

Most Reverend Hilary Doswald

1887-1951

ONE of the most illustrious members of the Carmelite Order, the Most Reverend Hilary Doswald, was born on March 19th, 1887, in a little town of Wuerttemberg, where his parents were conducting a business. When, as a boy of fourteen, he was pursuing his study of the humanities, he decided on the advice of the Most Reverend Pius Mayer, then superior of the Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, to come to America, together with his companion, known today as Father Sebastian Urnauer. While engaged in his studies at the monastery of New Baltimore, he was privileged to have as his teacher the renowned Father Avertanus Brennan, whom afterwards Father Hilary himself praised highly. (Analecta, IV, 118) Having completed his novitiate in New Baltimore, Father Hilary there made his simple vows on December 26th, 1894, and finally on August 6th, 1900, at Pittsburgh, he was ordained to the sacred priesthood. Since he was only twenty-two years old at the time, it was necessary to obtain an apostolic dispensation.

He was soon transferred to Chicago, where steps were underway for the establishment of the monastery of Saint Cyril's. There Father Hilary was to function as professor of Latin and Greek. How well he succeeded in this work is testified by the calibre and number of former pupils who paid their respects to him on the occasion of his golden jubilee.

In 1912 he was elected prior and held this office for three terms. As prior of Chicago he, saw to the establishment of our monastery there, although there were some among the brethren who were very hesitant about going through with the plans, due to the extreme risks involved. It was Father Hilary who persuaded the major superiors to uphold the plans.

In 1921 the duty of pastor of St. Cyril's parish in Chicago fell to his lot and he, who had so ably functioned as both teacher and prior, discharged his parochial duties well and ably. The parish of St. Cyril's underwent as it were a rebirth. Father Hilary exercised an assiduous care of the sick, developed the various parish societies and finally supervised the building of a parish school, a monument to his own endeavor, a school which even now accommodates about four hundred children.

It would be a cause of wonder if Father Hilary had devoted his time and strength entirely and solely to the establishment of our monastery. The truth is he had many other activities and obligations. In the provincial chapter of 1909 he had been the house *socius* and secretary. At the same chapter he was elected first definator. His work continued unabated in Chicago until finally in 1925 he was sent to Rome to assist the Carmelite provincials, in matters of the gravest import, with his wisdom and prudence.

In the General Chapter held in 1925 Father Hilary was elected assistant to the Most Reverend Father Magennis, who always held him in the highest esteem. On May 8th, 1927 Father Hilary was named Consultor of the Congregation of the Sacraments. Finally in the chapter of 1931, he was elected Prior General of the whole Order. His manifold accomplishments in that office should be treated in much more detail; here only the surface of his work may be touched. When first he assumed control of the entire Order, he made clear his aims by the very words of his motto: *Ardeo nam credo*. By word and work he tried to inflame the hearts of his men in order that they might make it their concern to increase the glory of Carmel in the number and quality of her members. Well did he fulfill the task allotted to him by the General Chapter of editing the liturgical books, the psalter, diurnum, breviary and missal. Yet if one had asked Father Hilary what he considered his greatest work, beyond doubt he would have replied that it was the

Directorium Carmelitanum Vitae Spiritualis. He visited the whole Order many times, sparing no pains to arouse in his subjects the zealous fire with which he burned.

In 1937 for the second time he was elected General of the whole Order. Alas, due to the ravages of war, he was forced to transfer his headquarters from the city which he loved elsewhere. From the year 1940 he directed Carmelite affairs from New York City, whence he could more easily get in touch with his subjects. How much aid he was able to give to our Carmelite brothers and sisters, suffering in the war zones, only God will reveal on the day of judgment. For almost sixteen years he bore the heavy responsibility of his task, finally being freed from it by the election of the Most Reverend Kilian Lynch in 1947.

Returning to his own province he chose the Washington House of Studies as his residence. There it was his delight to celebrate the community Mass every day. On August 6th, 1950, he was privileged, by the Grace of God, to celebrate the golden jubilee of his priesthood. This he celebrated not only in the monasteries of his own province but even at Rome itself. The joy and honor which this celebration accorded him has already been told, not only in the pages of this magazine but also in the letters which he himself sent to his fellow Carmelites.

After Christmas in Rome he was ordered, because of a heart condition, to bed; but was able to celebrate Mass on the feast of St. Hilary. However, on the second day of March at five-thirty in the afternoon he suddenly died, having received Extreme Unction. May he rest in peace.

With what gifts of mind and heart Father Hilary was endowed it is most difficult to say. In the first place, his knowledge of Sacred Theology, particularly moral, is to be commended. Throughout his life many priests and even bishops sought his advice in the most difficult cases. He was consulted all the more because he knew how to keep his own counsel concerning what he was asked.

Deserving of special commendation is his experience in arts and letters which brought him world-wide fame. His Latin writings were most willingly accepted for publication in the pages of *Vox Urbis* by the renowned Aristides Leonori. Several documents of grave moment he rendered into Latin at the request of bishops. Not only did he himself know how to write Latin well but he was able to arouse in others the desire to do likewise.

Most praiseworthy was his strict sense of duty. Whatever work he had to do, he by no means omitted.

Not to be forgotten is his loyalty to his friends and associates. If anyone did him a favor he never forgot it. As a result many received after his death letters and mementoes, sent while he was yet alive.

Of Father Hilary's interior life, what can I say? He was truly a man endowed with the greatest devotion to God and His holy Mother. He was not, however, the kind of man who manifests his feelings of piety before others. Those with whom he was on more intimate terms can attest to his goodness and virtue. Particularly outstanding were his fervor in the celebration of Mass, his ardor in preaching, his prudence in act, his loyalty in friendship, his patience in trials, his persistence in labor, his reverence toward superiors, his solicitude for the younger men. He was a man of the greatest simplicity of mind and heart; he refused to see guile or evil in others. Even if he felt there was guile, he could conceal his suspicion.

These words are written in sadness by one who considers it a privilege to have been among the disciples of Father Hilary, even though the least of them, Father Leo Walter of the Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary. May he rest in peace!