruled with such wisdom and such fruit for the last eight years. Before his election to the supreme office of his Order, Father Suarez was already pre-eminent as a canon lawyer and as Consultor of numerous Roman Congregations; and his acknowledged authority in these spheres was to remain at the service of the Church. But his work in this connection was inevitably of a somewhat hidden character; moreover in a Dominican review we may be pardoned for recalling in particular his work in and for the Order, and that at a time of the greatest difficulty with its legacy of the war and its aftermath.

Father Suarez brought to the government of the Dominican Order not merely the gift of an exact and trained intelligence proper to an eminent and experienced lawyer. The criterion for any Dominican, whatever his function within the Order, must be St Dominic himself; and it was more than a common nationality which established the marked similarity of the late Master General of the Order of Preachers to its founder. For he was a man of vision and courage as wide and as fearless as that of St Dominic, and to these qualities was allied an apostolic zeal no less burning and insatiable. He was not merely concerned to conserve and stabilize his Order in the post-war chaos of the world; he believed that an Order devoted from the first to the appreciation and spread of Truth in all its aspects, natural and supernatural, had a mission of peculiar value and urgency in the face of the basic untruth that strives for the ascendancy in our own day. He therefore encouraged and indeed pressed for the rapid increase of the Order, both in numbers and in the range of its work, and was able to communicate his own vision, courage and zeal to his brethren throughout the world. Most of them he had himself spoken to in the course of his ceaseless visitations of the Provinces of the Order, for he made it his primary business to see and to

hear for himself. He met his death on his way to preside at the Chapter of his own Province of Spain, having but two days before returned to Rome from a visit to Sicily, and it was his intention afterwards to proceed to South America. This was typical of the constant and personal care of his rule, and there can be few Dominicans throughout the world whose recollection of the Father General will not be in terms of his patient and fatherly interest in their personal lives and work.

Undismayed by the increasing stress of his own preoccupations, without diminishing in the slightest his service to the Holy See, he was unfailingly at the service of his brethren, and his greatest service to them was his readiness to listen and his power to encourage. His clarity of view and his sure firmness of judgment in no way clashed with his deep sympathy for the aspirations of all those Dominicans who were alive to the true meaning of their mission in the contemporary world. These qualities combined indeed to meet new situations and solve difficulties which might well have daunted a less courageous man and defeated a less able one. He had the true magnanimity which can accommodate itself to the accidental requirements of place and conditions, without for one moment losing sight of the essential means and purpose of the apostolic Order he was called upon to govern. His death must seem untimely, yet both the work he did and the inspiration he gave will long remain. May he rest in peace.

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