

PROMINENT ASSUMPTIONIST REV. GERVAIS QUENARD, A.A. (1875-1961)
SUPERIOR GENERAL (1923-1952)

First assignments in the Near East

Born in Chignin, next to Montmélian (Savoie), France, on January 11, 1875, Jean-Claude Quénard, after grammar school, already became somewhat of a founder by participating in the foundation of the alumnate in Miribel-les-Echelles (Isère) in 1887. After finishing his secondary education in Brian (Drôme) from 1890 to 1892, he received the Assumptionist habit on August 7, 1892 at the novitiate in Livry (Seine-Saint-Denis) with the name of Brother Gervais. Annually professed August 7, 1893, he finished his novitiate in Phanaraki, Turkey, where he made final profession August 15, 1894, and where he studied philosophy (1894-1896). He studied theology in Jerusalem (1896-1900) where he was ordained a priest August 20, 1899 by Latin Patriarch Luigi Piavi.

Appointed professor of Holy Scripture in Jerusalem (1900-04), he collaborated with *Le Guide de la Palestine / Guide to Palestine*
before being assigned to the publications of
La Bonne Presse
(1904-05) where he felt uncomfortable. Father Emmanuel Bailly appointed him to Russia along with four confreres. Father Gervais began his activity in Vilnius (1905-08). In 1908, he was appointed teacher at Saint Augustine College in Philippopolis, Bulgaria, where he quickly became its superior. However, in 1915, the leaders responsible for the politico-military alliances in Bulgaria invoked the king's friendship with the religious as grounds for their expulsion. Father Gervais found refuge in Romania (1915-19). After the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919, he pleaded without ill-feelings the cause of Bulgaria and returned to

Philippopolis (1919-20) where he was appointed Superior of the Near Eastern Mission (1920-23).

Assumptionist Superior General 1923-52

In 1923, the Holy See took it upon itself to appoint Father Gervais Superior General, thereby bringing to an end the transitional years of Father Joseph Maubon as Vicar General and the provisional character of the Assumptionist Constitutions. Appointed at age 48, renewed twice by election, in 1929 and 1946 for two terms of 12 years, Father Gervais was able to transmit to the Congregation, reunited after the 1918-1922 crisis, the enthusiasm of his own youth. He, as well as the members of the Curia, needed all the energy and moral strength they could muster to recreate unity, to regroup in France the elderly religious who had been living alone, and to impose new directions and new leaders: Father Merklen at *La Croix* and Father Protin in Bordeaux.

The Congregation was reorganized according to the Roman directives into 4 provinces: 3 in France and 1 in Belgium-Holland. In 1924, Father Gervais had *La Bonne Presse* recognized as a civil corporation in order to reassume the work that Paul Féron-Vrau had administered since 1900. In 1932, he did not hesitate to support
La Croix's
new orientation whereby it broke with its former positions and adopted those proposed by Pius XI: condemnation of nationalism and encouragement of movements known as
Catholic Action.
He reunited the two branches of the Oblate Sisters in Paris and Nîmes (1926); he dressed the wounds inflicted by World War I; and he adapted the structures of the Institute to accommodate its rapid expansion. In 1935, the 4 provinces, numbering 1,036 religious living in 102 communities, made room for 3 vice-provinces that became autonomous provinces in 1946: Holland, England, and North America. That same year, the Congregation counted 1,596 religious living in 125 communities in 23 countries.



[redacted]