

CENTENNIAL SNAPSHOTS

15. Father Albien Van Biesen, CSSR

Albien (called Albin in French) was born in Lebbeke, Belgium, in a strongly religious family on December 27, 1886. He was the youngest of four brothers and began his formal schooling later than usual at Dendermonde College at the age of 16, but constant illness and lack of any other language but Flemish forced him to continue his studies at home, with his parents, Antoon-Benedikt (Benoit) and Marie-Louise Moortgat. Deeply influenced by his local pastor, increasingly spiritual in his thinking, he felt called to serve the Flemish people, but he wavered long between the Dominicans and the Redemptorists. After much debate, Albien entered the Redemptorist minor seminary and then the Redemptorist novitiate at Roeselare. He finished his novitiate in St. Trond (St. Truiden in Flemish) where he professed his vows of religion on September 29, 1910. He was only 23, but in those days that was considered old. He continued his studies and was ordained on September 12, 1915, in Esschen. After his ordination he returned to St. Trond for a final year of studies in moral theology and then served as an assistant (socius) prefect to the students in 1916. He was then assigned to Antwerp from 1916 to 1918. At the close of the First World War, in 1919 his superiors succeeded in obtaining a visa for him and he was sent to St. Mary's, Yorkton, in Saskatchewan, Canada, to serve as a teacher in the new Redemptorist minor seminary there. He said his first Divine Liturgy in the Byzantine Slavonic rite on May 29, 1919. His many years of illness and then of studies at an older age, learning first French and then Latin, French, and Latin in Canada. When he was not teaching, he occasionally served in the Komarno, Manitoba area (1919), but his spiritual gifts were recognized when he was named assistant to the novice master (1921) and then novice master (1922-24). In 1924, Father Van Biesen began teaching and serving as novice master in the minor seminary in Zboiska and, in 1927, in Holosko. When the novices left in 1928 to study in St. Trond, he accompanied them and in 1929 he returned to the Latin rite and was named assistant (socius) to the novice master in Gand (Ghent). In 1930, he became minister in Esschen, returned to Gand in 1934, and worked in Jette (the northern part of Brussels) in 1942. By 1948, his severe arthritis brought his superiors to transfer him to the Antilles to enjoy the warmer climate. He served in Roseau, Montserrat, and Antigua. Increasing ill-health forced him to retire to Jette, Belgium in 1962. He then published insightful works of theology and spirituality in Flemish. He died in Gand on December 23, 1967. He was 80. 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