

# Very Rev. Fr Joseph Helmprecht, C.SS.R. (1820-1884)

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Father Helmprecht, born on 14 January, 1820, was the son of a well-to-do family in Bavaria. He made his studies partly with the Benedictines at Metten, where the celebrated Abbot Boniface Wimmer was one of his preceptors, and partly at the University of Munich. Before completing his theological course, he applied to be received as a novice of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer for the American Missions. Being accepted, he arrived in America, June, 1843, and made his novitiate and finished his studies at the old St. James monastery in Baltimore.

He was professed on 6 December, 1844. There, too, he was ordained on 21 December, 1845. He performed his first ministerial services in Baltimore until 1848, when he was sent to Buffalo as Superior, at the age of twenty-eight. His spirit of regularity, prudence, solid learning and piety justified his appointment. In 1854, he became Rector of the monastery in New York, which office he held until 1860.



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For only a short time, from 1860 to 1863, he again became a subject, and as such lived contented and happy. But in 1865 he had to accompany the Provincial, Father DeDycker to Rome, whence he returned as the latter's successor. The heavy burden and great responsibilities of the Provincialate, which he had to bear for four successive terms, made him only more humble and charitable. During those twelve years of office he had innumerable trials and sufferings, some connected with his office, others of a private nature. Some of them demanded more than ordinary courage and confidence in Divine Providence. But he bore everything with heroic fortitude. We refer only to the Annapolis disaster of 1866.

When relieved of the Provincialate in 1877, he was appointed Rector of St. Michaels, Baltimore, and in 1880 of the monastery of the Most Holy Redeemer, New York, where he had been Rector twenty-five years before. The faithful of the parish, who had known him long ago, were delighted to see him back in his old position, but the good Father was worn out by cares and troubles. He sighed for the moment when he could again be a simple subject, a favour which he daily implored of Almighty God.

God granted his desire. At the expiration of his three-year term, another Father was appointed Rector, and Father Helmprecht was free to endure in silent patience the torments of his protracted sickness. Like a true and genuine disciple of his Crucified Redeemer, he suffered almost without relief and comfort. Such had long been his desire. He wished to die within the Octave of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and to die with no one present.

The Octave came, the 15th of December, 1884. It was past ten o'clock that night, when good Brother Lambert, his beloved infirmarian, said to him: "Well, Father, you are not going to die within the Octave, after all." Father Helmprecht, in his native language, was heard to whisper: "Mother! Mother! Mother!" The "Mother" heard her faithful son. After some little time, he said to the Brother: "If you will leave me, I think I can sleep a little now." Brother Lambert, to gratify him, withdrew from the room. Looking in a little later, he found Father Helmprecht lying dead, as calm and composed as when he had last seen him. His words were fulfilled.

All who were closely acquainted with Father Helmprecht knew him to be a truly saintly priest and Redemptorist. It is, therefore, to be hoped that, at some future day, a lengthy biography of this holy man will be published. James McMaster, the celebrated journalist, who knew the Father well, declared that he did not hesitate to invoke his intercession. †

