

CENTENNIAL SNAPSHOTS

11. Father Jaak Janssens, CSSR

Born in Bruges 12 July 1878 of a large family from which eight of twelve children joined the clergy or religious congregations, Jaak (called Jacques in French and Jacob in English) joined the Redemptorists, was professed in Saint-Trond on 3 October 1897, and was ordained in Beauplateau on 25 September 1904. After further studies in theology, Father Janssens became a teacher in the minor seminary of Saint-Trond (1905-06). He was particularly interested in the Hebrew scriptures and his studies brought him the appointment as professor of exegesis in the major seminary of Beauplateau (1906-12). He was an excellent public speaker and was then named a parish missionary while living at Saint-Trond (1912-14). Father Schrijvers, one of the founders of the Redemptorist mission in Ukraine, asked him to volunteer for the work of Christian Unity. Father Janssens arrived as one of the first Redemptorists in Halychyna in 1914 just before the First World War. With Halychyna invaded by the Russians, the Redemptorists were in constant danger of death, deportation, or imprisonment. They were forced to remain in their monastery. Father Janssens took the opportunity to learn the Ukrainian language and rite thoroughly. After the War, he was assigned to Ituna, Saskatchewan to take the place of the recently deceased Father Boels. From 1919, he worked in the outlying districts of Beckenham, Jasmin, Bedfordville, Goodeve, and Hubbard especially against schismatics and pseudo-priests who were attracting several Ukrainian Catholics to their sects. He developed a series of clearly dogmatic sermons explaining the Catholic position that was appreciated by many people, Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Since many Canadian Ukrainians were fearful of assimilation into the Roman Catholic Church and very suspicious of any priest who had been a Roman Catholic, his Belgian background worked against him and he left for Yorkton for a short while and then returned to Halychyna in 1922. There, he preached in all weathers and heard thousands of confessions. Bishop Ratti (the future Pope Pius XI), then the Papal nuncio to Warsaw, consulted Father Janssens about Polish-Ukrainian problems and Father Janssens' brief was studied in Rome. Metropolitan Sheptytsky personally thanked Father Janssens for his work. He continued to study the Ukrainian language to improve his sermons, but his health began to give way from exhaustion. He returned to Belgium in 1928 and lived in the retreat house in Roulers until 1932. He then took on the directorship of the Holy Family in Saint-Trond (1932-34), but he was unable to go on. On his death bed, perfectly submissive to the Will of God, he repeated three times: "We are going to Heaven!" He was 61. Vichna Pamiat'!



Ukrainian Redemptorists 100 years

The year 2006 marks 100 years since the Redemptorists began formally working with eastern European immigrants in North America and eventually around the world in their own rite. This series of 'Bulletin Inserts' is dedicated to the pioneer Redemptorist Fathers and Brothers of the Yorkton Province. For more information about the Redemptorists, contact: the Redemptorist Vocation Office: 250 Jefferson Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2V 0M6, Canada or visit our website: www.yorktonredemptorists.com