

## Father Albert Stoeckel, C.Ss.R. - Spending time with Our Lord

posted on 01/06/10 07:51 PM by Fr. Santo Arrigo C.Ss.R.

The summer of 2010 would have been an eventful one for our Father Stoeckel. He would have celebrated three anniversaries—that of his birth on August 15th, of his 78th as a Redemptorist on August 2nd, and his 73rd as a priest on June 20th. Instead, since he died on May 13th this year, he will celebrate these events with our Redeeming Saviour as he takes his place in heaven.

Father Stoeckel's life story has been told several times in our Co-Redemptorist News. Here I try to capture, what seems to me, is at the heart of his long life and the main reason why so many people have treasured him for over seventy-three years since his ordination. Four years after his birth in Buffalo, N.Y. and baptism in St. Mary's parish there the Stoeckel family of ten moved to Toronto where Albert received his first years of schooling at Holy Name. His next four years were spent with the Clerics of St. Viature at L'Académie St. Michel in St. Lambert QC. In 1926 he entered St. Mary's College in Brockville, ON, graduating from there in 1931 at age 21.

But what was it in the boy that matured into the central focus of his priestly life?

Early on Albert developed a devotion to the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament as reserved on the altar. At Brockville, in Novitiate in Saint John, and during his seven years in seminary this devotion continued to grow. Early in his priestly ministry, as chaplain at Toronto General hospital, he treasured the times that he brought Viaticum to sick and dying there. He was moved by how this presence affected people who had been away from church and sacraments for years. They were filled with consolation after a good confession and Communion, and were at peace when given the last rites.

In his sermons to Sisters on retreats, to the thousands who listened attentively to him preaching on the missions, to his talks to nurses in training, and to men and women in lay associations he spoke always of making time for the Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament. He always led by example, being the first to spend time before the Blessed Sacrament. It was not by force, or rule or ritual, but it was because of his love of the Lord and his need to spend time in His presence. This devotion was the soul and source of his spiritual life. It was the central message in all his preaching – spend time and visit with your best friend in the Blessed Sacrament and you will be able to carry your cares and woes more lightly and courageously. He was, of course, only following in the footsteps of his Founder, St. Alphonsus Liguori, who was noted and canonized for his deep affection for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

This dedication was greatly reinforced by the many who made his missions, or sought him out in his parish work. Some of these people had, for the first time, an opportunity to pray and meditate or just repose before the Blessed Sacrament. In those places where there was no reserved Sacrament he would carry with him a monstrance to display the host. Every mission included several nights with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. What a joy it was for those people to have Jesus present in their very own church for a week or two. This was as true in Claresholm Alberta, as in parishes in northwestern Saskatchewan, as well as all over southwestern Ontario and practically every outport and town and city in Newfoundland. He came away always in wonder at how quickly the people understood and practised what St. Alphonsus called 'his love of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament'.



As he approached one hundred years, spending time with the Lord remained part of his daily life and was the secret of all his spiritual strength and strong faith and the great success he has had as a Redemptorist missionary priest. May he rest in the peace and love of our Redeeming Lord.