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CARDINAL WILLEM VAN ROSSUM, C.SS.R.
«The Great Cardinal of the Small Netherlands»
(1854–1932)

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INTRODUCTION

When visitors come to the Redemptorist residence in Wittem, a small town in the Limburg Province of the Netherlands, they cannot help but notice the pride taken in the memory of the Redemptorist Cardinal Willem van Rossum. Looming large in the church is van Rossum's memorial statue, in exquisite white Carrara marble. They are told that the statue was carved in 1939 by the official sculptor of the Vatican, Enrico Quattrini, and that the cardinal's remains lie just behind the memorial, inside a special vault within the church wall.

If the visitors inquire further, they are told that for many years, until a renovation of the Redemptorist residence, a small museum of Cardinal van Rossum was maintained. It displayed

his robes, many official and personal papers, photos from his life, and various personal effects. The museum was a reminder of how he had been invited to a post in the Vatican in 1896, later became a Cardinal, and died while still a key member of the Pope Pius XI's Curia in 1932, having served there under four different pontiffs.

Visitors may reflect for a moment that, sadly, like the museum, van Rossum's memory has managed to slip away quietly into the past¹.

For those, however, who have studied missiology and are familiar with the church's post-World War I dramatic expansion into remote mission fields, he is still a vivid and vibrant figure. For in 1918 he had been chosen as Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Faith, now known as the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. It was in this role that he organized, centralized, administered and inspired the modern mission outreach of the Catholic Church.

Nor was this his only contribution during his years in the Vatican. For, among the many other Curial positions he held, he was chairman of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, a member of the group which produced the 1917 Revised Code of Canon Law, was Grand Penitentiary, and was repeatedly the official emissary of the popes he served. Moreover, being the first Dutch cardinal in 400 years, he played a large role in the emancipation movement of Catholics in the predominantly Calvinistic Netherlands in the early twentieth century.

In this article we hope to set forth the story of his very active life. We present the result of wide-ranging research of sources originally in Dutch, French, German, Italian, Latin, and English. These sources included articles and books about Cardinal van Rossum, with further attention to the corpus of his own writings, including his available official and personal correspondence, and the monographs he authored.

¹ In corroboration of this statement, it may be of interest that in the year 2004, when a popular competition was held in the Netherlands to name the most famous Dutchman, Willem van Rossum went unmentioned.

Let it be noted that the subtitle we have chosen, «The Great Cardinal of the Small Netherlands», comes from a poem written in 1913 which honored Willem van Rossum when he came home to the Netherlands for the first time as a cardinal.

1. – *The Historical Context of Cardinal van Rossum*

1.1. *Social and Political Context in the Netherlands*

In the nineteenth century, Johan Rudolf Thorbecke (1798-1872) introduced the ideology of liberalism into the Dutch nation's policy. Six years before Willem van Rossum's birth, democratization was embodied in the new constitution of 1848, thereby emphasizing freedom in public life. When van Rossum was sixteen years old, he witnessed the effects of the French-German war, as Europe was involved in a raw struggle for power and influence.

By 1880, when van Rossum was a young Redemptorist priest, the principal socio-political leaders in the Netherlands were the Calvinistic Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), and the Catholic priest Herman Schaepman (1844-1903). There followed a «Pillarization» of Dutch politics, the «pillars» being Catholicism, Calvinism, and Liberalism. In the wake of this came the formation of many political parties, among which can be listed: *The Anti-Revolutionary Party* (a Calvinistic Group led by Kuyper); *The Historic Christian Union* (a Reformed Group); *The Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij* (literally: «*The Politically Reformed Party*» – a theocratic group in the tradition of the Dutch Reformed Church); *The Catholic People's Party*; *The People's Party for Freedom and Democracy* (a Liberal Group); *The Workers Party* (a Socialist Group); and *The Communist Party*.

By the time of World War I, Willem van Rossum was serving as a cardinal of the church in Rome. The Netherlands was officially neutral in World War I, yet it mobilized its forces in a state of «Armed Neutrality». Despite this official neutrality, the war years brought many hardships to the Netherlands, including food rationing and the flight of huge numbers of Belgians into refugee camps set up on Dutch soil. (In addition, in the war year of 1916, the country suffered devastating floods).

Somewhat brighter days came to the Netherlands in 1917, with the declaration of universal suffrage, and the granting of equal status to both public and church-related schools². This equalization proved to be a stimulus for both the economic and political standing of the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands.

It may also be noted that in the early years of the twentieth century, effective labor unions were on the rise. About the same time, the Dutch Women's Movement was taking hold under the leadership of the physician Aletta Jacobs (1854-1929) and other like-minded women.

1.2. *The Roman Catholic Context in the Netherlands*

In 1853, one year before the birth of Willem van Rossum, the Holy See had restored the episcopal hierarchy in the Netherlands, thereby ending its status as «the Dutch Mission». It was also in the mid-nineteenth century that congregations of both men and women religious, including missionary groups, experienced significant growth. Some of this growth can be attributed to a government interdiction of religious life in France, with the same style of interdiction being briefly introduced in Germany during the *Kulturkampf* (1872-1878).

Both of these factors, the restored hierarchy and growth in numbers of religious, gave new impetus to the renewal of the Dutch Catholic church as van Rossum was a young man. The bishops insisted on upgrading the education of seminarians, and of men and women religious. In 1865 the First Provincial Council of the Dutch Church took place, with an eye toward continuing emancipation from the Calvinistic domination referred to above. By 1923 the Netherlands was to see the opening of a Catholic university in Nijmegen. Although socially and politically the stature of Catholics was in a pattern of growth during van Rossum's life, their percentage of the *total* Dutch population remained almost constant. In 1870 they were 36.5% in the nation (1.3 million out of 3.56 million people); whereas in 1930 they

² Originally Article 192, now Article 23, of the Constitution of the Netherlands.

were 35.6% (2.89 million out of 8.1 million)³.

The total monetary subsidy of the Dutch government to Roman Catholic endeavors was divided according to the following percentages in the years between 1880 and 1930.

General Religious purposes	2.9%
Hospitals, clinics, nursing homes	23.2%
Education	50.8%
Vocational Organizations	3.9%
Cultural events, building restorations	16.2%
Housing Projects	2.9% ⁴

1.3. *The Cultural Context in the Netherlands*

In the second half of the nineteenth century, in Willem van Rossum's early and middle years of life, the Netherlands was richly productive in cultural pursuits. Eduard Douwes Dekker (1820-1887), writing under the pseudonym of «Multatuli», won instant fame with his *Max Havelaar* in 1860, in which he recorded the experiences of social injustice in the Dutch East Indies. Then there was the group of littérateurs involved in the «Movement of the Eighties», [*Beweging van Tachtig*] including Henry Gorter (1864-1927), F. Lodewijk Van Dijssel (1864-1952), Frederik Van Eeden (1860-1932), Willem Kloos (1859-1938), and the youthful Jacques Perk (1859-1881). Collectively they emphasized a visionary realism. One of their main principles was *l'art pour l'art*, or «art for art's sake», meaning that art needs no justification, nor any political or didactic motive. In general, Dutch writers, musicians, architects, and painters were experimenting with new forms and materials, and perhaps their greatest protagonist was another young man, Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890).

³ Eric SENGERS, *Al zijn wij katholiek, we zijn Nederlanders*, in *Opkomst en verval van de katholieke kerk in Nederland sinds 1795 vanuit rational-choice perspectief*, Delft 2003, 74-75.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

1.4. *The Papal Context of van Rossum*

Van Rossum's life spanned the period occupied by five popes; they and their years of papacy were: Pius IX (1846-1878), Leo XIII (1878-1903), Pius X (1903-1914), Benedict XV (1914-1922), and Pius XI (1922-1939). (He was to work in the Vatican with and under the last four of these).

When the future cardinal was quite young, Pope Pius IX was beginning to resist rationalistic ideas with the papal documents *Quanta Cura* and the *Syllabus Errorum*, both issued in 1864. Pius IX also convened the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) in order to curb liberalism and rationalism. The Council sharpened the contrast between the Ultramontanists, who stood for centralized papal authority, and the liberal minded who wanted much less papal control.

Later, when van Rossum was serving in the Vatican and about to become a cardinal, came Pius X's *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (1907) against the heresy of Modernism, and the introduction of the same pope's Oath Against Modernism (1910).

As a cardinal, van Rossum was a witness to the ravages of World War I (1914-1918) which resulted in an estimated ten million deaths of soldiers, along with devastated economies, including those of Italy. Through the efforts of Pope Benedict XV to alleviate wartime and post-war sufferings, the Vatican's own treasury was entirely depleted. Also, in the post-war era there was a heightened and widespread sense of extreme nationalism which was taking its toll on the missionary efforts of the Church. In the treaties of 1918 Pope Benedict's formal proposals had been not too gently discarded by the diplomats of the victorious nations. Nevertheless, the pope continued to plead for peaceful and just settlements.

1.5. *The Redemptorist Context in the Netherlands*

It was in 1873 that Willem van Rossum entered the novitiate of Redemptorists, then located at Roermond (province of Limburg). This missionary congregation, founded by St. Alphonsus de Liguori in 1732, had come to the territory of the Netherlands

in 1836 (to Wittem)⁵ and it had flourished. Between 1848 and 1931, the Redemptorists established other foundations in Rijsenburg, Hattert, Amsterdam, Den Bosch ('s Hertogenbosch or *Bois-le-Duc*), Roermond, Roosendaal, Roermond-Kapeller-poort, Sambek, Rotterdam, Amersfoort, Seppe, Vaals, Zenderen, Nijmegen, and Bergen⁶.

During van Rossum's years in the Redemptorists, they were led by three superiors general: Nicholas Mauron 1855-1893, Matthias Raus 1894-1909, and Patrick Murray 1909-1947⁷.

1.6. *The Context of Missionary Outreach in the Netherlands*

It has already been indicated that when van Rossum began his religious life, the Netherlands was seeing a surge of various missionary congregations going out to all sections of the globe. These Dutch groups specifically were the Divine Word Missionaries who were founded at Steyl in 1875, the Sacred Heart Missionaries and the Vincentians who settled in the Netherlands in 1880, followed by the Holy Family Missionaries and the Spiritans in 1886, and the Marists in 1911. The Dutch Jesuits were called upon by the Holy See to care for the mission field of Java, Indonesia, in 1865. A similar call came to the Dutch Redemptorist for the Dutch Colony of Suriname in 1866⁸. Then followed the Dominicans, taking on a mission in the Dutch Antilles, West Indies, in 1868.

⁵ When the Redemptorists came to Wittem in 1836, the town was within the country of Belgium; it came under Netherlands rule in 1839. Cf. Jean BECO, *Les Rédemptoristes en Belgique. 1ère partie: Les Débuts (1831-1841)*, in *SHCSR* 55 (2007) 37.

⁶ Some of the earlier foundations lasted but a short time, being moved (for various reasons) to other locations in this listing given here. However, the Redemptorist presence always remained strong. See Martin MULDER, *Overzicht van de ontwikkeling der Congregatie van de Allerheiligste Verlosser*, Tilburg 1949.

⁷ The birth and death years of these men: Mauron (1818-1893), Raus (1829-1917), Murray (1865-1959).

⁸ The outreach of the Dutch Redemptorists was to continue when they went to Brazil in the early 1890s. As we will see, van Rossum was once among those under consideration for the Brazil mission in 1894.

2. – *The Family of Cardinal van Rossum*

The parents of Willem (Wilhelmus) Marinus van Rossum were Joannes (Jan) van Rossum and Hendrika Veldwillems.

His paternal grandfather was Jacobus van Rossum, born in Emmerich (now Germany) in 1792. Later he moved to Zwolle the capital city of the northern Dutch province of Overijssel. This grandfather was married to Maria Gerrits Krommendame, who was born in 1789 in Hoornhorst-Dalfen. The grandfather operated a modest, one-man tub factory, located on the Vechstraat in Zwolle. These grandparents both died in Zwolle, she in 1864, he in 1867⁹.

Willem van Rossum's maternal grandparents were: Johannes Veldwillems, who was born in 1775 at Ommen, dying in Hellendoorn in 1840; and Wilhelmina Hemmink, who was born in 1785 at Raalte, dying in 1866 at Hellendoorn.

The couple Jan van Rossum and Hendrika Veldwillems were living on the Hagelsteeg, a street in Zwolle, when their second son, Willem, was born on September 3, 1854. He was baptized on the same day, and the baptism was registered «Wilhelmus Marinus van Rossum». Later they welcomed the birth of two daughters and a third son. Sadly, the father Jan was to live only seven years after the birth of son Willem, dying in 1861.

Hendrika married a second time, this husband being Lambertus Janssen, who took over the one-man tub factory. Hendrika gave birth to twins in 1863, but shortly after, she also died, a victim of typhoid. The children of the first marriage, Willem among them, were placed in orphanages in Zwolle. The three boys went to the city orphanage, which was reportedly better than the orphanage for the poor. It is recorded that they got financial support for schooling and for clothes¹⁰.

We can add that the family name van Rossum is not uncommon in the Netherlands. In the Bommelerwaard (Mid-Ne-

⁹ Jurriaan VAN TOLL, *Kardinaal van Rossum en zijn voorgelacht*, in *Sibbe* (Maandblad van het nederlands Verbond voor Sibbekunde), Amsterdam 1943-1945, 141-146. This was a monthly magazine for tracing Dutch genealogy.

¹⁰ Katholiek Documentatie Centrum, Nijmegen, 831, nr. 16. Hereafter KDC.

therlands) and in the neighborhood of Enschede (on the eastern border with Germany) there are villages called «Rossum». Also, in the nation's military history one General Maarten van Rossum (1478-1555) played an important role as commander-in-chief.

Willem's brother Jacobus Joannes, his elder by nine years, entered the Congregation of Brothers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Maastricht in 1869. He became a novice on January 23, 1870, taking the religious name of Nicodemus. The next year he moved to Amsterdam, and then again, in 1872, to Hasselt (Bonnefantenstraat-Pensionaat), Belgium. Finally, in early 1873 he returned to the Brothers' headquarters in Maastricht, only to leave that congregation of religious in March. The reason for his leaving, according to the congregation's archives, was poor health¹¹.

Willem's sister Hendrika Johanna (b. December 28, 1856) became a member of the Sisters of Charity at Tilburg, entering their convent on November 30, 1873, and taking the name Maria Gerulpha. She made her profession of vows on July 15, 1877, and died November 9, 1937 in Tilburg¹². At one time she had been named to join her Sisters in the Suriname mission, but a subsequent medical report indicate that her health was not adequate for that ministry. Her brother Willem at one time wrote a poem of seventeen strophes for her birthday¹³.

Later, two of the future cardinal's cousins also became members of the Sisters of Charity of Tilburg. They were Jacoba Maria van Rossum and her sister Maria Hermana¹⁴, daughters of Jacobus van Rossum and Theodora Jop, an uncle and aunt to

¹¹ Archives of the Christian Brothers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (FIC), Maastricht: Brusselsestraat 38, 6211 PG Maastricht. The notation is «wegen ziekte weggezonden», i.e., «sent away on account of sickness».

¹² Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Tilburg.

¹³ *Het Overijsselsch Dagblad*, 8-9.

¹⁴ Jacoba was born at Zwolle September 6, 1868 and entered the convent September 20, 1885. Her sister Maria Hermana was born at Zwolle May 1, 1872, entered the convent on April 27, 1890, and died at Raalte, January 21, 1958. Data taken from the Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Tilburg, *Kroniek Raalte*, Part I, 83-84. See also KDC, 831, nr. 17.

Willem. He wrote to these cousins many times during his cardinalate, and was a visitor to their convent in Tilburg in view of his being their cardinal protector¹⁵.

In the Catholic Documentation Center (*Katholiek Documentatie Centrum*) in the Netherlands there exists a collection of sixty-nine letters of van Rossum to his family – his stepfather, aunt, brother, sister, and other family members. They cover a wide range of years, written from his days of teaching at Wittem, and from his time in Rome. At first, the letters strike one as being short, essential, and even formal. Yet in them van Rossum mentions family names in something of an affectionate way, leading us to believe that he loved his family and was interested in their lives. On the other hand, the letters also indicate that he did not have an inner circle of close friends, nor that this was a concern to him¹⁶.

3. – *Van Rossum at the Minor Seminary of Culemborg (Kuilenburg)*

Very little is known of van Rossum's childhood days, other than the family data provided immediately above. However, after entering the Redemptorist novitiate, he did write in his *curriculum vitae* that even in childhood he had clear leanings to being a priest and joining a religious order¹⁷. Accordingly, in 1867, at the age of thirteen he was encouraged by his parish priest, Father G. Roelofs, who recognized his potential, to enter the diocesan minor seminary. This seminary was conducted by the Jesuits and was located in Culemborg (alternately spelled *Kuilenburg*) some 115 kilometers southeast of his native Zwolle¹⁸.

¹⁵ Since medieval times it has been a custom to assign a cardinal to a particular church group as an advocate of their needs and interests. Van Rossum served as Cardinal Protector to thirty-two religious orders and congregations. See *Annuario Pontificio*, 1932.

¹⁶ KDC, Rossum, 831, nr. 203. These letters were published in edited form in 1933, with the editor omitting the quite personal elements. *Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van Zwolle's Groot kardinaal*, overdruk, *Het Overijsselsch Dagblad*, Zwolle 1933.

¹⁷ Archives of the Netherlands Redemptorists, RWM, 1.

¹⁸ Josef DREHMANN, *Kardinaal van Rossum en de missieorganisatie*, dans

The seminary records show that he was a good, though not remarkable, student. As he began there in 1867, his assigned student number was 144 and he found that there were other students from Zwolle. The seven class levels had the following designations: *Sexta*, *Quinta*, *Grammatica*, *Syntaxis*, *Poësis*, *Rhetorica*, and *Philosophia*. Reports of the Teachers' Conferences at the Culemborg seminary¹⁹ show that these skills were emphasized: Composition Writing, Spoken Latin, Dutch Pronunciation, and Declamation. Students were required to approach the sacrament of confession once a month. The instructors were to engender in the students an aversion to romantic involvement, and the avoidance of harmful books and newspapers.

The average total enrollment in the Jesuit-run seminary during van Rossum's six years there was about 180. Their day started at 5:30 A.M., with Mass following at 6:00. The rest of the day was filled with study, lectures, recreation, rosary, spiritual reading and evening prayers at 8:45 P.M. On Sundays and Thursdays this schedule was varied.

At the end of the school year of 1871-1872 van Rossum was awarded a prize for Declamation and Greek. Toward the end of each school year he took part in student theatre productions. A pleasant little anecdote from these days is mentioned in the Culemborg records. It says that on May 14, 1873 he asked permission of the seminary rector for the students to be allowed a smoke. The reason he gave was that his departure for the Redemptorist Novitiate was scheduled for the next day. (The smoke was granted). Van Rossum did not finish the whole course, departing after his sixth year and before the year which was designated «Philosophy»²⁰.

There seem to be no extant letters or documents covering this Culemborg period of his life. We do know, however, that in this same seminary, Johan Baptist Kronenburg (1853-1940) was in the class immediately preceding van Rossum. Kronenburg left

Het Missiewerk 16 (1934-1935) 204-210. See also Josef DREHMANN, *Kardinaal van Rossum, Korte Levensschets*, Roermond 1935, 7-14.

¹⁹ Jesuit Archives, Nijmegen, 1866-1903.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, *Diarium Alumnorum*.

Culemborg for the novitiate of the Redemptorists in 1872, and himself went on to become among them a well-known teacher, author, and provincial superior. In later years van Rossum and Kronenburg were destined to be together many times in their lives as Redemptorists.

4. – *Van Rossum's Early Life with the Redemptorists*

Willem van Rossum's first contact with the Redemptorists had been when a parish mission was conducted by them in his native Zwolle. As a minor seminarian he read the life of their founder, St. Alphonsus de Liguori, and his vocation to join this missionary group started to come into focus. Later, in the *curriculum vitae* from his novitiate year, he listed what things attracted him to the Redemptorists:

1. Their severe lifestyle and discipline are very appropriate to expiate my early sins.
2. Their activities: God gave me the talents to do that work.
3. Their special devotion to Mary, our Beloved Mother, to whom I am indebted for the vocation to the congregation.
4. After a long prayer to Jesus and Mother Mary for a month, and on advice of my confessor, I put myself, metaphorically, on my deathbed. I reflected on my reasons once again and asked myself, «How can you die in the most peaceful way?» My answer was, «As a Redemptorist»²¹.

The Redemptorists had been taken across the Alps from Italy by St. Clement Hofbauer in the late eighteenth century. By the 1830s men of Belgium and the Netherlands were inspired to join them. In 1841 the province of Belgium was established, encompassing also the Netherlands. Later, in 1865, came the autonomous Dutch province. Similarly, the growth of the Redemptorists elsewhere was splendid, as witness these figures of total membership (in the span of van Rossum's lifetime):²²

²¹ Archives C.S.S.R., Netherlands, RWM, 1.

²² *Catalogus C.S.S.R.*, Typis Prop. Fide, Romae 1856, 79; *Catalogus C.S.S.R.*, Cuggiani, Romae 1890, 189; *Catalogus C.S.S.R.*, Cuggiani, Romae 1910, 271; *Catalogus C.S.S.R.*, Cuggiani, Romae 1930, 349.

1855	900
1890	2,557
1910	4,069
1930	5,735

When van Rossum entered the Redemptorist novitiate of the Dutch province (officially the province of Amsterdam), it was located at Roermond (province of Limburg), about 130 kilometers to the Southeast of his minor seminary in Culemborg. As was customary, he spent a month as a postulant, and on June 16, 1873, was invested with the distinctive Redemptorist habit as his year of novitiate officially began²³. However, after only four months, this formation program was moved from Roermond to 's Hertogenbosch (Den Bosch), back in a northwest direction toward Culemborg.

The director of the novitiate year was Father Theodorus Langerwerff. Van Rossum's fellow novices were Guglielmus Stassen, Mathias Tulkens, Jacobus Polman, Engelbertus Bührs, Joannes Baekers, Joannes Ten Winkel, and Brother Juliaan Van Schagen²⁴.

In the novitiate the novice van Rossum would have been expected to become familiar with the Constitution and Rules of the congregation, with the typical Redemptorist prayers as found in the *Manuale*, and the *Parvum Manuale*. He was approved for vows and made his profession as a Redemptorist on June 16, 1874.

He immediately moved to the house of studies in Wittem (province of Limburg). His first two years there were spent in studying Philosophy and *Physica*²⁵. Coming in the next two years

²³ Archives C.S.S.R., Netherlands, *Kronieken*, 1873, 83.

²⁴ L[Laurentius] DANKELMAN, *Oversten en Officiales*, in *Monumenta Historica Provinciæ Neerlandicæ CSSR* 5 (1953) 32; Alfons STRIJBOSS *De geschiedenis van ons Novitiaat*, in *ibid.* 6 (1954) 7-8. There were two others in the novitiate class whose surnames were Kreyns and Blom; apparently they did not persevere as we have found no further record of them. All the rest were a credit to the Redemptorists, some with service in Brazil. Brother Juliaan Van Schagen was already a professed Redemptorist and was making a «second novitiate» period, a requirement of the time for Redemptorist Brothers.

²⁵ It seems probable that the content of «*Physica*» was a course in basic natural sciences.

were his courses in dogmatic theology and biblical exegesis, and the final two years in moral theology, canon law, and church history. His grades were registered as *Excellenter* with only one *Bene*²⁶.

On October 17, 1879, while he was still in his final year of studies, Willem van Rossum was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Nikolaus Adames (1813-1887), the bishop of Luxembourg City and a good friend of the Redemptorist community.²⁷ When his studies were complete, he began to teach in September of 1880 at the Redemptorist minor seminary at Roermond. Johan Baptist Kronenburg, whom he had known in the Jesuit seminary at Culemborg, was already in the same community²⁸.

However this Roermond appointment was to be for only three years, for on September 17, 1883 he was transferred to the house of studies in Wittem in order to be a lecturer in dogmatic

²⁶ L. DANKELMAN, *Uit het leven van Kardinaal van Rossum, studiën te Wittem*, in *Monumenta Historica Provinciæ Neerlandicæ GSSR* 6 (1954) 195.

²⁷ J. DREHMANN, *Kardinaal van Rossum, Korte Levensschets*, 21, states that the ordaining prelate of van Rossum was Bishop Johannes Theodor Laurent. But this is erroneous: According to the *Analecta* 11 (1932) 368, the ordaining prelate was Nikolaus Adames. Adames was Pro-Vicar Apostolic of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (1848-1863), and Vicar Apostolic of the same Grand Duchy (1863-1870), and then bishop of Luxembourg city (1870-1873). In 1870 he was one of the group of prelates who met at the Redemptorist Generalate in Rome to plan strategy for the passage of the Vatican Council's doctrine of Infallibility of the Pope. (See Jean BECO, *Les Cent Cinquante Ans de la maison "Sant'Alfonso" à Rome*, in *SHCSR* 54 (2006) 11-12). He spent the last days of his life in the Redemptorist residence of Luxembourg. Cf. Erwin GATZ, *Die Bischöfe der deutschsprachigen Länder 1785/1803 bis 1945, Ein biographisches Lexikon*, Berlin 1983, 4-5.

²⁸ Van Rossum was also to hold the position of Prefect of the Sick, serve as confessor in the diocesan college of Roermond, and minister in the local jail. See *Kronieken, Roermond C.S.S.R., 1878-1898, passim*, pp. 77, 85, 108. There is clear evidence, likewise, that during the summer months of 1881 and 1882 van Rossum served as something of a «Chaplain to Pilgrims» at the Redemptorist church in Roermond. These pilgrims came from as far away as Amsterdam to venerate a small miraculous statue of the Blessed Mother. After the future Cardinal's death, a publication (the *Pelgrimsblad*) originating in this *Kapel in 't Zand* featured a series of his talks to the pilgrims from those days. The tone is a bit mystical, but the theme is: *Faith and Trust in Mary's Intercession are Effective in one's Life*.

theology. It may be of note that van Rossum never pursued further studies beyond those of his own seminary training²⁹.

Beside his dogmatic theology classes (taught in Latin)³⁰, he proceeded to produce three theological tracts at Wittem. In the first, he did a translation from Italian into Latin, in manuscript form, of the dogmatic text of St. Alphonsus «On the Predestination of Jesus Christ». Later, in 1896 and 1903, this work was printed in Rome in two other editions with expanded notes³¹.

The second work from van Rossum's Wittem period was entitled *Hexameron seu Officium Sex Dierum*, a commentary on the six days of Creation in Genesis in which he argued for a literal sense of a twenty-four hour day³². The background of this «conservative» Scriptural commentary was the forceful contemporary discussion in Europe of the historical-critical method in biblical scholarship by men like Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) and the Dutch author Abraham Kuenen (1828-1891). The Vatican was already looking askance at the historical-critical method.

The third work from the Wittem days was an incomplete treatise on the Eucharist entitled *Tractatus de SS. Eucharistia*. It was certainly intended for use only by the Wittem students³³.

²⁹ It seems that what we might call «higher studies» was never considered in van Rossum's time. The Redemptorists as yet did not have a *schola major* in Rome, nor was there yet a Catholic university in the Netherlands. Moreover, political disturbances of revolutions in Europe were still of fresh memory. But perhaps most significant of all, there was a prescription in the Redemptorist Rule against accepting any honor or title outside of the congregation. This point deserves further research. It is certain that the in-house seminary education at Wittem was of excellent quality.

³⁰ Van Rossum was fluent in both spoken and written Latin, as generally were his contemporary Redemptorists. An examination of his theological texts in Latin, produced both in Wittem and Rome, show a clear, elegant style.

³¹ Willem van ROSSUM, *Dissertatio adumbrata de Praedestinatione J. Chr. Auctore S. P. N. Alph. ex Italo in latinum versa*, autogr., Wittem 1885. The 1896 and 1903 Roman editions were published by the printer Cuggiani.

³² Willem van ROSSUM, *Hexameron seu Officium Sex Dierum*, autogr., Wittem 1888; 2nd ed., Wittem 1890. This work was probably intended for use only by the Wittem students.

³³ Willem van ROSSUM, *Tractatus de SS. Eucharistia*. It was later included in the printed work, François HARTE, C.S.S.R., ed., *Dictata theologica-dogmatica*,

The student body at Wittem was not large. During van Rossum's tenure (1883-1895) the average total number was twenty-six. From 1850 onward there were twelve different Redemptorists who taught dogmatic theology. However, with the arrival of van Rossum the faculty was to grow more stable, with turnover among them on the decrease³⁴.

In 1886, in addition to his teaching, another task was placed upon him, that of Prefect (or Director) of Students. He was relieved of the Prefect role in 1893, only to be named Rector of the Wittem community.

In both the material he taught, as well as in his methodology, van Rossum emphasized the theology of the Redemptorist founder, St. Alphonsus de Liguori, who had been declared a Doctor of the Church in 1871³⁵. Moreover, he promoted in his students a sense of their Redemptorist heritage, for instance, having a strong Marian devotion³⁶. Once during his term as Rector at Wittem, on October 7-9, 1894, he assembled a meeting of all the lecturers and professors. The scope of this meeting was to examine the general orientation and thrust of the theology courses. Following this meeting, on October 10, he drew up a document, which all participants signed, pledging their common effort to

Galoppe [Gulpen] 1899, 490-573, annotated *ad usum privatum*.

³⁴ L. DANKELMAN, *Oversten en Officiales, in Monumenta Historica Provinciæ Neerlandicæ CSSR* 5 (1953) 19-39.

³⁵ Theo VAN EUPEN, *Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de dogmatische theologie in Wittem (1836-1955)*, in *Monumenta Historica Provinciæ Neerlandicæ CSSR* 7 (1955) 97-118. Cf. Lodewijk WINKELER, *Ten dienste der seminaristen, Handboeken op de Nederlandse priesteropleidingen, 1800-1967. Jaarboek KDC* 1987, 12-56 (VAN ROSSUM 21) and L. KOEVOETS: *Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland. Dossier I, Archief der Kerken, Amersfoort* 1975; Bruno KLEINHEYER, *Die Priesterweihe im Römischen Ritus, Eine liturgiehistorische Studie*, Trier 1962, *Trierer Theologische Studien* 12.

³⁶ For papers/abstracts we can refer to: H.v.d. VORSTENBOSCH, *Inventaris van de archieven van de opleidingshuizen van de Congregatie der redemptoristen (C.S.S.R.) (1741) 1836-1975*, Nijmegen 1996; Stichting Dienstencentrum kloosterarchieven in Nederland, nr. 328 visit of Cardinal van Rossum to the minor seminary in 1913; nrs. 4045-4049: Conferences on religious life; conferences at the beginning of holidays, farewell to the young priests; start of a new study year 4081: material of gymnasial issues; 4082 material theologia dogmatica.

preserve and promote the heritage of St. Alphonsus³⁷.

In his capacity as Rector he also had the responsibility of seeing to the spiritual, and to a degree, the temporal welfare of the Redemptoristine nuns, a community of forty-six contemplative sisters in Partij-Wittem³⁸.

His own community at Wittem numbered around sixty³⁹. Among them he had the reputation of being a practical-minded leader, a trait which came to the fore as he directed some necessary restoration and repair of the buildings at Wittem.

Van Rossum's role as Rector was to come to an end in 1895. A year earlier his name had been suggested for the new Dutch Mission in Brazil, where he would join his classmate Matthias Tulkens. However, Father Matthias Raus, elected as Superior General of the Redemptorists in 1894, let it be known that his talents could be put to better use in Rome⁴⁰.

There is no record of any protest on van Rossum's part regarding this Roman appointment. He left Wittem and the Netherlands on November 24, 1895, and arrived in Rome on December 10.

5. – *Serving the Redemptorists and the Vatican, 1895-1909*

The Redemptorist General Chapter of 1894, which had elected Matthias Raus as Superior General, also launched the general notion of a *Schola Major*. Patterned on what other ma-

³⁷ *Litterae Annales de rebus gestis Provinciae Hollandicae Congregationis SS. Redemptoris, anno salutis 1895, Galoppiae [Gulpen], 1895, 13. To quote the original Latin, «propagare et vindicare libera voce».*

³⁸ Letter, Willem van Rossum to stepfather, 13 July 1893, contained in KDC, Rossum, 831, nr. 203. The founder of the Redemptorists, St. Alphonsus Liguori, played an important role also in the foundation of the Redemptoristines in 1731.

³⁹ A typical year was 1894 when there were 15 priests, 28 students, 11 professed brothers, one novice brother and four candidate brothers, and two live-in domestic helpers. Cf. *Kronieken C.Ss.R., Wittem*.

⁴⁰ Letter, Matthias Raus to Johan Kronenburg, July 29, 1895, AGHR, Provinciae Hollandicae. The suggestion that van Rossum be transferred to Rome may well have come from a Dutch Redemptorist then serving in Rome, namely, Father Peter Oomen (1835-1910), the Procurator General of the Congregation.

jor Religious Orders and Congregations were doing in Rome, the Redemptorists wished to found a school of higher learning for their ordained members, with special attention to the theology proper to St. Alphonsus⁴¹. Part of the 1895 plan was to bring van Rossum to Rome as one of the pillars of this *Schola Major*⁴².

Although it was grand idea, circumstances militated against a *Schola Major*. The truth was that money, professors, and students were lacking. A later General Chapter, in 1909, was to reaffirm the plan, and a small beginning was to get underway in the academic year of 1910-1911. Meanwhile van Rossum was gradually adjusting to life and work in Rome. He found time to visit locations in southern Italy which were memorable to the Redemptorists, including the birthplace of St. Alphonsus Liguori near Naples, and his burial place in Nocera di Pagani, and described these visits in a letter back to the Netherlands⁴³.

Suddenly, barely a year after his coming to Rome, on December 24, 1896, he was appointed to an administrative position in the Vatican. How this came about was that an official of the Holy Office approached the Redemptorists in Rome with a question then being discussed by the Holy Office which involved a moral issue. He wanted to know the opinion of St. Alphonsus on the matter. The Superior General Raus recommended that the official consult with Father van Rossum, who wrote a reply that was very satisfactory to the man enquiring⁴⁴. It also got the attention of the other members of the Holy Office and soon van Rossum got the invitation to join them as a consultor⁴⁵.

⁴¹ *Acta integra Capitulum Generalium C.S.S.R. ab anno 1749 usque ad annum 1894 celebratorum*, Romae 1894, nr. 1354.

⁴² Jan Olav SMIT, *Wilheminus Marinus Kardinaal van Rossum, Een groot mens en wijs bestuurder*, Roermond 1954, 10.

⁴³ Willem van ROSSUM, *De Volksmissionaris* 18 (1897) 31-40, 4-89, 42-144.

⁴⁴ Cfr Giuseppe ORLANDI, *S. Alfonso negli Archivi Romani del Sant'Officio. Dottrine spirituali del Santo Dottore e di Pier Matteo Petrucci a confronto, in due voti del futuro cardinale W. M. van Rossum*, in *SHCSR* 47 (1999) 205-238.

⁴⁵ *Analecta* 11 (1932) 369.

At the time, this did not seem to be an especially prestigious appointment since the Vatican was accustomed to draw on the different religious orders and congregations to fill positions in its various offices or «dicasteries»⁴⁶. It was a way of maintaining good will and steady contact with these religious.

It is probably impossible ever to know the specific tasks assigned to van Rossum as consultor to the Holy Office. No record has been discovered of what these were, and many Vatican archives remain closed. However, we do know that his appointment to the Holy Office was later repeated in succeeding years⁴⁷.

On November 25, 1902, he received another Vatican assignment, namely, to promote a movement known in Italian as *La Opera per la Preservazione della Fede in Roma*. The circumstances behind this movement was a perceived danger to the Catholic faith within the very city of Rome. For the Protestant community had established schools, workshops for the poor, and social centers, as a way of alleviating deplorable social conditions in the city of Rome.

Pope Leo XIII, whose adviser in this matter was the Jesuit philosopher and author Pius de Mandato (1850-1914)⁴⁸, admitted that the Vatican had been sadly negligent for long a time within Rome. The pontiff believed that a crisis situation had developed, as the Protestants and their «modern heathenism» had grown rampant at the very heart of Catholicism⁴⁹. The pope laid the groundwork for a counter-initiative, appointing a special commission of cardinals, who were to be assisted by selected priests and laymen. The scope of the initiative was to bolster

⁴⁶ J. DREHMANN, *Kardinaal van Rossum, Korte Levensschets*, 27.

⁴⁷ Nine cardinals were listed in this Office in 1909, and van Rossum was one of twenty-five consultors. AAS 1 (1909) 110.

⁴⁸ *De Volkmissionaris* 35 (1913) 301.

⁴⁹ For another analysis of this «Protestant danger in Rome», one may wish to consult John Courtney MURRAY, S.J., *Theological Studies* 14 (March, 1953) 1-30. In short, Murray says these groups which were trying to alleviate the social conditions of Rome were not religion-based. Instead they were primarily political groups who were trying to seize political power formerly held by the Church, and in that sense anti-Catholic, and only secondarily rooted in Protestant sects. This, however, was not the viewpoint of Leo XIII, nor of van Rossum.

Catholic schools in Rome, encourage Catholic trade unions, and provide Catholic social institutions for entertainment, sports, and cultural events.

A major component of their efforts was to be the gathering of funds, both within Italy and beyond. Fundraising in the Netherlands was to be the special focus of van Rossum and he was put in charge of the *Opera* in his native country. In support of van Rossum's appointment, the Redemptorist provincial in the Netherlands agreed to serve as a contact person, lending his office address in Amsterdam as the location to which people could send donations. In 1904, Pius X appointed van Rossum to the international sector of the *Opera*⁵⁰. For over two decades he was to remain involved in this *Opera per la Preservazione della Fede in Roma*, beginning with the time of Leo XIII, and continuing through all the pontificate of Pius X and into that of Benedict XV. As for Pius X, preserving the Catholic faith fit well within his aim, as proclaimed in his motto «To Restore All Things in Christ». Benedict XV insisted that *efficiency* was necessary within the organization; he himself made personal donations to the work, declaring that indeed a conspiracy against the Catholic faith was afoot⁵¹.

In his dedication to the *Opera*, van Rossum's anti-Protestant sentiment came out strongly. He once pointed to the «enemies of Rome» by name: «Evangelical Baptists, Waldensians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Anglicans», to be found in «English, American, German, and Italian Churches». He went on to say that the Protestants could boast of sixty churches and chapels in Rome, as well as developing their publishing errors in four weekly newspapers (distributed gratis), and twelve magazines. Moreover, he said that, in their proselytizing, they were giving much attention to members of the Italian military⁵².

In 1919, in a letter to a priest of the diocese of 's Hertogenbosch, he urged the priest to tell the local seminarians: «The

⁵⁰ J.O. SMIT, *Wilheminus Marinus*, 10.

⁵¹ *De Volksmissionaris* 37 (1915) 65-71. As we shall see, an emphasis on *administrative efficiency* was later to be a hallmark of van Rossum's tenure as Prefect of Propaganda Fide.

⁵² *De Volksmissionaris* 34 (1912-1913) 300.

enemies of Holy Mother Church tried recently, with more vigor than ever, to snatch the city of Rome away spiritually from the pope, inviting people to give up their Roman Catholic faith. They have thereby tried to enslave people within the grip of their Protestant unbelief»⁵³. In short, he was conditioned by his own historical context, suspicious of non-Catholics' mission outreach, and hardly in contact with what would Vatican II would call our «common heritage»⁵⁴. This need to be kept in mind, when one delves into his writings and discovers his personal creed of life.

In this general period, we find that van Rossum was given still other assignments by Vatican authorities. He was named Apostolic Visitor to Italian monasteries and convents; he was assigned to help Archbishop (later Cardinal) Pietro Gasparri (1852-1934) put the Vatican Archives in order,⁵⁵ and it may well be that Pius X requested his help in a reform of the Vatican Curia.⁵⁶

⁵³ KDC 831, n. 200.

⁵⁴ See Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, pgh. 4. Other instances of his almost virulent anti-Protestant tendency can be found. See van Rossum's two-page preface to J. A. LOEFF, *Het katholiek Nederland 1813-1913; Ter blijde herinnering aan het eerste eeuwfeest onzer nationale onafhankelijkheid*, Nijmegen 1913. Also van Rossum's recommendation to the 1924 Missiological Week in Louvain entitled «Protestant Propaganda», in which he referred to the «huge problem of the Protestant invasion» and the «ongoing destructiveness of Protestant missionaries». He said the answer was to stop all such by means of a better preparation and training of missionaries. *Verslag Missiologische Week*, Leuven 1924, 7.

⁵⁵ J. DREHMANN, *Kardinaal van Rossum, Korte Levensschets*, 27-29.

⁵⁶ In Roermond (the Netherlands) the family of Father Josef Drehmanns, C.Ss.R. (who had been secretary to Cardinal van Rossum until 1930) told the author that Drehmanns gave his sister the document "*Eingabe des Kardinals van Rossum an den Heiligen Vater über die notwendigen Verbesserungen in der Regierung der Kirche*" [Translation "Cardinal van Rossum's report to the Holy Father on the needed improvement of church management"]. The family maintained that this document was from the era of Pius X, who requested van Rossum (then a Redemptorist General Consultor) to research the possibilities for a new structure of the Papal Curia. This author's later research proved the Drehmanns family's information to be in error. For the document *Eingabe*, dates from the 1931 era, and said request came rather from Pius XI. The document was found by the historian H. de Valk in the Redemptorist archives in Wittem. He has a copy, while the original text

Then on March 19, 1904, Pope Pius X, in the *motu proprio* «*Arduum sane munus*», formally announced the creation of a Pontifical Commission for the unified codification of Canon Law. One of the directives of the *motu proprio* was that the Commission had to choose consultors who were «*peritissimi*», or «very expert», in canon law and theology, and whom the pontiff would himself approve⁵⁷. In less than one week, Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val, Secretary of State, announced the first seventeen of these consultors; among them was Willem van Rossum. The development of the new code of Canon Law was to take place under the leadership of Archbishop Pietro Gasparri. It was to prove a monumental undertaking, taking fourteen years to produce the resulting 2,414 canons. It was eventually presented to Pope Benedict XV on May 27, 1917, and scheduled to go into effect on Pentecost Sunday, May 19, 1918. Again we cannot state exactly what were van Rossum's contributions to this Canon Law codification. The record stands, however, that he was chosen to work among the «very expert».

While serving in his various Vatican positions, van Rossum found time also to proceed with additional theological writings. In 1896 it had come to his attention that a well-known moral theology professor in Verona, Italy, John Baptist Pighi, had published a work on the role of the confessor in judging whether or not to grant absolution to certain penitents⁵⁸. Specifically, it was regarding «occasionaries and recidives», that is, those who returned to an occasion of sin, or habitually fell back into sin. The title page of Pighi's work commemorated the two-hundredth anniversary of St. Alphonsus Liguori's birth, and the twenty-fifth of his being declared Doctor of the Church. This was ironic, since van Rossum, in his very polemic volume, takes Pighi to task, insisting that his opinions are *not those of Liguori*, that they are much too benign,

is lost. It is a mystery as to why the Drehmanns family changed the time. Likewise, a question remains as to how Drehmanns came into possession of the document. H. de Valk gave the author the correct information.

⁵⁷ *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 36 (1903-1904) 549.

⁵⁸ Joannis Baptistae PIGHI, *Commentarius de Judicio Sacramentali*, Verona 1896.

and they endanger people's salvation!⁵⁹ This work of van Rossum brought forth (in 1897) from Pighi a second edition *with an Italian appendix* to answer van Rossum's charges. Now, van Rossum was too deep into the controversy to keep silent; so in the same year, 1897, he published yet a second edition, in which he demonstrated that Pighi's «answers» were *still incorrect*⁶⁰. The controversy focused mainly on how a confessor was to judge the «extraordinary signs» of true repentance in penitents, and then either grant or deny them sacramental absolution.

Another publication of van Rossum likewise belongs to this period of his Roman life. The year 1904 was the fiftieth anniversary of Pope Pius IX's declaration of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and also the occasion of a Marian Congress in Rome. In observance of these occasions, he gathered into one attractive volume all of the dogmatic, moral, and poetic references of St. Alphonsus to the Immaculate Conception of Mary⁶¹. It was produced in *quarto* size⁶² and printed by the Polyglot Press of the Congregation Propaganda Fide. Van Rossum added a Latin translation of Alphonsus' original Italian, and explanatory notes where he thought them necessary.

One other matter must have weighed on van Rossum's mind in this period. The Ordinary of Haarlem in the Netherlands, Bishop Gaspard J. Bottemanne, had died in mid-1903, and van Rossum's name (as well as that of his Dutch colleague in Rome, Father Peter Oomen) was being circulated in Rome as a possible successor to Bottemanne. In the end, however, the choice fell to neither of these Redemptorists, but rather to a man named Augustinus J. Callier⁶³.

⁵⁹ G[ulielmus] M[arinus] van ROSSUM, *Commentarius de Judicio Sacramentali Joannis Baptistae Pighi ad trutinam vocatus*, Romae 1897, 7.

⁶⁰ ID., *Editio altera*, 1897.

⁶¹ Gulielmus M[arinus] van ROSSUM, *S. Alphonsus M. De Ligorio et Immaculata Conceptio B. Mariae Virginis*, Romae 1904. A historical note: from 1626-1909 Propaganda Fide operated the Polyglot Press; in 1909 it was amalgamated with the Vatican Printing Office. See Josef METZLER, *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*, III/2, Rom-Freiburg-Wien 1976, 411.

⁶² When open, 28 x 38 cm, approx. 11 x 15 inches.

⁶³ B. VOETS, *Bewaar het toevertrouwde pand: Het verhaal van het bisdom*

6. – *Consultor to the Redemptorist Superior General, 1909-1911*

The Redemptorists held their 1909 General Chapter in Rome. The members first accepted the resignation of the Superior General Matthias Raus, and then began balloting for their new General. Van Rossum had not been elected to this chapter either as a *vocalis* (voting member from one's province) or as a *supplens* (substitute in case of an inability of a *vocalis* to attend). He was surprised then to learn, in the lobby of the Sant' Alfonso headquarters, that, *in absentia*, he stood as a strong candidate to be the new General. He and his old friend Joannes Kronenburg, now the provincial of the Netherlands, were tied in the balloting. However, after this deadlock, subsequent ballots swung in favor of the provincial of Ireland, Patrick Murray. On May 1, 1909, van Rossum received four votes; Joannes Kronenburg, eleven; Alfons Bros of Germany, two; and Patrick Murray was elected General with 38. Still, for van Rossum this chapter had significant results, as the members did elect him to be one of the General Consultors to Patrick Murray⁶⁴.

In this capacity, he is remembered as having rebuilt the convent building of the Redemptoristine Nuns at Scala in the Amalfi region of Italy⁶⁵. The new Superior General also wanted van Rossum to accompany him on an official visitation to the Canadian foundations. However, his work in the Vatican's Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office prevented this⁶⁶.

Furthermore, it was not to be his ministry within the Redemptorist congregation that van Rossum was to achieve his major place in history. For on Saturday, October 28, 1911, after having finished the official visitation of the Belgian houses, he

Haarlem, Hilversum 1981, 172.

⁶⁴ *Acta integra Capituli Generalis XI Congregationis SS. Redemptoris Romae celebrati anno MCMIX*, Romae 1909, 40 n°1494. This chapter had four focus points in addition to the elections: Regular Observance, Ministry, Formation, and Government of the Congregation. There was also a discussion of the question having watches, not gold or silver, and the use of the celluloid clerical collar.

⁶⁵ Redemptoristine nuns from Belgium were ready to move to Scala.

⁶⁶ Postscript to Circular letter N° 13 of Patrick Murray to all Redemptorists, May 24, 1910.

was with the Superior General Murray at the Redemptorist residence in Mulhouse, Alsace. Meanwhile in Rome, the Postulator General of the Redemptorists, Joseph Schwarz, was contacted by the papal Cardinal Secretary of State, Raphael Merry del Val. The message was that van Rossum was to return to Rome and the Vatican as soon as possible. Van Rossum left Alsace by train. As he arrived in Rome on Monday, October 30, awaiting him at the train station was a cardinal's carriage, drawn by a team of fine black horses, ready to take him to the Redemptorist Generalate on Via Merulana. Pope Pius X had named van Rossum a cardinal-designate. When the confreres gathered to congratulate him, he was very emotional as he said, «For whatever I have received, I am indebted to our beloved congregation, and I hope to remain a genuine son of St. Alphonsus forever»⁶⁷.

7. – Van Rossum, Cardinal of the Catholic Church, 1911

At the consistory of November 27, 1911, along with seventeen others, Father Willem van Rossum, C.S.S.R., was created a cardinal, technically a cardinal deacon, with the titular church of San Caesareo in Palatio⁶⁸. He moved with his Redemptorist secretary, Father Josef Drehmanns, and a Redemptorist Brother to an apartment on Via dello Statuto, around the corner from their Generalate on Via Merulana.

According to Pius X, the cardinalate for van Rossum was meant also as a way to honor the Redemptorists⁶⁹. After the consistory one of the first major assignments he received was as Papal Legate to the International Eucharistic Congress in Vienna in September 1912⁷⁰. One report says he was viewed as the central ecclesiastical figure of the congress⁷¹. In July in the year follow-

⁶⁷ *Analecta* 11 (1932) 373.

⁶⁸ San Caesareo in Palatio was later to be the titular church of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła (1920-2005), (Pope John Paul II, 1978-2005).

⁶⁹ *De Volksmissionaris* 34 (1911-1912) 4. The author of this statement is not named, possibly the editor of the publication.

⁷⁰ Josef DREHMANN, *De Volksmissionaris* 33 (1912-1913) 3; 34, 295 ff.

⁷¹ Karl KAMMEL, *Bericht über den XXIII Internationalen Eucharistischen Kongress, Wien, 12 bis 15 September, 1912*, Wien 1913.

ing the Congress, the Austro-Hungarian Emperor, Franz Josef I, awarded him the Grand Cross of the Royal Order of St. Stephan.

It seems that he was in no hurry to return to his homeland in the Netherlands for a visit, but when he did so in July 1913, his itinerary took him to Zwolle, Culemborg, and Amsterdam. His arrival was observed with great ceremony. The press reports courted him with the honorific titles of «Prince of the Church» and «Member of the Roman Court». Excitement was in the air when this first Dutch cardinal in 400 years reached Amsterdam⁷². He was greeted with songs and poems which acclaimed both his mystical and his militant spirit.

Back in Rome, his days were spent with a quiet reserve to which he was accustomed during his life as a religious. The Dutch Redemptorist, Engelbert Eijkemans, who studied in Rome at this time, has left us a sketch of van Rossum's ordinary day:

4:30 A.M. In chapel for morning prayer, meditation, followed by Mass and a half-hour thanksgiving; then breakfast followed by time in his office for reading, correspondence, and preparation for upcoming meetings.

10:00 A.M. Meetings, usually of the various Vatican Congregations, followed by Prayer of the Breviary.

1:00 P.M. Midday meal, during which his secretary briefed him on major current events, then followed a siesta and a stroll, sometimes in the Alban hills.

5:00 P.M. Two hours were reserved for meeting church leaders, religious superiors, missionaries, and other appointments.

8:00 P.M. Supper, preceded by a brief period of prayer.

Eijkemans also reports that immediately after his supper he went to the privacy of his room and generally retired early to bed. Seldom did he accept invitations to receptions and other

⁷² Some four hundred years before, there was the Dutch Cardinal Willem van Enckenvoirt [alternate spellings *Enckevort* and *Enckenwoert*], (1464-1534), Archbishop of Utrecht; it seems this Cardinal Archbishop never visited his see, but governed it from Rome through an administrator. He is buried in Rome in the Church of S. Maria dell'Anima, along with his close friend, the tragic Pope Adrian VI, also of the Netherlands. See Erwin GATZ, *Die Bischöfe des Heiligen Römischen Reiches, 1448 bis 1648*, Berlin 1996, 154-156.

public celebrations. (Later, when he became the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, his schedule included a meeting with the Holy Father every second and fourth Thursday)⁷³.

When created cardinal, van Rossum was fifty-seven years old, and not in the best of health, as he suffered from complications brought on by high blood pressure and diabetes. At various times his condition required that he go for rest in Switzerland and Germany.

Very soon after the 1911 consistory, van Rossum was appointed a consulting member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and within about two years on January 13, 1914, he became its Cardinal-President. He presided over this Commission until his death in 1932⁷⁴.

The Pontifical Biblical Commission, of course, was established (in 1902) in the swirl of concerns regarding the errors of Modernism. In 1893 Leo XIII had already spoken out in his Encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* about the too-free interpretation of Scripture, while also urging a better quality of Biblical studies, especially among seminarians. The purpose of the Biblical Commission, according to Leo XIII, was *to strive to bring about with all possible care that God's words will be given everywhere among us that thorough study which our times demand, and will be shielded not only from every breath of error, but even from every rash opinion*⁷⁵. In 1907, Pius X stipulated that the decrees and recommendations of the Pontifical Biblical Commission carried the

⁷³ Engelbert ELJKEMANS, *Bij den dood van kardinaal van Rossum, Enkele persoonlijke herinneringen* (Noordbrabants Dagblad, Het Huisgezin) Jaargang 63, no. 203, August 31, 1998, p. 185. This author says that at the end of his last meeting with Pope Pius XI, they both agreed that they needed another ten years to finish the work before them.

⁷⁴ *Annuario Pontificio*, years 1911, 1914, and thereafter until 1932.

⁷⁵ LEO XIII, «*Vigilantiae studii*», *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 35 (1902-1903) 235, pgh. 2. In the original Latin, «*omni ope curare et efficere, ut divina eloquia et exquisitorem illam, quam tempora postulant, tractationem passim apud nostros inveniant, et incolumia sint non modo a quovis errorum afflatu, sed etiam ab omni opinionum temeritate*».

same weight as a Vatican Congregation⁷⁶.

In the early years of van Rossum's membership on the Biblical Commission, it continued to issue strict and clear directions regarding biblical scholarship, especially regarding exegesis and the use of interpretive models. He also witnessed the establishment of the Pontifical Biblical Institute (1909) by Pius X⁷⁷. Shortly after his assuming the presidency of the Commission in 1914, it published a decree on the authorship of the Letter to the Hebrews, and the method for its exegesis. From 1915 onward, however, with the time of crisis past, the purpose of the Pontifical Biblical Commission took as its primary concern the encouragement of Biblical studies among Catholics⁷⁸.

According to the 1954 biographer of van Rossum, Bishop Jan Olaf Smit, Pius X was very appreciative of the presence of the Dutch cardinal in the Curia as the Modernist-Integralist tension was at its height. In fact according to Bishop Smit, Pius X had sought his help in producing the 1907 anti-modernist Encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*⁷⁹.

Pope Benedict XV also issued an encyclical in reference to scriptural studies on September 15, 1920. It was entitled *Spiritus Paraclitus* and marked the fifteenth centenary of the death of the Doctor of the Church, St. Jerome (347-419). In the spirit of *Providentissimus Deus* and the early decrees of the Biblical Commission, *Spiritus Paraclitus* likewise emphasized reading and study of the Scriptures and new methods of exegetical and linguistic study. Nevertheless, it focused heavily on the maintenance of the purity of Christian faith. We can offer no evidence of whether van Ros-

⁷⁶ PIUS X, *Motu Proprio «Praestantia Sacrae Scripturae»*, *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 40 (1907) 723 f.

⁷⁷ In 1916 Benedict XV authorized the Pontifical Biblical Institute to grant the academic Licentiate degree in the name of the Biblical Commission. In 1930, toward the end of van Rossum's life, the Biblical Institute was given independence from the Biblical Commission by Pius XI as well as the permission to grant doctorates. Van Rossum's role in these developments is not currently clear.

⁷⁸ Louis F. HARTMAN, ed., *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*, 2nd ed., New York 1965, col. 244.

⁷⁹ J. O. SMIT, *Wilhelmus Marinus*, 11.

sum collaborated on this encyclical or not. Its tone, however, is in alignment with his ecclesiological frame of reference.

There was one other significant accomplishment by van Rossum in his early years as cardinal. In 1914 he published a two-hundred page volume entitled *De Essentia Sacramenti Ordinis: Disquisitio Historico-Theologica*⁸⁰. It was his most scholarly work by far. With exacting research he examined the question of whether it is the *imposition of hands and the accompanying prayer by the bishop* which alone constitutes the valid matter and form for the Sacrament of Orders, or *whether there must also be for validity the «traditio instrumentorum»*, that is, the ceremonies involving the chalice, paten, wine, and host. Van Rossum concluded in favor of the former (only the imposition of hands with the accompanying prayer); he argued meticulously from Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, Councils through the years, and the rituals of both the Eastern and Western Churches, citing multiple references and giving ample quotations. He demonstrated that the additional ceremonies of the *traditio instrumentorum* were introduced sporadically around the tenth century for greater solemnity⁸¹.

His huge «*difficultas*» (his term) was to examine and explain the *Decree for the Armenians* issued by Pope Eugene IV in 1439 which stated that the matter for the Sacrament of Orders is the handing over (*porrectio*) of the chalice with wine and the paten with the bread (and the form is the prayer following)⁸². Van Rossum argued that Eugene IV did not intend to define or speak infallibly about the essence of the Sacrament of Orders; but by ordinary authority was handing on what at that time was what learned men were more commonly teaching⁸³. The numer-

⁸⁰ Willem van Rossum, *De Essentia Sacramenti Ordinis: Disquisitio Historico-Theologica*, Freiburg im B. 1914; ed. 2da, Romae 1932.

⁸¹ Van Rossum's summary conclusions can be found on pp. 194-197 of the 1914 edition.

⁸² DENZIGER-HÜNNERMANN, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, Bologna 1995, nro. 1326, p. 590. The same in English, Jacques DUPUIS ed., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Faith*, New York, 2001, # 1705/1326.

⁸³ Willem van Rossum, *De Essentia Sacramentum Ordinis*, ed. 1914, 197.

ous times that this work is cited in articles indicates its important contribution to the topic⁸⁴.

8. – *Van Rossum in the Role of Grand Penitentiary, 1915-1918*

Pope Pius X died on August 20, 1914, and was succeeded by Benedict XV on September 3 of that year. On October 4, 1915 the Roman profile of Cardinal Willem van Rossum took on more prominent focus when the new pope named him Grand Penitentiary (while he retained his presidency of the Biblical Commission).

The very term «Penitentiary» may well seem strange in today's context. Historically it developed as one of three courts (or tribunals) of law within church government, the other two being the Roman Rota and the Signatura. Its general purpose grew into one of upholding moral conduct and discipline of individuals and of the offices of the Holy See. The cardinal at the head of the «Penitentiary» became known as the Grand (or Major) Penitentiary, the office which van Rossum held from 1915 until 1918.

He moved into this role shortly after Pope Benedict XV had issued a minor reform of the Penitentiary. Instead of handling only cases of conscience matters in the internal forum, the Penitentiary – after April of 1915 – was also to attend to matters of the granting and use of indulgences (which Pius X had previously reserved to the Holy Office). The «cases of conscience» often involved grave failings for which sacramental absolution was reserved to the Holy See. In other instances they involved matters for which individuals incurred severe penalties. An example

Van Rossum's opinion is the same adopted by Pope Pius XII in the Apostolic Constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis*, November 30, 1947. However Pius XII made his declaration *ex nunc*, that is «from now on», adding that if indeed the Church had made the *transmissio instrumentorum* to be of the essence of the sacrament, then it was a construct of the Church and something that the Church could change. The pope then declared that only the imposition of hands (and the following prayer) constituted validity *ex nunc*.

⁸⁴ For example, *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, ed. 1952, IX, s.v. *Ordini et Ordinatione*, sez. IV, 222 f.; also *Lexikon für Theologie u. Kirche* ed. 1998, VII, s.v. *Rossum, Van*.

would be a priest who attempts civil marriage, for which he incurs suspension *a sacris*, along with censures and irregularities. On the other hand, questions involving indulgences were attended to in the external forum.

For the most part, van Rossum's role as Grand Penitentiary cannot be documented since many records of this office are confidential and never made available. However, we can find some documented references to common rules and permissions in the external forum which he signed in 1916 and 1917⁸⁵.

9. – In 1918, an Appointment as Prefect of Propaganda Fide

Still ahead of Cardinal van Rossum was arguably his finest contribution to the life of the church. For, as World War I was moving into its final months, on March 12, 1918, Pope Benedict XV appointed him Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, often called *Propaganda Fide*, or simply *Propaganda*.

Cardinal Girolamo Gotti (1834-1916) had held this office of Prefect from 1902 until his death in 1916. Succeeding Gotti was Cardinal Domenico Serafini (1852-1918), a Benedictine of Subiaco, Italy. But after serving barely two years, Serafini also died. Thus it came about that Benedict XV's choice as the twenty-seventh Prefect of Propaganda Fide was Willem van Rossum⁸⁶. By now he was 64 years old and continuing to have bothersome health concerns.

The outstanding accomplishments of van Rossum as Prefect of Propaganda, to some extent had their historical roots in the previous century, and precisely in the preparations for the First Vatican Council. In 1869, there was a Council preparatory commission named *Commissio pro Ecclesia Orientali et Missionibus*, headed by Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò. A proposed *Schema* (or Position Paper) of the commission was roundly discussed

⁸⁵ AAS 8 (1916) 108; 9 (1917) *passim*, 191, 280, 440, 539.

⁸⁶ This position has at times been referred to as that of the «red pope», given the important duties and the extent of authority and territory attached to the office.

by the commission members and went through several rigorous revisions. Its final version had three chapters which dealt with: a) bishops and vicars apostolic in mission lands, b) missionaries and their relationship to *Propaganda Fide*, and c) various practical means of evangelization in mission lands. Some of the concrete items advocated by the commission included the potentially harmful patronage of European governments in mission lands, the education and formation of native clergy, and the accommodation of liturgical matters to local cultures. As it turned out, some fifty years later these very ideas and concerns were to find a champion in the person of van Rossum⁸⁷.

At the time when he assumed the leadership of Propaganda, and with the First World War coming to an end, the Vatican was all too aware that with a depleted treasury it had to face the suffering and destruction resulting from the War. Yet there was a growing optimism in the air, an openness to the challenge of new ideas. The discipline of missiology as branch of theology was in full development, especially in Germany with the influence of Dr. Josef Schmidlin (1876-1944). The time seemed right to envision a broad global expansion of the missions of the Roman Catholic Church.

It soon meant for van Rossum that he was named to two more Vatican positions allied with Propaganda Fide. On March 22, 1918 he became a member of the Sacred Congregation of the Eastern Church, and also president of the Pontifical Seminary of Propaganda Fide (known as the Urbanianum, or even by a third name, The Pontifical Institute of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul).

Additionally, with his new status as Prefect of Propaganda, tradition required that van Rossum be ordained a bishop. When first given the red hat of a Cardinal in November of 1911, it was with the rank of cardinal-deacon. Then, in 1915, his rank was

⁸⁷ Hubert JEDIN, *Manual de Historia de la Iglesia*, VII, Barcelona 1978, 827-837. Jedin's treatment of the procedures of this preparatory commission is outstanding. He says that the «mission representatives» who came to the Council were sometimes treated as second-class members. The *Schema*, of course, was never voted on in plenary session because of the sudden end to the Council.

changed to that of cardinal-priest⁸⁸. Now he was designated the Titular Archbishop of Caesarea in Mauretania⁸⁹, and ordained a bishop by Benedict XV on Pentecost Sunday, May 19, 1918, in the Vatican's Sistine Chapel⁹⁰.

As for his role as Prefect of Propaganda Fide, Cardinal-Archbishop van Rossum had an evident affinity of spirit toward missionary life and activity. His religious congregation of Redemptorists was missionary from its beginnings. His own Redemptorist Dutch province had sent members to South America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa. He met these foreign missionaries on their return to the Netherlands and at the Redemptorist Generalate in Rome. He knew of the growth of the entire Dutch missionary movement and of Dutch missionary congregations, and of the mission support groups such as the Society for Propagation of the Faith founded by Pauline Jaricot in Lyon, France, in 1822.

He seemed eager to seize the moment. Barely two weeks after being appointed Prefect, he was writing to the editorial board of the Dutch review *Onze Missiën in Oost- en West-Indiën* emphasizing the important task of preserving the faith and sharing it with other regions. He urged the board to continue promoting interest in the missions, to pray and to solicit funds for them⁹¹. A month later he wrote to the Dutch Mission Union to thank them for the personal congratulations they had sent and to urge their continued collaboration «... for the sake of the mil-

⁸⁸ At the same time his titular Roman church became that of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, rather near his residence.

⁸⁹ Mauretania was a one-time Berber kingdom on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa (roughly in current western Algeria/northern Morocco). This is not today's Mauritania, which lies on the Atlantic coast south of Morocco.

⁹⁰ J. DREHMANN, *Kardinaal van Rossum, Korte Levensschets*, 77. Still more «positions» were to come van Rossum's way in 1919, as member of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities (see AAS 11 [1919] 166), and in 1922 as the Chamberlain/*Camerarius/Camerlengo* of the College of Cardinals (see AAS 14 [1922] 609). He was not the Papal Chamberlain, who has special *interregnum* duties when a pope dies.

⁹¹ Willem van Rossum, *Onze Missiën in Oost- en West-Indiën*, in *Kolonial Missie Tijdschrift* VIII, 1925, 223-224.

lions and millions of souls in Dutch East Indies who have never had the good fortune, through the true faith, to enjoy the knowledge of God and of the one He sent, Our Lord Jesus Christ»⁹².

In June of 1918, in a letter to the German Mission Union of Francis Xavier, the cardinal declared that all efforts had to be put forth, «... to restore the damage [caused by World War I], to gather in the ripe harvest, to fill up the number of personnel diminished by the war, and to give the poor missionaries the material needed to continue their beneficial work»⁹³.

In these messages we can gauge what he wanted to emphasize as Prefect. The language he used was practical and without theological abstractions. Likewise very practical were his moves in 1929 to find a place for the German missionaries who had been exiled from lands lost by Germany in World War I, and also to found the *Agenzia Internazionale Fides*, the mission news agency based in Rome, with four-hundred active correspondents throughout the world⁹⁴.

On November 30, 1919, Benedict XV published his landmark encyclical *Maximum Illud*. It stood as a kind of a *Magna Charta* for twentieth-century Catholic missionary effort, calling for not only significant dedication of funds, but a genuine support of mission societies such as France's Society for the Propagation of the Faith and Holy Childhood Society. The pope insisted that a decolonization effort in church missions was a necessity; the mission fields had to promote native vocations, have their own native hierarchy, and eventually organize their own financial independence. The encyclical was issued in Pope Benedict XV's name, but Josef Drehmanns testifies that its behind-the-scenes author was Cardinal van Rossum⁹⁵.

Several years into his tenure as Prefect of Propaganda, he

⁹² *De Volksmissionaris* 39 (1917) 195.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ J. METZLER, ed., *Sacrae Congregationis*, 256.

⁹⁵ J. DREHMANN, *Kardinaal van Rossum, Korte Levensschets*, 81. Also, Andrzej MIOTEK, *Das Missionverständnis im historischen Wandel: am Beispiel der Enzyklika «Maximum Illud»*, Veröffentlichungen des Missionspriesterseminars St. Augustin, Nettetal 1999, Nr. 51.

had a series of disappointing setbacks. The first was in 1922 in Scandinavia. He was planning to establish a Roman Catholic mission in this predominantly Lutheran region of northern Europe. To lead the mission, he chose thirty-two year-old Jan Olaf Smit, a Dutch diocesan priest who had formerly studied in Rome. Smit was to be ordained a bishop, and proceed onward to Norway with the title of Apostolic Vicar in that country. Within a brief time the charismatic new bishop was eagerly joined by five Catholic missionary groups from the Netherlands. Van Rossum himself travelled to Scandinavia and wrote back a report⁹⁶. The mission, however, turned out to be generally a failure, at least as it had been envisioned by the cardinal. The arriving missionaries were received with suspicion both as Catholics and as an external threat to Norway's young independence (gained in 1905). Young Bishop Smit was ill prepared for this and eventually had to be withdrawn in 1928. Some Dutch priests and women religious did remain in Norway, though they had to tone down the original dream of the mission. They became more of an ecumenical presence, by way of service in education and health care⁹⁷.

A second crisis developed for van Rossum in 1922. On May 3, 1922, the newly-elected Pope Pius XI issued a *Motu proprio*, *Romanorum Pontificum*, which was major news for those involved in the mission activity. It conferred the title of «Pontifical» on four prominent missionary support organizations: Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Holy Childhood Association, Society of St. Peter the Apostle, and the Missionary Union of Priests and Religious. Furthermore, the *Motu proprio* announced that these Societies were now to be centrally adminis-

⁹⁶ Willem van Rossum, *Aan mijn landgenooten*, Rotterdam 1923. On this same trip, van Rossum also ordained as bishop Johannes M. Buckx, S.C.J., in Helsinki, Finland on August 15, 1923. Van Rossum was the first Cardinal to enter Scandinavia since the Reformation.

⁹⁷ Several recent works deal with this Scandinavian dream of the cardinal: Vefie POELS, *Een Roomse droom: Nederlandse katholieken en de Noorse missie 1920-1975*, Nijmegen 2005. Also, «Die Missie van Jan Olaf Smit», *Jaarboek Katholiek Documentatie Centrum*, 1992, 30-49. See also, P. BOERRIGTER, «Het eerste Scandinavisch Eucharistisch Congres te Kopenhagen», *Onze Missionarissen*, 1932, 275-277.

tered in Rome and would have to operate under a new set of regulations⁹⁸. Except for the Missionary Union, these Societies were of French origin, and all were quite successful. But considerable discontent and outright opposition had developed, because there was totally French control over monies collected *worldwide*. When by decree these mission societies were now to be centrally administered from Rome, there was a huge outcry from the French sector of the church. According to his Redemptorist biographer Joseph M. Drehmanns, the protest from France was so intense that Cardinal van Rossum wanted to resign as the Prefect of Propaganda Fide⁹⁹.

Yet a third setback for van Rossum followed in 1926: an unsuccessful attempt to establish a Roman Catholic mission field inside Soviet Russia. This failure focused on the figure of a French Jesuit, Michel d'Herbigny (1880-1957). He was a talented, dynamic professor of theology and one-time director of Graduate Studies at the Gregorian University in Rome (1921-1923) and later President and Rector of the Pontifical Oriental Institute (between 1923 and 1931). In 1926 he received Pius XI's permission to travel within Bolshevik Russia and there to select and secretly ordain several bishops. En route D'Herbigny was himself first ordained bishop by Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII, at that time the papal legate in Berlin. Bishop D'Herbigny did go on to ordain four priests as bishops, but the project generally collapsed when, due to his own indiscretion, d'Herbigny's secret identity became known and he had to be recalled¹⁰⁰. The failure inside Russia, in turn, reflected badly on the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda in Rome.

⁹⁸ Benedict XV had died on January 22, 1922. The text of *Romanorum Pontificum*, including the rules for the Pontifical Mission Societies can be found in AAS 14 (1922) 321-330. Much of it was drawn up when Pius X still lived; evidence points toward van Rossum as designer and principal instrument of this centralized administration. See Joseph DREHMANN, «Kardinaal van Rossum Prefect der Propaganda Fide», *Het Missiewerk* 14 (1932-1933) 146. Cfr also, Giuseppe ORLANDI, *Giovanni XXIII e i Redentoristi*, in SHCSR 50 (2002) 427-442.

⁹⁹ J. DREHMANN, *Kardinaal van Rossum, Korte Levensschets*, 75.

¹⁰⁰ Leon TRETJAKEWITSCH, *Bishop Michel d'Herbigny, S.J., in Russia: A Pre-cumenical Approach to Christian Unity*, Würzburg 1990.

Although he had considered resigning, van Rossum remained at his post in Propaganda, and despite these and other disappointments, his successes were numerous. Pointing to these successes, Joseph Drehmanns, C.S.S.R., who served van Rossum as secretary until 1929, calls the cardinal «the second founder of Propaganda Fide»¹⁰¹. He authored and published numerous mission documents¹⁰²; he consulted widely with leaders of missionary congregations; his office organized and unified the scattered efforts of many missionary groups; he minimized rivalry, competition, and discord among those in the field; he succeeded in establishing native clergy and hierarchy; and he found new ways to finance the worldwide vision of Catholic mission.

A listing of his specific efforts is impressive:

1. He carefully selected and named capable Apostolic Delegates in mission fields.
2. He oversaw successful fundraising efforts for the education of native seminarians.
3. He centralized the administration of the Pontifical Mission Societies under Vatican authority in 1922 (as seen above).
4. He organized the 300th Anniversary Observance of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in 1922.
5. He organized and oversaw the International Vatican Missionary Exhibition in 1925.
6. He was responsible for the founding of World Mission Sunday as a day of prayer and other observances on behalf of mission lands in 1926.

¹⁰¹ J. DREHMANN, *Kardinaal van Rossum, Korte Levensschets*, 86; J. METZLER, *Sacrae Congregationis*, 312, repeats this designation by DREHMANN as «Second Founder of Propaganda» and seems to concur.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 81; DREHMANN says that van ROSSUM was also the real author of PIUS XI's mission encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* of February 28, 1926. (This encyclical stated, pgh. 14, that the Holy See had, conferred «as it were, Roman Citizenship» on the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith). DREHMANN also calls attention to the numerous decrees of Propaganda Fide which appeared in AAS between 1918 and 1926, and says van ROSSUM was their author. The content of the protocols and decrees that he authored, so many of them very practical, are clearly outlined in J. METZLER, *Sacrae Congregationis*, 310 f.

7. He arranged for the ordination in Rome of native bishops from mission lands around the world. These included fifteen Chinese bishops between 1926 and 1932; a Japanese bishop in 1927; three bishops from India between 1928 and 1931; an Ethiopian bishop in 1930; and a Vietnamese in 1933. Moreover, in 1930 in India Archbishop Mar Ivanios and his followers made their profession of faith as Catholics in union with Rome, with the same Archbishop in 1932 being established by Pius XI as head of the Syro-Malankarian Rite.

8. He directed the relocation in 1929 of the Pontifical Propaganda College, the Urbanianum, from the Piazza di Spagna to the Janiculum Hill near the Vatican. Then he proceeded to oversee the building of the current magnificent structure for the Urbanianum¹⁰³.

9. His gave full support to the Priest Mission Union in the Netherlands; this was a group of diocesan priests which strongly and successfully supported mission work and, at times, sent delegations to Rome to confer with their Dutch cardinal¹⁰⁴.

According to Josef Metzler, Vatican Archivist, the following statistical increase took place in the years when van Rossum was Prefect of Propaganda Fide:¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ His predecessors as Prefects, Cardinals Gotti and Serafini, had this project in mind, but World War I prevented its realization. The former quarters at the Piazza di Spagna had become very inadequate for the more than 125 students. See J. METZLER, *Sacrae Congregationis*, 269-270, 310.

¹⁰⁴ Antoon BAAN, *SPL/PMB in Nederland, 1920-1980; Zestig jaar geschiedenis van de Nederlandse afdeling van het St. Petrus Liefdewerk/Pauselijk Missiewerk voor priesteropleiding oversee*, Den Haag 1928, *passim*. Also, B. VAN DEN EERENBEEFT, *De missie-actie in Nederland, 1600-1940*, Nijmegen 1945, *passim*. Also, B. VAN DEN EERENBEEFT, in *De Volksmissionaris* 53 (1932) 300. Also, Jan ROES, *Het groote Missie-uur 1915-1940: De Missiemotivatie van de nederlandse Katholieken*, Bilthoven 1974, *passim*.

¹⁰⁵ J. METZLER, *Sacrae Congregationis*, 312. All of Metzler's references to van Rossum in this volume are valuable and enlightening.

	1919	1932
Total Mission Fields	352	498
Missionary Priests	16,000	16,050
Missionary Sisters	30,000	38,504
Missionary Brothers	5,000	7,305
Catechists	25,000	74,127
Teachers	20,000	61,756

Josef Drehmanns states outright that van Rossum was the principal author of the two encyclicals *Maximum Illud* (1919) and *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926)¹⁰⁶. Presuming this is so, one cannot but help notice the emphasis placed on efficient *organization* and *management* within the mission field. Perhaps these two words, then, are a fair summary of the cardinal's main contribution as Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide in the years 1918 to 1932. What he faced as he came into office, besides the depletion of funds and personnel in the missions due to the recent war, was a tangle of diverse efforts and initiatives among missionary groups. There was abundant good will, but without coordination of effort there was also much dissipation of energy. Moreover the missions were often interwoven with competition and rivalries among the groups, compounded by the designs of some governments¹⁰⁷ who wanted to use the missions as a way of developing spheres of political and economic influence in the mission lands.

Van Rossum approached this tangled situation with his personal theological model of Church. For him there was only one model; it was hierarchical, centralized, well-organized, well-managed, and not timid. Working from this model, he took firm steps both within Rome and in the mission fields to renew Roman Catholic endeavors to fulfil the gospel mandate of world-wide evangelization.

¹⁰⁶ See footnotes 91 and 99 above.

¹⁰⁷ Note the mention of this in *Maximum Illud*, pgh. 20. J. METZLER, *Sacrae Congregationis*, 310 f., comments on van Rossum's concrete regulations forbidding foreign missionaries to advocate the advantage of their native homelands.

In passing we may observe that Cardinal van Rossum never seemed to impress his colleagues in the College of Cardinals as a strong candidate for the papacy. In the 1914 conclave after the death of Pius X, he was only three years a cardinal and perhaps relatively unknown; we find no evidence of his name surfacing at all¹⁰⁸. In 1922 after the death of Benedict XV, in the conclave which elected Pius XI, when van Rossum had been Prefect of Propaganda for four years, he received four votes on the first ballot, and none thereafter¹⁰⁹.

10. – *The 1924 International Eucharistic Congress in Amsterdam*

One of the memorable moments in the life of Cardinal van Rossum as Prefect of Propaganda deserves special mention. Pope Pius XI ask him to be his special legate to the Twenty-seventh International Eucharistic Congress held in Amsterdam in July of 1924¹¹⁰. This also was the fiftieth anniversary of the cardinal's profession of vows as a Redemptorist. The Roman Catholic newspapers of the day depicted the Congress as glorious and exuberant.

The Dutch church historian Ton van Schaik further describes the occasion, «In that month of July, Amsterdam, in short, resembled a Roman fortress inside of which could be seen soutanes and habits, old-fashioned knickerbockers and purple sashes. It was a spectacle the likes of which had not been seen since the processions of the middle ages, all in honor of the Blessed Sacrament»¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁸ Josef SCHMIDLIN, *Papstgeschichte der neuesten Zeit*, Band III, München 1936, 187.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Band IV, 21. Van Rossum himself never makes mention of these conclaves, and his non-election did not seem to cause a stir in the Netherlands.

¹¹⁰ AAS 16 (1924) 274-275 and 327-329. See also *De Volksmissionaris* 45 (1924) 133-139.

¹¹¹ Ton VAN SCHAİK, *Een mooi geloof: Katholieken in Salland*, Zwolle Ijsse-lacademie, nr. 169 (2003) 87. Also see *Katholiek Nederland en de Paus*, Utrecht 1985.

The cardinal arrived in Amsterdam by boat from Jmuiden, travelling along the North Sea Canal. On the banks of the canal were a children's choir and an adult Oratorium choir. Part of the reception committee was made up of men and women from the Catholic village of Volendam who stood on the decks of their fishing fleet, dressed in their traditional costumes.

Dignitaries who attended the Congress along with van Rossum included the primate of Spain, Cardinal Enrique Reig y Casanova; the prince-archbishop of Breslau, Cardinal Adolph Bertram; the five bishops of the Netherlands; Baron van Voorst tot Voorst, Chair of the First Chamber of the Kingdom; and the Roman Catholic Prime Minister Charles J. M. Ruys de Beerenbrouck. There were also the Knights of Malta and the members of the City Council of Amsterdam.

The days of the Congress included a beautifully organized program of prayer sessions liturgies, processions, and conferences. The closing Mass, held in a local stadium, drew an attendance of 70,000 faithful.

The huge display of Catholic faith, with its gathering of elite personages, left the citizens of Amsterdam in wide-eyed excitement. It also left some of the Protestant community registering their discontent. They viewed the occasion as a political show of power on the part of Catholics in the «pillarized» Dutch society¹¹².

11. – *Other Events as a Cardinal*

With no attempt to relate them to the previously noted experiences of van Rossum, we can observe still other events in his life as a cardinal, and let them serve to fill out the picture of his ministry and his personality. The additional events are presented here in a loosely chronological order.

¹¹² In observance of his golden jubilee of profession, van Rossum also received an artistic memorial portfolio from his confreres in the Suriname mission. It contained congratulations in nine different languages, three of them European, and the others were Sranantongo, Urdu, Kali'na, Sanskrit, Javanese, and Chinese, all nine of which were spoken in Suriname. It was a great indication of the multicultural reality of this and other mission fields. [Data taken from KDC, 831, nr. 226].

As the Dutch cardinal in Rome, his office was at times approached by people from the Netherlands for help on various church matters. One instance of this was the 1913 papal approbation of the Missionary Sisters of Asten, of the province of North Brabant. Their founder was a diocesan priest, Gerard van Schijndel, who successfully petitioned the cardinal to use his influence for the approbation.

In 1920 van Rossum was in search for someone to serve as President of the Central Council of Italy for the Pontifical Missionary Societies. He wanted someone who was an organizer, one who could inspire and energize people, and one who could also raise funds. His choice fell upon a thirty-nine year-old Monsignor in Bergamo, Italy. With the permission of Bergamo's Bishop Luigi M. Marelli, and with the approval of Pope Benedict XV, who knew the Monsignor personally, on January 10, 1921, van Rossum invited the young Monsignor, named Angelo Roncalli, to Rome. The future Pope John XXIII came to the Vatican one week later and for three years served in his Italian Council position with Cardinal van Rossum¹¹³.

In 1923 the cardinal was involved in the launching of the Roman Catholic University at Nijmegen, in the Netherlands. This event has been looked upon as a major indication of Catholicism's strength within the Dutch political coalition known as pillarization¹¹⁴.

In 1928 van Rossum made a trip to Ireland on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Confraternity of the Holy Family, a group strongly encouraged by his fellow Redemptorists. Father Patrick Murray, the Superior General of the Redemptorists and a native of Ireland, was also present. On this occasion they were both named as Freeman of the City of Limerick,

¹¹³ Peter HEBBLETHWAITE, *Jean XXIII, le pape du Concile*, Paris 1988, 118-120. Also, POPE JOHN XXIII, *Journey of a Soul*, London 1964, 198 f. Cf. G. ORLANDI, *Giovanni XXIII e i Redentoristi*, 431-442.

¹¹⁴ Hans DE VALK, *Roomser dan de paus*, Voorburg 1998, 265-266; 271-305. Also, Gerard BROM, *Dies Natalis*, Nijmegen 1955. Also, Hub LAEVEN – Lodewijk WINKELER, *Radboud Stichting, 1905-2005*, Nijmegen 2005, 59. The University changed its name in 2004 to Radboud University Nijmegen.

where a famous Redemptorist parish is located. Lacking facility in English, the cardinal responded to the honor in French¹¹⁵.

Also in the general context of 1928, another instance of Cardinal van Rossum's being approached by his fellow citizens of the Netherlands involved the intriguing case of an association popularly called *Amici Israel*. This group was founded by two Dutch clergymen and a famous woman-convert from Judaism. The two priests were Anthony van Asselman, the Roman Procurator General of the Crosier Fathers, and Laetus Himmelreich, a Franciscan. The convert was Sophie van Leer, who at the time of her baptism as a Catholic had taken the name of Maria Francesca. The «Friends of Israel» was begun in Rome in 1926 with the purpose of praying and working for the conversion of the Jews to the kingdom of Christ. Sophie Van Leer, who was from a prominent family in the Netherlands, came to the cardinal's office in Rome seeking his support for the association. At first he was a staunch advocate of *Amici Israel*, which within two years could count numerous other cardinals and bishops as members. Then on March 24, 1928, came the shocking news: the association known as *Amici Israel* was officially abolished, and this by a decree of the Holy Office itself, of which Cardinal van Rossum himself was a member¹¹⁶.

To this day many questions remain about this case. The decree of abolition gave the following reason for the suppression of *Amici Israel*: that, although it had kept its primary purposes in view, it had later «... initiated a manner of acting and thinking inconsistent with the spirit of the Church, with the thought of the Holy Fathers [of the Church], and with the very liturgy itself»¹¹⁷. Recent authors have tried to puzzle out what historical facts lay behind this brief, and considerably vague, reason given for abolition. A tenacious rumor that the relationship of Father Van Asseldonk and Sophie Van Leer was reprehensible, and there-

¹¹⁵ *Der Tijd*, juli, 1928. See also KDC, 831, nr. 226.

¹¹⁶ AAS 20 (1928) 103-104.

¹¹⁷ In the original Latin: «... deinde rationem agendi inivisse ac loquendi a sensu Ecclesiae, a mente SS. Patrum et ab ipsa sacra Liturgia abhorrentem».

fore was the reason for suppression, does not seem to have any documentary evidence¹¹⁸.

One positive effect that did arise from this sudden and strange event is that the decree which abolished *Amici Israel* also contained a very strong condemnation of anti-Semitism: «... and just as [the Apostolic See] condemns all ill-will and hatred among peoples, so also [it condemns] to the utmost that hatred against the people once chosen by God, and, beyond question, that hatred which customarily today is called by the term 'anti-semitism'»¹¹⁹.

The year 1929 brought a more distant trip for Cardinal van Rossum. In his official capacity as Prefect of Propaganda, he went to Iceland and was cordially welcomed by both church and government officials. While there he announced the creation of the Vicariate Apostolic of Iceland¹²⁰. He also consecrated the Iceland Cathedral of Christ the King in Reykjavik¹²¹.

Later in that same year of 1929, van Rossum became involved in a complicated local dispute in the city of Roermond in his home country. The dispute was between two different groups of religious sisters over the building of a new hospital. For some years van Rossum had served as the «Cardinal Protector» of one of the groups, the (previously-mentioned) Sisters of Charity of Tilburg in which two of his cousins were members. This group

¹¹⁸ Among these authors: Marcel POORTHUIS – Theo SALEMINK, *Op zoek naar de blauwe ruiter: Sophie Van Leer: een leven tussen avant-garde, jodendom en Christendom, 1892-1953*, Nijmegen 2000, 263-287. Also, A. RAMAEKERS, *Doctor Anton Van Asseldonk, O.S. Crucis, 1892-1973, Clairlieu* [Bulletin of the O. S. Crucis], Achel 1978, 5-51; also J. SCHEERDER, *Wilhelmus Antonius Van Dintner, in Clairlieu*, 44, Achel 1986, 95-123; 182-285.

¹¹⁹ AAS 20 (1928) 174. In the original Latin, «... et quemadmodum omnes invidias ac similitates inter populos reprobat, ita vel maxime odium adversus populum olim a Deo electum, odium nempe illud, quod vulgo "anti-Semitismi" nomine significari solet».

¹²⁰ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., Bernard MARTHALER, et. al. eds., Washington D.C. 2003, s.v. «Iceland», 7:277.

¹²¹ G. BOOTS, *Bezoek van Zijne Eminentie Kardinaal van Rossum aan de Ijslandsche Missie, Onze Missionarissen*, in *Hoensbroek* 21 (1929) 135; 230-240. See also Z.E. *Kardinaal van Rossum in Ijsland*, in *Katholieke Illustratie* 63 (1929) nr. 47, 1057. This is also recorded in *Analecta* 11 (1932) 370.

had operated the Roermond hospital since 1850, and now, after seventy-nine years, the building needed to be replaced. The second group of Sisters, from the town of Heeren, proposed that *they* put up the new building in Roermond, and then conduct it themselves. It was clearly a territorial wrangle.

Perhaps acting on poor information, van Rossum, from Rome, stepped into the fray and tried to stop the Heeren group, but without success. The Tilburg group packed up and left Roermond. Later in that year of 1929 the cardinal came to Wittem to celebrate his fiftieth anniversary of priestly ordination. Who should come to the Wittem reception but some of the Heeren Sisters, and their priest-director! But they could not bring themselves to present themselves to greet the honoree. There was general embarrassment all around.

In the background of this sad event was perhaps the Redemptorist secretary of the cardinal, Josef Drehmanns, for his brother was a member of the city council of Roermond and favored the Tilburg Sisters. (We will see shortly that Drehmanns was soon to be replaced as van Rossum's secretary and asked to leave Rome by Pius XI)¹²².

12. – *The Death of Cardinal van Rossum, 1932*

In the late 1920s and early 1930s the health of Cardinal Willem van Rossum was deteriorating further. He continued to suffer from high blood pressure and diabetes, both of which had an effect on his heart. He was susceptible to bouts of influenza and bronchitis. Nevertheless he tried to maintain a rather rigorous schedule as Prefect of Propaganda (along with his other Vatican commitments, which in the last year of his life included being a member of the Congregation of Rites)¹²³.

¹²² G. VAN BREE, *De Voorgeschiedenis*, in G. LINSEN red., *Tot heil der zielen: Bijdragen over de ontkerklijking in de ziekenzorg in Roermond ter gelegenheid van het vijftigjarig bestaan van het St Laurentiusziekenhuis*, Roermond 1981, 44-64. Also, Maurus HENDRIKS, *Levensbericht van een honderdjarige: Korte geschiedenis van de Congregatie De Kleine Zusters van de H. Joseph*, Heerlen 1972, 33-35. This latter work refers to this incident as «the famous undertaking».

¹²³ In his years as Cardinal, van Rossum was at some time a member of

As already mentioned, his golden jubilee of priestly ordination was in 1929. He observed the occasion with a somewhat longer stay in the Netherlands. But it was hardly a time of relaxation as he visited friends and family, was officially feted in various locations, and paid a special visit to the Archbishop of Utrecht, Johannes H. Gerardus Jansen. When he returned to Rome and his Vatican duties he was very tired and not feeling at all well. Then came the difficulty regarding his long-time Redemptorist secretary Josef M. Drehmanns, which resulted in Drehmanns leaving Rome, and another Redemptorist, Bernard J. Lijdsman, taking his place.

The details of his departure have never been clarified¹²⁴. However, a key factor seems to have been the June 1929 *Motu Proprio* of Pope Pius XI. By this decree the «Society of St. Peter the Apostle» (for which Drehmanns was the Secretary General) was now to be under the direct administration of Propaganda Fide¹²⁵. According to several sources, especially Lijdsman himself,¹²⁶ Drehmanns resisted the action of this decree, whereupon Pius XI decided that Drehmanns was no longer to remain in Rome. The pope, however, did state to the Redemptorist Superior General Patrick Murray that this action taken against Drehmanns did not have to be considered a punishment, but a precaution¹²⁷.

the following Sacred Congregations: Holy Office, Sacred Council, Religious, Studies and Universities, Oriental Church, as well as belonging to the Commission for the Authentic Interpretation of the Code of Canon Law.

¹²⁴ G. ORLANDI, *Giovanni XXIII e i Redentoristi*, 439-440.

¹²⁵ In translation this *Motu Proprio* was entitled «*The pontifical Society of "St. Peter the Apostle" for the Establishment of Indigenous Clergy is Given its Own Definitive Statutes*». AAS 21 (1929) 345-349. This document expresses thanks «to Josef Drehmanns, a religious of the congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, who, while he served from the very first days of this Institute in the office of Secretary General, industriously exerted himself in this type of pioneer effort». *Ibid.*, 349. On the same occasion there was named as the [new] Secretary Msgr. Pietro Coffano, the Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith for Italy.

¹²⁶ *Memorie van p. dr. B. Lijdsman, opgetekend door p. dr. Mulders*. [Translation: Memories of Rev. Dr. B. Lijdsman, recorded in writing by Rev. Dr. Mulders].

¹²⁷ G. ORLANDI, *Giovanni XXIII e i Redentoristi*, 439. It seems that Pius XI

About this time the cardinal published a series of Advent and Christmas meditations in Italian¹²⁸, and also began to compose a devotional work in Dutch based on St. Alphonsus *Via Crucis*. (The meditations were published in Rome in 1930; the second work was eventually to be published posthumously in 1933, under the title *Sint Alfonsus' Lijdensgedachten*)¹²⁹.

In 1932 he was invited to take part in the mid-August Internordic Eucharistic Congress in Copenhagen, Denmark. The long ceremonies of the Congress left him noticeably tired. However, as soon as the Congress was over, he travelled by train for the Netherlands. After day-long visits first in Amsterdam and then in Utrecht, on August 25 he went to the Redemptorist house in Nijmegen. It was in Nijmegen that he suffered digestive problems and a complete loss of appetite. Nevertheless, on the next day, August 26, he chose to have a short visit with his sister, Sister Maria Gerulpha, in her Tilburg convent, returning to Nijmegen for the night.

Leaving Nijmegen on August 27 he journeyed to Sparrendaal (North Brabant) in order to ordain as bishop Father Francis Joosten, of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, who had just been named Vicar Apostolic of Tatungfu, China. He accomplished this ordination on August 28 with obvious difficulty and at its end was completely exhausted. But after a few hours rest, he was able to travel to his beloved Wittem. Entering the Redemptorist seminary where he had once taught and served in other capacities, he is remembered to have exclaimed, «How glad I am to be here!»

received Murray, Drehmanns and van Rossum in separate audiences all on the same day, April 15, 1930. When Cardinal van Rossum asked Pius XI the motives behind the removal of Drehmanns, the pope said that he was not able to tell him. *Ibid.* 440. Drehmanns left Rome in late April 1930, returned to Wittem in the Netherlands to teach Canon Law, where he was well known as a preacher and confessor. He founded a group of religious women (now called *Unitas*) in 1942 which has several branches. In 1950 he was assigned to Brazil (to the Redemptorist Rio de Janeiro province) and died in Halambra, 17 September, 1959. See *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, IX, 1598-1599.

¹²⁸ Willem van Rossum, *Meditazioni per le Domeniche dell' Avvento e del S. Natale*, Roma 1930.

¹²⁹ *Id.*, *Sint Alfonsus' Lijdensgedachten*, Roermond 1933.

But his end was near. He managed to celebrate Mass on August 29, but only with the assistance of his former and current secretaries, Fathers Joseph Drehmanns (now teaching at Wittem) and Bernard Lijdsman. It was the last Mass he celebrated. That evening, after his confreres and two doctors advised it, he consented to be taken to Mt. Calvary hospital in Maastricht. By 11:00 P.M. he was pronounced to be in very grave condition. After having received the sacraments of reconciliation, anointing, and Viaticum, he slipped into a coma and died at 2:00 A.M. on August 30, 1932, lacking four days of being seventy-eight years old¹³⁰.

The Dutch newspapers carried extensive notice of his death and burial. His funeral liturgy was celebrated in the ancient and magnificent St. Servaaskerk in Maastricht, where his body has lain in state for three days. Church and government dignitaries from all over the Netherlands and Scandinavia were in attendance, and then they accompanied the body to its burial in the Redemptorist church crypt at Wittem.

In Rome the Superior General and the Redemptorist community received the personal condolences of Pope Pius XI, relayed by one who was himself to become the next pope, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli. Similar condolences poured in from around the world¹³¹.

Soon he was being memorialized in further ways. The Secretary of Propaganda Fide, Archbishop (later Cardinal) Carlo Salotti (1870-1947) published a lengthy *In Memoriam* tribute to the deceased cardinal's life and service, with special recognition for his work as Prefect of Propaganda¹³². Other tributes were to follow. On January 24, 1933, Catholic Amsterdam commemorated him during a memorial concert. In the same year his cardi-

¹³⁰ These details of his last two weeks of life are from *Analecta* 11 (1932) 264-266, provided by the then Redemptorist Superior General Patrick Murray. This same source adds the detail that when his will was opened, it was discovered that he left his monetary assets to Propaganda Fide for the benefit of mission fields around the world.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² AAS 24 (1932) 320. Also, Archives CSSR Netherlands, RWM 1.

nal's hat was placed in St. Michael's Church in Zwolle, and the municipality of 's Hertogenbosch (Den Bosch/Bois-le-Duc) installed a statue of him on the plaza named Kardinaal van Rossumplein¹³³.

In 1939 his remains were removed from the downstairs church crypt in Wittem and placed in a special burial niche carved into the foundation wall of the church. Thus they now lie just behind the large Carrara marble statue mentioned earlier as the work of the Vatican sculptor Enrico Quattrini. Directly below the statue is an inscription, in memory of his Prefectship: *Vir bonus, Fidelis super multa, qui Christum annuntiavit in Gentibus*¹³⁴. His immediate successor as Prefect of Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi, came from Rome to be present for the reburial and dedication of the memorial.

In 1954 the townspeople of Zwolle commemorated their native son, observing the one-hundredth anniversary of his birth, with civic and clerical personages in attendance¹³⁵. On that occasion the town opened a social center named the *Kardinaal van Rossum Huis*, and two years later a group from Zwolle launched the Kardinaal van Rossum Instituut (using an acronym KAROSI). Its intent was to promote Socio-Cultural events on an international basis. The institute, however, never seemed to take hold and it disappeared a few years later¹³⁶.

The latest known public event commemorating Cardinal Willem van Rossum was the 1993 exhibit at the Jan Van Horne Museum at Weert (Limburg). It featured various vestments and personal effects of the Cardinal which were once on display in the small Redemptorist museum¹³⁷.

¹³³ *De Katholieke Illustratie*, September 9, 1933; *Brabants Dagblad*, January 16, 2002.

¹³⁴ Translation: «A noble man, faithfully in charge of many things, he revealed Christ to the nations».

¹³⁵ *Katholieke Illustratie*, September 18, 1954.

¹³⁶ Jan WILLEMSEN, *Academische leken missie actie, 1947-1967* (KDC: Nijmegen, 1990), 161.

¹³⁷ Some necessary renovations in the Wittem Redemptorist house occasioned the closing of the museum. The items are currently in storage.

13. – *Evaluation of Cardinal Willem van Rossum*

How do we evaluate the life of Cardinal Willem van Rossum? A place to begin is to consult the opinion of historians to date. Shortly after his death there were two rather lengthy memorial articles written about him. The first was by the famed German missiologist Josef Schmidlin (1876-1944), whose praise of van Rossum focused especially on his ardent zeal for promoting the missionary outreach of the Catholic Church, and on his centralizing the administration of this outreach in Rome. He also related an event in which a new lecturer in missiology was being sought for the Propaganda College. Schmidlin had recommended a certain candidate. Van Rossum judged the man to be lacking proper academic credentials¹³⁸. A second candidate was suggested, and the cardinal declared him too intellectual, too theoretical. Still the name of a third was put forward, and the cardinal said the man was simply without talent. Schmidlin said he himself was left wondering if this was a trial-and-error method of missiological development on the part of the cardinal and his Propaganda staff.

Another German missiologist, Josef Otto, wrote a memorial article. Referring to van Rossum's fourteen years as Prefect of Propaganda Fide, he described his achievements as *wunderbar*, «marvellous»¹³⁹.

In 1974 the Nijmegen church historian Jan Van Laarhoven wrote that van Rossum's centralized governance of Catholic mission effort at the Vatican resulted in creation of a genuine world power in religious affairs¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁸ Josef SCHMIDLIN, *Propagandapräfekt van Rossum*, in *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 22 (1932) 353-354. Schmidlin adds that the first candidate had written a critical article about the Propaganda College in the *Osservatore Romano*!

¹³⁹ Josef OTTO, *Zum Tode des Kardinals van Rossum*, in *Die Katolischen Missionen* 60/10 (1932) 269-271. Accompanying the article was a photograph of the Cardinal at the Internord Eucharistic Congress held at Copenhagen just a few weeks before his death.

¹⁴⁰ Jan VAN LAARHOVEN, *De Kerk van 1770-1970: Handboek van de kerkgeschiedenis*, V, Nijmegen 1974, 311.

Later in the 1970s the German historian Hubert Jedin (1900-1980) credited van Rossum with making the mission work of the church truly «world missions», and not simply European¹⁴¹.

Within the last decade two other historians have recognized the historic contribution of this third Dutch cardinal. Writing in 1996, Kees Ribbens, himself from van Rossum's native place of Zwolle (Overijssel), remarked that one must position him as prominent within the context of the «pillarization», when the Catholic Church stood in clear contrast to the Protestant and liberal segments of Dutch society, and before confessional belief in Catholicism had faded as a robust heritage¹⁴². The other recent historian, Andrzej Miotk of the missionary Society of the Divine Word, writing in 1999, has maintained that Cardinal van Rossum was a central figure at a turning point in history, and especially in church history¹⁴³.

Besides the historians, we might let our evaluation be guided by those who were his contemporaries. Cardinal Johannes de Jong (1885-1955), who was to follow in history as the fourth cardinal of the Netherlands (1946-1955), chose Willem van Rossum as his confessor when de Jong was a theology student in Rome. His memories of van Rossum were that he was devout and modest¹⁴⁴.

The author has been privileged to interview members of the Redemptorist missionary congregation who knew Willem van Rossum personally. They remembered him as headstrong, but a very good manager, introverted but very steady and predictable, faithful to personal and community prayer, and at times he could be tense and easily annoyed (although this, it was said, could be attributed to when his diabetes was hard to control). They also remember that he asked money of the Redemptorists, not for himself, but for the missions.

¹⁴¹ H. JEDIN, *Manual de Historia de la Iglesia*, VIII, 772.

¹⁴² Kees RIBBENS, *Heil U! Zwolle's edle spruit; De terugkeer van kardinaal in zijn geboortestad*, *Zwols Historisch Tijdschrift* 13 (1996) 58-65.

¹⁴³ Andrzej MIOTK, *Das Missionsverständnis im historischen Wandel; Am Beispiel der Enzyklika «Maximum Illud»*, Nettetal 1999, 220.

¹⁴⁴ H.W.F. AUKES, *Kardinaal de Jong*, Utrecht 1956, 78.

There is an oral tradition among some Redemptorists that, although he was much in favor with Popes Pius X and Benedict XV, there was not the same cordial relationship with Pius XI. We find no indication of conflict, yet it may be a fair conjecture that some of the rumored difficulty stemmed from the pope's dismissal from Rome of Josef Drehmanns, the Cardinal secretary (as related above).

We would be remiss if we did not mention here that a very special honor came to van Rossum late in life when Queen Wilhemina of the Netherlands (1880-1962) honored him with the Grand Cross of the Dutch Lion, the highest decoration granted to civilians. For a Protestant Queen of the Netherlands to grant this honor to a cardinal of the Catholic Church is yet another mark of the social movement of Catholics since the mid 1800s¹⁴⁵.

CONCLUSION

We choose to conclude with the simple observation that Cardinal Willem van Rossum was a man of his time. He was an orphan from a modest family background in a relatively small European country. He came with considerable talents into a missionary congregation which already had put down roots in missions around the globe. But instead of serving in one of those foreign missions, he was invited to the Vatican in Rome, to be a leader of the Catholic Church's missionary endeavors for the entire world. He came to a Vatican milieu that had not yet begun to emphasize dialogue and collegiality, ecumenism and the «right to religious freedom»¹⁴⁶. It did not have at its disposal instant communication via satellite, travel at supersonic speed, or substantial financial means.

¹⁴⁵ The author discovered of late that a portrait of Cardinal van Rossum was painted in 1929 by Jan Sluijters (1881-1957), a Post-Impressionist who was long one of the most popular painters in the Netherlands. It measured 50 cm. by 72 cm., is signed and dated by Sluijters, and was sold to a private collection in 2003. This information can be found on the internet, under «Jan Sluijters van Rossum auction results». No further information has been found on this work.

¹⁴⁶ Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis humanae personae*, 7.

Inside the Church there were the tensions between modernists and the ultra-conservative integralists¹⁴⁷. Outside of the Church there was the aftermath of the ravages of World War I, the exploding Russian Communist Revolution, nascent National Socialism, the weakening of colonialism, the rise of labor movements, and an unstable world economy that would crash in 1929¹⁴⁸.

It was in these times Cardinal Willem van Rossum excelled as a leader within the Catholic Church and beyond. To apply a phrase from a recent pontiff, Pope John XXIII, we submit that this cardinal from the Netherlands «read the signs of the times», and, mindful of his human limitations, with trust in God, responded accordingly, with results that still endure in our church.

In fact, when Pope Pius XI on April 24, 1931 stood by Cardinal van Rossum's side at the dedication of the beautiful new buildings of the Collegium Urbanianum on the Janiculum hill, it is recorded that the pope was visibly moved by the occasion and had difficulty expressing himself. Among other things, he said to van Rossum, «Your Eminence, it is not shameful to be speechless, when things themselves speak so eloquently... and like you, we prefer to let these things speak to everyone, now and forever ... these things so grand, so enduring, so full of promise for the future, to let them proclaim everything that a moment like this brings into our mind and heart»¹⁴⁹. We too may believe that the things which God worked through the Redemptorist Cardinal Willem van Rossum from the Netherlands speak more eloquently than any words.

¹⁴⁷ The Nijmegen church historian, L.J. Rogier, characterizes Cardinal van Rossum in the middle of the modernist-integralist struggle as «the quiet and wise father». L.J. ROGIER, *Katholieke Herleving*, Den Haag 1956, 476.

¹⁴⁸ Theo SALEMINK in his *Krisis en Konfessie: Ideologie in Katholieke Nederland 1917-1933* (Doctoral Dissertation University of Nijmegen, 1980) provides a valuable overview of this era from a Dutch viewpoint.

¹⁴⁹ J. METZLER, *Sacrae Congregationis*, 269-270.

SUMMARY

The Redemptorist Cardinal Willem van Rossum (1854-1932), the first Dutch cardinal since Reformation times, served in the Vatican under four popes (1896-1932). Perhaps his greatest contribution was as Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fide (1918 until his death). Orphaned as a child, he was inspired to join the Redemptorists after they preached a parish mission in Zwolle, his hometown. After ordination as priest, he taught Redemptorist minor seminarians at Roermond, then theologians at Wittem. Later he was called to Rome to be one of the first professors in the new Redemptorist *Schola Major*. As this project was delayed, he caught the attention of the Vatican which invited him to serve in the Holy Office. When, in 1911, he was also Consultor General to Redemptorist Rector Major Patrick Murray, he was named Cardinal by Pius X (as a special honor to the Redemptorists). A series of Vatican posts followed, including Prefect of Propaganda. (Later historians have called him the «Second Founder of Propaganda»). This article aims at providing fresh insights into van Rossum's personality and his mission service to the Church, while he remained – as he hoped to be – ever «a genuine son of St. Alphonsus».

RESUMEN

El cardenal Willem van Rossum, redentorista holandés (1854-1932), primer cardenal que tuvo Holanda desde el tiempo de la Reforma, trabajó en el Vaticano bajo cuatro Papas (1896-1932). Quizá su mayor contribución fue como prefecto de Propaganda Fide (desde 1918 hasta su muerte). Huérfano cuando era niño, se sintió llamado a hacerse redentorista después de una misión en Zwolle, su ciudad natal. Ordenado sacerdote, fue profesor en el seminario menor redentorista de Roermond y luego en el teologado de Wittem. Más tarde fue llamado a Roma para ser uno de los primeros profesores del nuevo *Colegio Mayor* de los redentoristas. Pero mientras el proyecto se retrasaba, el Vaticano se fijó en él y lo nombró miembro del Santo Oficio. En 1911, siendo consultor general del Rector Mayor redentorista Patrick Murray, fue nombrado cardenal por Pío XI, como un honor especial a los redentoristas. Ejerció diversos cargos en el Vaticano, entre ellos el de Prefecto de Propaganda Fide. Los historiadores posteriores lo han llamado «segundo fundador de Propaganda Fide». Este artículo proyecta nueva luz sobre la personalidad de van Rossum y su servicio a la Iglesia, siendo siempre, como él quería, «un hijo auténtico de san Alfonso».