

Rev. Fr Arnold Van Everdingen, C.SS.R. (1808-1856)

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Father Arnold Van Everdingen was born at Cuylenborg in Brabant, Holland, on the 26th of August, 1808, of pious parents. He does not seem to have had any thought of the priesthood when a young boy. There is not much known of his youth and early manhood, beyond the fact that he ever preserved a lively faith and piety and a desire to serve God more perfectly. Later we find him studying Theology in the Seminary at Hagveld. After his term there he was ordained priest in the 39th year of his age, April 3rd 1847. His mother, a most holy woman, assisted at his first Mass, and it is related that she fainted from very joy.

He exercised himself in the duties of a secular priest for three years, and then entered the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. After his profession at St Trond in Belgium on the 8th September 1851, he was sent to Clapham, London, in 1853. Of his short stay there, we read, "His Zeal for the conversion of sinners was insatiable..." "In a short time he overcame the difficulties of English and preached with great fruit...." "It was wonderful to see the number of persons, quite unknown to him that flocked to his confessional, and all went away from him in peace, testifying publicly, to his goodness, compassion, and zeal for the salvation of souls."

In 1855, he took part in the great Mission at Kingstown, after which he went to Limerick (Ireland). He showed the same zeal in Ireland as in England, both at home and on Mission, sparing himself in nothing, until Saturday 20th December 1856, when he was seized with fever which obliged him to leave his confessional. Nevertheless, he returned to the same salutary work the next morning, and celebrated the eleven o'clock Mass. It was the last time he offered the Holy Sacrifice, for that day he took to his bed, to leave it no more.

He soon became delirious, but on Christmas Day, God gave him the full use of his faculties; he made a General Confession and received the Last Sacraments. From the moment he received the Viaticum he enjoyed peace and tranquillity until the evening of St Stephen's Day when surrounded by the Community, praying for his passing soul, he finally expired.

He was the first Redemptorist to die in Ireland, and the first to be laid to rest in the crypt beneath the sanctuary of St Alphonsus' Church.

The concourse of priests, secular and regular, and of the faithful at his obsequies, showed the esteem in which they held him whom they knew as "Father Arnold." †