

Rev. Fr Augustine Freitag, C.S.S.R. (1836-1882)

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Father Freitag was born on 1 July, 1836, of Lutheran parents, whom he lost when still young. He went to America with the intention of becoming a Protestant minister. But God ordained otherwise. In Baltimore he happened to assist at a Mission given by the Redemptorists, by which he was enlightened as to the truth of the Catholic religion. Obedient to the inspiration, he not only embraced the Faith, but wished to devote himself entirely to God's service. He was, at last, received by Father Provincial Ruland as a novice into the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. From that moment he began to exhibit those virtues by which he distinguished himself throughout the remainder of his life: a lively faith and a most disinterested charity. He was professed on 27 May, 1857. He was one of the twenty ordained by Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick on 21 March, 1863.

Shortly after his ordination, Father Freitag had an excellent opportunity of displaying his zeal for souls among the sick and paroled soldiers in and around Annapolis. Besides working in the holy ministry, he had charge of some branches of study, especially of Greek, which he taught the younger students then in Annapolis. In 1865, he was transferred to New York where, for the first three years, he was stationed at the house of the Most Holy Redeemer, afterward, until 1869, at that of St. Alphonsus, whence he returned to Annapolis.

From 1871 to 1873, being Rector, he was most solicitous for the adornment of the church. He furnished it with new and costly vestments and other articles pertaining to Divine worship. After leaving Annapolis, he was stationed first in Boston, and then at St. Alphonsus, New York, where he died. As a missionary, he was very zealous and full of charity. Indeed, his charity toward the abandoned sinner was that of a tender mother for her sick child. It may be mentioned that, when in Boston, he took delight in visiting the colony of Penobscot Indians, in Maine, whose hearts he won by his devotedness.

While still in the vigour of manhood, a slow sickness gradually sapped his strength and, after prolonged suffering, he died peacefully on 26 July, 1882. The large concourse at his obsequies betokened the great esteem in which Father Freitag was universally held. †



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