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«WHOM DID BELGIUM SEND US?»
FATHER JOSEPH SCHRIJVERS' LIFE UNTIL 1913

1. – *Family tree*; 2. – *Primary and secondary school*; 3. – *Postulancy and novitiate*; 4. – *Seminary*; 5. – *Ordination*; 6. – *Professor at the seminary, Prefect of the students and superior's advisor*; 7. – *The beginning of his writing career*; 8. – *Future coauthors in Galicia*; 9. – *On the mission to Galicia; Conclusion*

We may find many both detailed and rather short biographies dedicated to the lives of individual people in the bibliography of the Belgian Province. Not only Redemptorists but also lay people have researched the life of those who served in the Ukraine: Emiel Van der Straeten¹, Achiel Delaere², Richard Costenoble³ and Louis Vangansewinkel⁴.

However, nobody has seemed to be interested in the life of Father Joseph Schrijvers so far. Until now there is no solid research on his life. His biography is limited to a few obituaries and short articles.

The first obituary, written by a Belgian Redemptorist, Pieter Clerinx, appeared in *Sint-Gerardus Bode* in 1945 in Flemish⁵. A year later another obituary was published in a magazine «*La Voix du Rédempteur*» (Voice of the Redeemer) in French⁶, which was written by the general archivist Maurice De

¹ Emile THEYSKENS, *Pater Van der Straeten 1862-1924: miles Christi, soldaat van Christus*, Sint-Alfonsusdrukkerij, Essen 1924, 60.

² Jozef DE VOCHT, *Pater Achiel Delaere. Eerste redemptorist van de griekse ritus. Een bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de Grieks-katholieke kerk der Oekraïeners in Canada. Missieactie der paters redemptoristen*, Jette 1954, 315.

³ Alfred DEBOUTTE, *Leven Richard Costenoble redemptorist, (1885-1975)*, Leuven 1978, 208.

⁴ Lucien CEYSSENS, *Louis Vangansewinkel (1892-1968), redemptorist van Linde-Peer, missionaris onder de Oekraïner*, Peer Heemkundige kring 1996, 66.

⁵ Pieter CLERINX, *In memoriam. Hoogeerw. P. Jozef Schrijvers, algemeen Consultor te Rome*, Sint-Gerardus Bode 1945, Mei, №3, 75-77.

⁶ Maurice DE MEULEMEESTER, *In memoriam. Le R. P. Jos. Schrijvers C.SS.R.*,

Meulemeester. The same obituary but in Latin appeared in «Analecta CSSR»⁷. The same author also wrote two articles about Father Joseph as a spiritual writer in 1947. One of them was published in French in the above mentioned magazine «La Voix du Rédempteur»: *Le R. P. Schrijvers comme écrivain de spiritualité*⁸ (Father Schrijvers as a spiritual writer). The other one appeared in Italian in a journal «Vita Cristiana» (Christian Life): *Un grande scrittore ascetico dei nostri tempi: il p. Giuseppe Schrijvers, C.SS.R.*⁹ (A great ascetic writer of our times: Father Joseph Schrijvers, C.SS.R.). An obituary in Ukrainian was written by the Redemptorist Roman Khomiak and published in a Ukrainian newspaper in Canada «Українські вісті» (Ukrainian news)¹⁰. A more detailed biography written by Bohdan Kurylas, CSSR appeared in a journal «Voice of the Redeemer»¹¹. A short obituary was posted in «The Jubilee Almanac» in 1956¹². Two biographical articles, written in Flemish by Clement Put¹³ and Jérôme Van Landeghem, C.SS.R.,¹⁴ were printed in «Stoppels». Raymond Lambie used them to write *A short biography of Z.E Pater Jozef Schrijvers, Redemptorist, 1876-1945*¹⁵. There were two biogra-

«La Voix du Rédempteur», N° 2, 15 Nov. 1947, 45-51. This obituary was later republished in «Lettres sur l'Ukraine» [B. Kurylas, A. Bosschaert], t. III, Jette 1988, 34-35.

⁷ ID., *Pl. R. P. Joseph Schrijvers (1876-1945)*, in *Analecta* 1948, 34-38.

⁸ ID., *Le R. P. Schrijvers comme écrivain de spiritualité*, in «La Voix du Rédempteur», N° 2, 15 Nov. 1947. This article was edited and republished in «Lettres sur l'Ukraine» [B. Kurylas, A. Bosschaert], t. III, Jette 1988, 35-37.

⁹ ID., *Un grande scrittore ascetico dei nostri tempi: il p. Giuseppe Schrijvers, C.SS.R.*, in «Vita Cristiana. Rivista ascetico-mistica», Anno XVI 1947, gennaio-febbraio, fasc. 1, 54-62.

¹⁰ Roman KHOMIAK, *Blessed Father Joseph Schrijvers, CSSR.*, in «Ukrainian news», Edmonton, Alberta, Tuesday 15th May 1945, N° 20, Year XVIII, 5.

¹¹ Kurylas BOHDAN, *Father Joseph Schrijvers – the lover of Ukraine*, in «The Voice of the Redeemer», N° 21, 12 December 1949, 36-40.

¹² *Jubilee almanac of the Redemptorist Fathers 1906-1956*, Yorkton 1956, 433-435.

¹³ Clement PUT, *Pater Jozef Schrijvers, redemptorist*, Stoppels 1989, N° 1, 24-29.

¹⁴ Jérôme VAN LANDEGHEM, *Z.E. Pater Jozef Schrijvers, redemptorist 1876-1945*, Stoppels 1991, N° 4, 168-190.

¹⁵ Raymond LAMBIE, *Z.E Pater Jozef Schrijvers, Redemptorist 1876-1945*, Zutendaal 1995, 15.

phies in Ukrainian written by two Redemptorists from the Lviv Province. The first one, "Father Joseph from the Sweet Valley",¹⁶ by Roman Bakhtalovskyi, the second, by Bohdan Beshley. It was published in «The Ascetics of the Order of the Most Holy Redeemer in Ukraine»¹⁷.

In his book Roman Bakhtalovskyi asks the question "Whom did Belgium send us?"¹⁸ which he did not completely answer. All the obituaries and articles are too laconic in the description of Father Joseph's life until 1913. Therefore, in this article I aim to give the answer to the question which Father Roman asked 35 years ago.

This topic can be further opened up through documents from two archives: the General History Archive of the Redemptorists in Rome «Archivum Generale Historicum Redemptoristarum, Roma» (further: AGHR) and the Archive of the North Belgian Province of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, (Redemptorists) which is currently kept in Katholiek Documentatie en Onderzoekscentrum KADOC, (Catholic Documentation and Research Center, Leuven, Belgium): «Archief Noord-Belgische Provincie van de Congregatie van de Allerheiligste Verlosser (Redemptoristen)» (further: KADOC, ANBPCAV), where I had a chance to work.

I would like to express my gratitude to Fr Jean Beco, the archivist of the General History Archive of Redemptorists in Rome, who helped me find the materials I required; Fr Hugo Gotink, the archivist in Belgium, who kindly allowed me to work

¹⁶ Father Roman wrote about Father Joseph in 1979, and not having access to all the information, he chose to write his memoirs. They were not published for a long time and only in 2004 did Father Bohdan Beshley put them in his biographic compilation: *Podvyzhnyky Chynu Naisviatishoho Izbavytelya v Ukraini* (The Ascetics of the Order of the Most Holy Redeemer in Ukraine), Ternopil 2004, 349-381. This edition is meant when citing the memoirs.

¹⁷ Beshley BOHDAN, *Podvyzhnyky Chynu Naisviatvyatishoho Izbavytelya v Ukraini* (The Ascetics of the Order of the Most Holy Redeemer), Ternopil 2004, 24-30

¹⁸ R. BAKHTALOVSKYI, *Otetz Joseph Schrijvers iz Sloldkoi Dolyny* (Father Joseph Schrijvers from the Sweet Valley), in Beshley BOHDAN, *Podvyzhnyky Chynu Naisviatvyatishoho Izbavytelya v Ukraini* (The Ascetics of the Order of the Most Holy Redeemer), Ternopil 2004, 356.

with the documents in KADOC, Leuven; and Mrs Patricia Qua-ghebeur, the specialist in the reading hall of the archive, who helped me find some materials.

1. – *Family tree*

I was able to trace Joseph Schrijvers' family tree using a database on the Internet¹⁹, reaching the XVI century. His furthest ancestor on the father's side was called Henricus Josephus Eduardus Schrijvers (+29 November 1636). He and his wife Emiliena Schrijvers (Cousen) (+11 December 1636) are Joseph's great (to the 7th degree) grandparents. It is known that they died in a village called As. Joseph is their descendant in the tenth generation. This period also points out that his ancestors always lived in the Limburg province (the Northeastern part of modern Belgium).

There are two villages in this province located within 10 km of each other: Zutendal (today: Zutendaal) and As. On the 21 of April, 1836 a daughter was born to Walter and Mechtildis (Weytjens) of the Wolfs family. They called her Anna – Mechtildis. She got married to a widower of the same village Pieter Steyfkens in 1862. Their son Gerard was born in February 1863. However, Peter died two years later, on the 6th of August, 1865. Peter's older brother Anton married her next year on the 25th of April, 1865. They had a son (born February 17, 1867) Henrik who died on the 20th of January, 1868. Anton died at the end of the same year, on December 25 and Anna became a widow for the second time.

Peter and Anton's sister Maria Khristina Steyfkens got married to Peter- Joannes Schrijvers in 1833 and moved to the village of As. His farm was probably rather small and not very profitable as she had to work as a maid. On July 28, 1840 she gave birth to Henry. On January 26, 1870 Henry took Anna Mechtildis Steyfkens as his wife, adopted her son Gerard and moved to Zutendal or – to be more precise – to a place called Gewaai, where Anna had a small farm. The village belonged to Zutendal. There they had three sons: Peter (23th of September,

¹⁹ [e-resource] – available at: www.nl.geneanet.org [31.10.2015].

1870), Walter (15th of March, 1874) and Joseph (19th of December, 1876). Their youngest son Joseph is at the centre of our research.

There are two moments from his early childhood which show that he was an active child and didn't like to sit long in one place. His niece Maria Helena Cornelli Schrijvers recalled how in 1879 one of Joseph's games nearly had a tragic end. He was three at that time. One day he was playing near their house, next to a water basin where local people took water for their animals. He accidentally fell into the basin. The water was very deep for such a young child so Joseph was submerged in the water. Luckily his brother Peter caught him and pulled him out of the basin, thus saving his life²⁰. The other story we know from Joseph Schrijvers himself. In one of his letters written during his seminary years he mentions how, when he was seven or eight, his maid used to say «What good can grow from such a child?»²¹.

2. – Primary and secondary school

Joseph went to a primary school in his village and was taught by Karel Michnon. His eagerness and conscientious attitude towards his studies was noticed not only by his teacher but also by the local parish priest. For this reason the two of them persistently recommended that his parents send Joseph for further studies²². The parish priest chose three boys who would learn Latin upon finishing their primary school. Of course Joseph was among them.

When Schrijvers was a young boy, there was a campaign for Catholic schools in Belgium. The renowned cardinal Victor De-

²⁰ Anekdote over Jozef Schrijvers, verteld door Helena Schrijvers (dochter van Pieter Jan Schrijvers, de broer van de vader van Jozef Schrijvers). Overlijden. Overlijdensberichten en bidprentjes, drukproeven, rouwbetuigingen, genealogische notities, brieven met getuigenissen, necrologieën. – 1945-1946; z.d. Katholiek Documentatie en Onderzoekscentrum in Leuven: Archief Noord-Belgische Provincie van de Congregatie van de Allerheiligste Verlosser (Redemptoristen) (KADOC, ANBPCAV), 3.3.2.17.9.

²¹ These memoirs will be mentioned further in the text.

²² R. LAMBI, *Pater Jozef Schrijvers, redemptorist 1876-1945*, Zutendaal 1991, 4.

champs (who was a Redemptorist)²³ was against state schools and founded catholic schools all over the country. He refused to give the Sacraments to anybody who entered a public school. The papal nuncio personally vetoed this reckless act, but the cardinal insisted on his position and eventually Catholic schools won the struggle²⁴.

A college for boys was built in the city of Hasselt in 1881-1882. A dormitory for students was built one year later. Taking into account the suggestions of Joseph's teacher and the parish priest, his parents Henry and Anna Mechtildis sent him to this college when he turned thirteen. It was the nearest college to their village. Hasselt is situated 20 km West of Zutendal. It was quite difficult to afford the studies and his parents had to make great efforts to be able to pay for them.

There were three more students from Zutendal who entered the college together with Joseph and the four of them became good friends. The new school was a bit strange for "the boys from Zutendal" and other students looked at them with curiosity. First of all, they were shocked with the language. They could hear French everywhere: in the classroom and in the playground.

Two of Joseph's classmates were future bishops. Jaak Moris, who became the bishop of Roseau, Dominica²⁵ and Louis-Joseph

²³ Victor-Auguste-Isidore Dechamps was born on the 6th of December 1810, in Melle. On the 20th of December 1834 he was ordained at the parish in Mechelen. A year later he joined the Congregation and on the 13th of June 1836 made his first profession of vows. On the 25th of September 1865 he was nominated to be the bishop of Namur and on the 1st of October was ordained as a bishop. In two years' time, on the 20th of December 1867 he became the archbishop of Mechelen. On the 31st of March 1875 he became the cardinal-priest of church of San Bernardo alle Terme, Rome. He died on the 29th of September 1883 [e-resource] – available at: <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bdech.html> [31.10.2015].

²⁴ Roman BAKHTALOVSKYI, *Apostol ziednannia nashykh chasiv; spohady* (The modern Apostle of unity, memoirs), Lviv 2001, 42-43.

²⁵ Jaak Moris was born on the 10th of March 1876. He joined the Congregation together with Joseph in 1894. They simultaneously started their novitiate, studies and were even ordained on the same day – the 2nd of October 1900. On the 4th of March 1922 he was nominated to become the bishop of Roseau and on the 30th of April was ordained as a bishop. He died

Kerkhof, who would become bishop of Liege (Luik – in Flemish, Liège in French, Belgium)²⁶. The latter described Joseph:

He was a kind and religious boy, a cheerful and diligent student, good at writing and quick at playing games. I used to admire him as a runner. However, when I saw him later in a slower tempo, I thought the opposite²⁷.

Those who knew Father Joseph saw a quiet boy in him, but he was very different: loud and funny games were his life.

Unfortunately there have been no resources found until now which could shed light on his studies at the college of Saint Joseph where he was enrolled for 5 years (1889-1894)²⁸.

3. – *Postulancy and novitiate*

At the beginning of the summer of 1894 Joseph graduated from college in Hasselt. He faced a choice which he made in favour of religious life in a monastery. What made him do this? What motivated him and influenced his decision? Joseph gives a partial answer in a letter to his family which he wrote on the 24th of December 1898 while in the seminary.

on the 4th of June 1957. [e-resource] – available at: <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bmoris.html> [31.10.2015].

²⁶ Louis-Joseph Kerkhof was born on the 15th of February 1878. He was ordained as a parish priest on the 22nd of September 1900 and on the 18th of December 1924 was nominated to be a bishop – coadjutor of Liège. His ordination to the episcopate took place on the 11th of February 1925 and on the 17th of July 1927 he became an ordinary (ordinarius). On the 7th of December 1961 he requested to be allowed to retire and died on the 31st of December 1962 [e-resource] – available at: <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bkerk.html> [31.10.2015].

²⁷ CLERINX, *In memoriam. Hoogeerw. P. Jozef Schrijvers...*, 75.

²⁸ *Studieschrift Grieks* (Sint-Jozefscollege Hasselt). KADOC, ANBPCAV, Jozef Schrijvers, 3.3.2.17.2. This is a notebook for Greek. The cover page contains a later inscription in Flemish (probably done by an archivist): Middelbaar Onderwijs, College Hasselt. (High school education, Hasselt college – R.P.). However, on the same page there is a note: Grec (st. Basili) with a reference to the 1894-1895 academic year. This is the year Joseph spent as a novice. Therefore this notebook cannot be from his studies in the college. It appears that there was a course of Greek based on the works of St. Basil the Great during their novitiate.

Who would have thought that your son might be a priest? I remember my nanny Catherin van Asch asking herself when I was six or seven “What good can grow from such a child?”²⁹ And I proudly said in my defense: “I’m going to be a priest!” It was a mere game then, but – who knows?! The only thing I can say is that Divine Providence worked on me when 10 years ago a priest came to our house to suggest that I go to the college. Ten years ago! How incredibly fast time flies, like lightning!”³⁰.

A total confidence and reliance on Providence was the way of his life.

Joseph followed the book “Abandonment to Divine Providence” by Jean-Pierre de Caussade for 20 years. Giving himself absolutely to Divine Providence and waiting for God’s directions was his own choice³¹.

It is worth remembering that it was a norm that one or even more children from each family chose religious life at that time³².

²⁹ These memoirs will be mentioned further in the text.

³⁰ «Wie had dat van dien kleinen stop gedacht, niet waar Vader, dat hij later pater zou worden? Ik herinner mij dat mij de meid Catherien van Asch eens zegde als ik rond de 7 of acht jaren oud was: Wat goede zal er ooit van zo een klein ding komen? En hoe klein ik ook was antwoordde ik fier weg: ik kan nog kaplaan, pastoor waeren; ik kan nog Pater waeren. En nu is het spel daar, ik weet niet hoe omtrent. Alles wat men kan zeggen, dat is dat de hand der Voorzienigheid er zichtbaar in mee gewerkt heeft. Indien ik wel meen, is het al tien jaren geleden dat Pastoor voor de eerste keer thuis kwam om aan Vader en Moeder zijn voorstel te doen. Al tien jaren! die zoo snel als de weerlicht zijn voorbijgevlogen...». A letter to his family written by Joseph Schrijvers on the 24th of December 1898 // KADOC, ANBPCAV, Jozef Schrijvers, 3.3.2.17.4.1.

³¹ Roman BAKHTALOVSKYY, *Apostol ziednannia nashykh chasiv; spohady* (The modern Apostle of unity, memoirs), Lviv 2001, 43.

³² This is clearly seen through the example of his own family: Henryk and Anne Mechtildis Schrijvers had four sons, three of them from this marriage - Peter, Walter, Joseph - and the oldest Gerard was the son of Anne-Mechtildis’ first husband Peter. The youngest - Joseph - became a Redemptorist. All three of his older brothers were married and some of the children entered on the path of religious life:

- Gerard Schrijvers – his son, Gerard became a priest; his daughter Henrietta became a nun, sr. Gerard, at the Monastery of Grauwzusters-Penitenten te Wervik;
- Peter Schrijvers – his son, Gerard became a priest; his daughter Mary

On the 10th of September 1894 Joseph along with nine other young men started his postulancy in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in Sint-Truiden. Earlier this had been a Franciscan monastery, which was sold to the Redemptorists in 1833. The superior of the Transalpine Redemptorists, Father Joseph Passerat, established a novitiate there in 1834³³.

The monastery chronicles contain a short note on each of the candidates. The note on Father Joseph states:

At 10 o'clock in the morning Joseph Schrijvers arrived. Born on the 19th of December, 1876 in Zutendal, in the Liege diocese, province of Limburg, legitimate son of Henry and Mechtildis, he finished humanities under supervision of the parish priest, continued and studied rhetoric at the college of Saint Joseph in Hasselt³⁴.

Among the documents there is a description of the dowry which every candidate was supposed to bring with them:

The fee for living is 500 francs until ordination. The time spent in the novitiate will not be counted as a new place of living. One has to have a Baptism Certificate, all valuables are to be kept in the novitiate. Upon the first profession the owner may use them; their clothes must be marked with their initials³⁵.

There is also a book "Voorwerpen der novices meegebracht naar het Noviciaat", which contains some notes about the dowry brought by the candidates. According to the book Joseph Schrijvers brought 5 bedcovers, 6 pieces of underclothes, 6 flannels, 12 underpants, 20 shirts, 12 towels, 17 handkerchiefs, 2 suits, 2 pairs of shoes and some books³⁶.

became a nun, sr. Agnes, at the Monastery of Grauwzusters-Penitenten te Wervik;

- Walter Schrijvers - his son, Joseph became a priest; his two daughters, Mehdi and Katerina, became nuns, sr. Christina and sr. Yulenta in the monastery of St. Joseph.

³³ Jozef DE VOCHT, *Pater Achiel Delaere eerste redemptorist van de griekse ritus*, Jette 1954, 21.

³⁴ Chronica Noviciatum Choristen, notes from the 10th of September 1894 // KADOC, ANBPCAV, Noviciat, 3692.1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3693.2.

³⁶ Voorwerpen der novices meegebracht naar het Noviciaat. // KADOC,

The postulancy lasted only one month. The rite of investiture was held on the 7th of October at 10 o'clock in the morning, during which twelve novices received their habits: Jean-Baptiste Thiry, Achiel Braeckman, Jozef Mattele, Paul Hubin, Pierre Despas, Jaak Moris, Jozef Schrijvers, Armand Rigaux, Leo Van Severen, Augustin De Ridder, Maurice Van de Maele and Julian Pieters. The very same day the last four novices mentioned moved to the monastery in Beauplateau, where the Redemptorists seminary was located. At that time there was one novice – a priest Louis Manise, who joined the monastery on the 5th of May 1894 and received the tonsure on May 24th. On the 15th of October one more novice, Alfred Letourneau, received the investiture. In total there were 10 novices at the end of 1894³⁷.

The novice master was their immediate superior. He had an assistant, called a socius, who helped him with the novices³⁸. Edouard Meersmans was the novice master at that time³⁹, Henri Debongnie was the socius⁴⁰. However, a new socius is mentioned in the chronicles, at the beginning of 1895. It was Emiel De Ronne⁴¹. Both he and the novice master had to work hard in order to reach the aim of the novitiate, which lasted one year:

The aim of the novitiate is twofold- that is to say, they are tested from two sides. In order to gain spiritual and moral confidence that the novices are truly called by God and eagerly said “Yes”, that they are ready for their first profession, the Congregation tests them during the novitiate. The novices also must test themselves and their strengths and will towards the obligations they will receive after their profession⁴².

ANBPCAV, Noviciat, 3693.2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3692.1. Chronica Noviciatum Choristen, notes from October 1894 and January 1895.

³⁸ *Constitutiones et Regulae Congregationis Sacerdotum sub titulo Sanctissimi Redemptoris*, Romae 1923, C. 500-505 (pars III, caput II, § V, Constitutio II).

³⁹ Edouard Meersmans, (3.04.1865–12.03.1932), first profession of vows 15th of October 1882, ordination 6th of October 1889.

⁴⁰ Henri Debongnie, (29.12.1867–24.06.1897), first profession of vows 4th of October 1886, ordination 4th of October 1891.

⁴¹ Emiel De Ronne, (16.01.1867–11.12.1933), first profession of vows 6th of October 1889, ordination 3rd of April 1893.

⁴²The most important parts were taken from the rules of the novices and the statutes of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Manuscript, 1-2.

Therefore the daily schedule in the novitiate looked very intensive:

- 4:30 – getting up, morning prayers, going to the chapel;
- 5:00 – meditation in the chapel;
- 5:30 – the small hours (First, Third, Sixth) or free time;
- 6:00 – first Holy Mass and preparation for the Holy Communion;
- 6:30 – second Holy Mass and prayer after Communion;
- 7:00 – meditation-like reading about prayer on Sundays, Mondays and Saturdays; reading from the congregation's constitutions on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays;
- 7:30 – breakfast, and a walk in the garden until 8 o'clock;
- 8:00 – free time for tidying bedrooms. If this is finished earlier – more time in the garden;
- 8:30 – reading of religious books;
- 9:00 – conference in the common room;
- 9:45 – Stations of the Cross;
- 10:30 – a lesson or free time;
- 11:25 – Novena prayer;
- 11:40 – Ninth Hour, or free time;
- 11:45 – Examination of consciousness, lunch;
- 1:30 – Vespers or free time;
- 2:05 – Rosary;
- 2:25 – reading from the lives of the Saints;
- 2:55 – meditation in bedrooms;
- 3:25 – Divine office (Lauds), free time;
- 4:10 – Rosary to Virgin Mary and adoration;
- 4:30 – free time as in the morning;
- 5:30 – short adoration, studying or free time;
- 6:35 – community reflection on our mistakes;
- 6:55 – reflections in the chapel;
- 7:30 – dinner and recreation;
- 8:55 – evening prayers and free time;
- 9:30 – (sometimes later) switch the lights off and go to bed.

This is the general schedule. Every day had its own nuances and small changes.

The chronicle contains a laconic description of life in the novitiate. From those very brief notes we learn about a pilgrimage to Costenbosch on 23rd May. Both students and novices took part in it. There is also a note about one novice leaving the Congregation⁴³.

During the year a novice master has to complete two reports on life in the novitiate and give a short account of each novice. These were taken into consideration when making a decision whether the novice was to be admitted to his profession of vows or not. There is a separate folder with these reports in the archive of the Belgian Province but unfortunately the folder containing these files for the years 1894-1895 is not present.

On the 6th of October 1895 Joseph Schrijvers together with nine of his confreres made his first profession of vows⁴⁴ and the next day he moved to Beauplateau. There is a note in the Status Personalis Pulchrijugi⁴⁵ 1881-1958, stating that the new students, including Joseph, arrived on the 8th of October⁴⁶.

4. – Seminary

All Belgian students used to get their theological education in Holland in the city of Wittem, until the 9th of September 1882, together with the students from Dutch Province. On the 18th of July 1882 the general vicar Michael Ulrich canonically approved a new seminary in Beauplateau and it was officially opened on the 9th of September⁴⁷. Roman Bakhtalovskyi, who was a student there from February 1921, described this monastery:

⁴³ The novice Armand Rigaux left the monastery on the 1st of February. A new novice Jozef Mattele, joined later but the chronicle does not contain any information about it. He is not on the list of those who had their first professions either. *Chronica Noviciatum Choristen*. No page numbering, notes from 1895 // KADOC, ANBPCAV, Noviciat, 3692.1.

⁴⁴ Interestingly enough the list from the chronicle of the novitiate contains names of people which were not mentioned earlier: Alfred Debast, Alexis Roelandts, Remi Van de Vijver and Florimond Degraeve. They probably had their novitiate in Beauplateau and first vows together in Sint Truiden. *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Latin name of Beauplateau.

⁴⁶ Status Personalis Pulchrijugi. AGHR, VI Belgica, Studentat Beauplateau ad 1882, 43.

⁴⁷ Uten J. Nog één keer: Beauplateau. – Typescript. KADOC, ANBPCAV, Studendaat. 3717.1, 12.

The house had the form of a large three-storied square. All the students lived there, all six years together with the Brothers in novitiate. There was a farm nearby where cows and pigs were kept. It was a lovely, picturesque neighborhood overall⁴⁸.

The studies at the seminary lasted for 7 years. They were divided into three blocks: two years of philosophy, three years of dogmatic theology and two years of moral theology. During the first two years of studies some natural sciences were taught. Together with theology they had Biblical studies. For the last two years they studied Canon Law and the history of the Church.

There were exams at the end of each academic year, usually in August. All students had to take two exams. One exam could contain materials from multiple subjects. For instance, on the 24th of August 1897 a philosophy exam contained questions on ethics, cosmology and anthropology⁴⁹.

Joseph was a good student judging from the marks in his examination book. He passed all his exams with the highest mark 'with a plus': "Excellenter" was given "if a student gave a full and comprehensive response to a question". He only passed one exam – a philosophy course – in his second year with just the "Excellent" without the "plus". However, it is worth mentioning that Joseph did not take all the exams. Sometimes he was exempt from them⁵⁰.

Every student also had to defend theses during each of his last three years of studies. Joseph presented a thesis on dogmatic theology and another on moral theology in 1900 and 1901⁵¹. He received "Excellent with a plus" for both of these.

Joseph had three different prefects while studying at the seminary, 1895-1902: Josef de Caigny (1893-1895)⁵², Alphonse

⁴⁸ BAKHTALOVSKYY, *Joseph Schreijvers...*, 356.

⁴⁹ *Annua examina et theses in domo studiorum Provinciae Belgicae ad S. Joannem in Pulchro Jugo 23-26 Augusti 1897*. AGHR, VI Belgica, Studentat Beauplateau ad 1882.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* Examens Beauplateau. This is the book which contains students' exam results. Joseph Schrijvers and all his exam results and grades are registered under number 175.

⁵¹ *Chronica Studentatus*. AGHR, VI Belgica, Studentat Beauplateau ad 1882. T. 1. 1882-1929. C. 141, 151.

⁵² Josef de Caigny, (28.03.1862), first profession of vows 15th of October

Lemieux (23.02.1895-2.05.1898)⁵³ and Edouard Meersmans (7.05.1898-1902)⁵⁴. Every year the prefect wrote a report on each student. Joseph always had a positive one. The only negative comment was about his rather poor health.

The first year of studies, 1895-1896: Brother Schrijvers

1. Quite frail health. 2. First year of Philosophy student. He is a man of high intellect and good critical thinking; diligent, makes progress as regards his health. 3. He is the happiest one. An exemplary student in all respects. He is concentrated, always patient, kind and amiable. 4. I have no doubts about his endurance. He has a tendency to contemplative life. I believe he would make a good superior in the future⁵⁵.

The second year of studies, 1896-1897: Brother Schrijvers. Second year of Philosophy student. Great character, zealous monk. Constantly meditates and works on his spiritual growth. I think he is making good progress in training his virtues. He has frail health and encounters heart problems⁵⁶.

Third year of studies, 1897-1898: Brother Schrijvers (*First year of dogmatics*). A great young person, who is constantly and without any trouble leading a deep spiritual life with meditation. A model monk and student. Has heart problems⁵⁷.

Fourth year of studies, 1898-1899: Brother Schrijvers (*Second year of dogmatics*). A model monk and student. Despite his frail health he studies hard. A man of prayer, he is into meditation and spiritual life. He makes progress in the practice of virtues and enjoys inner peace⁵⁸.

Fifth year of studies, 1899-1900: Brother Schrijvers (*Third year of dogmatics*). His health is not strong but it is becoming

1880, ordination 11th of October 1887, left the Congregation on 13 March 1897.

⁵³ Alphonse Lemieux, (27.02.1858–3.03.1931), first profession of vows 12th of April 1888, ordination 8th of April 1882.

⁵⁴ Edouard Meersmans, (3.04.1865–12.03.1932), first profession of vows 15th of October 1882, ordination 6th of October 1889.

⁵⁵ Rapport sur le Studentat de Beauplateau. Année scolaire 1895-1896. AGHR, VI Belgica, Studentat Beauplateau ad 1882.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

better every day. He usually is in meditation. He is an example for others in all respects⁵⁹.

Sixth year of studies, 1900-1901: Brother Schrijvers (*first year of moral theology*). Very frail health. A great student. An example for others in all respects, it is this which led to him becoming 'zelator'⁶⁰. It seems that he is the most prepared among his confreres. It will be difficult for him to go in missionary work because of his health, but he would be a good professor. I have no doubts he will do a lot with his talents and especially his virtues⁶¹.

Seventh year of studies, 1901-1902: Brother Schrijvers (*second year of moral theology*). 1) Has relatively bad health but managed to study throughout the year. 2) has very delicate and astute spirit. Did very well during his studies. 3) He is a good monk. I can't take back anything I said about him last year praising him as one of the best students. A great zelator; 4) I am happy for the seminary, it is great that the superiors assigned him to teach philosophy, as he will set a good example for the students. On condition that he has the strength to teach! This young man will become a true scholar, who could in the future be responsible for a journal like "The Missionary" for instance. He might lack energy and strength. I really hope he will endure. He is more of a "snake" rather than a "dove"⁶².

The chronicle of the student house mentions Joseph only a few times in seven years. The first one is dated the 8th of April 1896, his first year of studies: «Schrijvers left the student house for some time due to his health problems and asked to go to Trudonopolim»⁶³. Trudonopolis is the latin name of the monastery in Sint Truiden, where the novitiate is located. It is not clear how long he was absent. The chronicle does not give us the return date.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Zelator – from Latin, a member of monastic community who had the task to make sure the rules of the monastery were kept. In Joseph's case it was towards the seminary community.

⁶¹ Rapport sur le Studentat de Beauplateau. Année scolaire 1895-1896. AGHR, VI Belgica, Studentat Beauplateau ad 1882.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ «Schrijvers ad tempus, sanitatis causa relinquit studentatum et Trudonopolim petit». Chronica Studentatus. AGHR, VI Belgica, Studentat Beauplateau ad 1882. – V. 1. – 1882-1929, p. 112.

The next recollection is dated back to the end of 1896 and the beginning of 1897. It is related to the death of Joseph's mother. On December 25th, 1896 Anna Mechtildis passed away at the age of 61. There is a note written the next day: «Due to the death of his mother Joseph Schrijvers asked for a permission to go home»⁶⁴. Her post-mortem card says that the deceased was a woman who followed God's will and was an outstanding mother. She was happy to see her younger son wearing priestly robes, as St. Alphonsus' child in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer⁶⁵. After the funeral he returned to the student house on the 2nd of January 1897⁶⁶.

In April 1897 Schrijvers was absent for a few more days from the 17th to the 27th of April. There were two reasons for this: "his health and him being called up for military service"⁶⁷. Unfortunately, there is no more information and therefore it is not clear which military service it was. It is only known that next year on the 12th of July he asked to go to the town of Arlon because of military service: «Brother Joseph Schrijvers asked to go to Arlon due to the difficulties with military service. He returned on the same day, free of any military requirements and service»⁶⁸. Another note shed light on his ordination which will be described later.

5. – Ordination

On the 3rd of October 1896 Joseph, along with 12 confreres, accepted the tonsure and minor orders. The ordination took place at the monastery church of St. John the Baptist. They were ordained by Jean Decroliere the bishop of Namur⁶⁹. However, he re-

⁶⁴ «Ob matris suae mortem, Schrijvers domum petit». *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁶⁵ De overledene was eene vrouw volgens het hart van God, en eene uitmuntende moeder; ook had zij het geluk haar jongste zoon in priesterkleed te zien, als kind van den H. Alphonsus in de orde van den Allerheiligsten Verlosser. KADOC, ANBPCAV, Jozef Schrijvers, 3.3.2.17.9.

⁶⁶ «Rediit Schrijvers». *Chronica Studentatus. AGHR, VI Belgica, Studentat Beauplateau ad 1882. – V. 1. – 1882-1929*, p. 120.

⁶⁷ «Absens est Schrijvers tum pro re militari tum pro sanitate». *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁶⁸ «Joseph Schrijvers propter difficultates circa militiam exortas Arlonem petit. Eadem die revertitur, omnibus difficultatibus e medio sublatis». *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁶⁹ Ordinationes habitae anno scholari 1895-1896. *AGHR, VI Belgica,*

ceived the next step (sub-deacon's ordination) separately for some unknown reason. In the chronicle it is noted that on the 18th of December Joseph Schrijvers went to Liège to be ordained to the sub-deaconate, in the house of the local bishop and next day he came back⁷⁰. A separate note is made in the prefect's report of 1897-1898 about this event. It says that on 18th of December 1897 the bishop of Liège Victor-Joseph Doutreloux ordained Joseph as a sub-deacon⁷¹. Why did Joseph not have his ordination together with his confreres is still unknown. We assume that the reason could be his weak health which was repeatedly mentioned in the annual reports. On the 8th of September 1899 at the beginning of his fifth year of studies Joseph received his deaconate, together with ten other confreres. The ceremony was led by the bishop of Mechelen, Victor-Jean-Joseph-Maria van den Branden de Reeth, and it took place in the monastery church of John the Evangelist in Beauplateau⁷². A year later, on the 2nd of October 1900 the bishop of Namur, Thomas Louis Heylen, ordained five of them in the same church⁷³. The four confreres who received the ordination with Joseph were: Paul Hubin, Pierre Despas, Jaac Moris and Victor Dubar. Next day all five of them celebrated their first Liturgy in the local church of John the Evangelist. Obviously, it was done separately, as concelebrating the Mass was not practiced at that time in the Roman Catholic Church.

For the ordination card Father Joseph chose to have an inscription from Job's life: when his friends came to him. On the front of the card is said in Latin: *Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit. Sicut Domino placuit ita factum est. Sit nomen Domini benedictum. Iob.1,21.* (The Lord gave me what I had, and the Lord has taken it away. Praise the name of the Lord. Job 1, 21 New Living Translation Catholic Ed.). There are two more messages in Latin

Studentat Beauplateau ad 1882.

⁷⁰ Chronica Studentatus... – V. 1. – 1882-1929, p. 127.

⁷¹ Rapport sur le Studentat de Beauplateau. Année Scolaire 1897-1898. «Illustrissimus ad Reverendissimus Dominus Victor-Josephus Doutreloux Episcopus Leodiensis, in ecclesia seminarii Leodiensis subdiaconatum contulit R. P. Schrijvers, die 18 decembris 1897».

⁷² Rapport sur le Studentat de Beauplateau. Année Scolaire 1898-1899. s. – V. 1. – 1882-1929, p. 137.

⁷³ Rapport sur le Studentat de Beauplateau. Année Scolaire 1899-1900.

on the back of the card: “Praise the Lord, for he is good” (Psalm 117), and “Oh, how my soul praises the Lord, he has done great things for me” (Luke 1, 46,49). Also, there was a definition of a priest in Flemish: a priest is a “second Christ” (St. Bernard), because a priest “lives for Christ” (Romans, 6), “Lives like Christ” (Romans 8.), “Christ lives in him» (Galatians 2)”. At the bottom there was a short prayer to the Virgin Mary in Flemish: Oh, loving Mother Mary, your child carries priestly life in You and for You in the Heart of Jesus⁷⁴.

After the ordination Father Joseph continued his studies for two more years until the 28th of April 1902⁷⁵. But on the 10th of October that same year he was assigned back to that same monastery, this time as a professor of philosophy for the seminary⁷⁶.

6. – *Professor at the seminary, Prefect of the students and superior’s advisor*

Starting from October 1902 Father Joseph began teaching at the seminary from which he had recently graduated. It was not unusual at this time for someone to start teaching without any further studies. This practice was absolutely acceptable at that time. He taught philosophy for five years from 1902 until 1907. The number of students (in their first and second years of studies) was different each year:

- 1902-1903, 20 students: 9 first year and 11 second year students;
- 1903-1904, 24 students: 10 first year and 14 second year students;
- 1904-1905, 31 students: 14 first year and 17 second year students;
- 1905-1906, 22 students: 13 first year and 9 second year students;

⁷⁴ KADOC, ANBPCAV, Jozef Schrijvers, 3.3.2.17.2.

⁷⁵ Personalia. Status personalis (1882-1958). AGHR, VI Belgica, Studentat Beauplateau ad 1882. This book contains names of all those who lived in the monastery of St. John the Evangelist. Joseph Schreijvers’ name was written here, along with the other students’ names, under the number 190, p. 42-43.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* the note No. 63, p. 4-5.

- 1906-1907, 20 students: 10 first year and 10 second year students⁷⁷.

He also attended the defense of the philosophy theses which were usually held in July and August.

On the 2nd of May 1904 the local parish priest, Jozef Dumont,⁷⁸ asked him to be the zelateur of the local community. Such local nominations lasted three years which means that he was the zelator of the community from 1904 till 1907.

While he was a student at the seminary, his mother Anna Mechtildis died on December 25th, 1896. Eight years later his father Henry passed away on the 2nd of May 1904, at 64 years of age. There are no notes in the chronicle but we may be sure that he went to the funeral as there is a message on the back of the Henry Schrijvers' memorial card:

He faced death with peace and even happiness. His last words were: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, into your hands I commend my spirit. Just like an exemplary Christian father he dedicated his life for the spiritual and material welfare of his children and he was also happy to find eternal rest in the arms of his son, a priest and a monk. My dearest children, I am going to enjoy the eternal life in heaven together with your mother and I will be waiting for you and praying for you. Live like children who love Jesus and His mother, Mary and do not forget to pray for your father⁷⁹.

On the 29th of April 1907 Father Joseph was appointed to be the prefect of students. «It is a very important position, probably second most important in the Province», notes Roman Bakh-

⁷⁷ Rapport sur le Studentat de Beauplateau. Année Scolaire 1902-1907.

⁷⁸ Jozef Dumont was born on 25 November 1866, had his first vows on 21 April 1889, was ordained on 4 October 1891, died on 27 June 1943.

⁷⁹ «Hij zag den dood met kalmte en zelfs met vreugde naderen. Zijne laatste woorden waren: Jezus, Maria, Jozef in uwe handen beveel ik mijnen geest. Als een ware kristene huisvader wijdde hij zich gansch toe aan het geestelijk en tijdelijk welzijn zijner kinderen. Ook had hij het geluk een zijner kinderen priester en kloosterling te zien en zachtjes te ontslapen tusschen diens armen. Lieve kinderen, ik ben het eeuwig geluk gaan genieten; daar, in het hemel met uwe moeder zaliger wacht ik op U en zal ik voor U bidden. Leeft als ware kinderen, bemint Jezus en Maria en vergeet niet te bidden voor uwen vader». KADOC, ANBPCAV, Jozef Schrijvers, 3.3.2.17.9.

talovskiy in his book about Joseph Schrijvers⁸⁰. He was thirty at that time and the Province entrusted him with the upbringing of numerous students. For instance, 59 students successfully completed the academic year of 1907-1908, which was the first one with Father Joseph as the prefect⁸¹. The prefect at the seminary was also their spiritual advisor, who cared about spiritual growth and the formation of the students. Father socius was his assistant. In the period from 1907 to 1913 his assistants were Cyriel Meersdom (1907-1911), Jaak Janssens (1909-1910; 1911-1912) and Ferdinand Hubert (1912-1913). Every year father prefect had to write a report on life in the seminary and give a brief report on each student. There are reports written by Father Joseph in the archive for the whole period, 1907-1912⁸².

On that same day – the 29th of April 1907 – Father Joseph was nominated to be the second advisor of the local superior which automatically also made him the secretary of the house council. There is a book with notes from the house council's meetings, starting from the 9th of November 1909, in the archive in Rome. Father Joseph as the secretary took all the notes until July 1913. On the 22nd of June 1912 he was assigned as the local superior's advisor again (for three years 1912-1915!).

From September 1909 Father Joseph continued teaching, giving lectures on the theology of asceticism for the last year students, while remaining prefect at the same time. He taught this course during three academic years: 1909-1910; 1910-1911; 1911-1912. During the 1912-1913 academic year he was a professor of philosophy, sociology and political science.

7. – *The beginning of his writing career*

Jérôme Van Landeghem, CSsR, the author of an article about Father Joseph, describes him as a writer, stating: «the nomination of Father Joseph to be a professor of philosophy in

⁸⁰ BAKHTALOVSKIY, *Joseph Schrijvers...*, 356.

⁸¹ Rapport sur le Studentat de Beauplateau. Année Scolaire 1907-1908. AGHR, VI Belgica, Studentat Beauplateau ad 1882.

⁸² *Ibid.*

Beauplateau was the beginning of his career as a writer»⁸³. As a young professor of philosophy from 1902 until 1907 Father Joseph was interested in social issues, political systems and socialist movements. As a result of this he wrote four short essays on the topic: *De eigenlijke verhouding der geestelijke adviseurs tot sociale verenigingen* (The correlation between spiritual fathers and social organizations) (1906), *Les Trois Grandes Ecoles d'Économie politique* (Three great schools of political economy) (1907), *Het Historisch Materialisme van Karl Marx* (Karl Marx's historical materialism) (1908) and *De Ontwikkelingswet van de Socialisten* (The law of socialist development) (1911). The first big book *Manuel d'Économie politique* (A textbook on political economics) was printed in 1907 and it was very successful thus making Father Joseph very popular. In 1907 he was assigned as the prefect of students and became interested in the schools of ascetics and spiritual life. As prefect he was, first of all, responsible for students' spiritual formation. As a result of his new interests and five years of experience working with students a new book, *Les principes de la vie spirituelle* (The principles of spiritual life), appeared in 1912. A new book was published a year later, *La bonne volonté* (Good will). Although it was shorter than the previous ones, it quickly gained popularity and was called a "precious gem". All three books as well as the forthcoming ones⁸⁴, were written in French. Father Bahtalovsky explains this:

What luck that a Flemish person, who loved his language, nonetheless wrote in French. Otherwise these works, so valuable and useful to so many souls, may have remained unknown. As is, his works have been translated into many languages around the world⁸⁵.

8. – *Future collaborators in Galicia*

In August 1913 Father Joseph arrived in Galicia. The group consisted of six priests and two brothers. They were not only

⁸³ «Zijn lectoraat in de wijsbegeerte te Beauplateau is het vertrekpunt geworden van zijn schrijverloopbaan». VAN LANDEGHEM, Z.E. *Pater Jozef Schrijvers...*, 181.

⁸⁴ A short analysis of his works may be found in this article: VAN LANDEGHEM, Z.E. *Pater Jozef Schrijvers...* KADOC, ANBPCAV, Jozef Schrijvers, 3.3.2.17.6.1. Also: Bio-bibliografische aantekeningen, pp. 181-188.

⁸⁵ BAKHTALOVSKIY, *Joseph Schrijvers...*, 357.

members of the same province, but some of them were those with whom Father Joseph had lived together with in Beauplateau⁸⁶:

1. Hector Kinzinger made his first vows a year after Father Joseph, on the 4th of October 1896. They studied together for 6 years from 1896 till 1902. Upon finishing his studies Father Hector left Beauplateau and returned for six months in 1905 for his second novitiate (1st of May – 15th of October) and later from the 25th of September 1907 he stayed in this monastery as a missionary until the 15th of September 1909.

2. Frans-Xaveer Bonne made his first vows on the 29th of September 1903 which means that Father Joseph was his philosophy professor for the first two years and ascetics professor in his last year; Father Joseph was his prefect from April 1907 until July 1910.

3. Frans Poisson made his first vows on the 29th of September 1905, Father Joseph was his philosophy professor and later his prefect until the end of his studies in the summer of 1911.

4. Louis Van den Bossche made his first vows on the 29th of September 1906, Father Joseph was his philosophy professor for one year, and later his prefect until the summer of 1912; during the academic year 1912-1913 he taught him the theology of asceticism; Father Louis was also the professor of Church History, Latin and the Flemish language, at this same time.

Twenty three more Redemptorists came to Galicia from the Belgian Province at different periods of time and Father Joseph knew 12 of them very well.

1. Jaak Janssens, June 1914 – made his first profession of vows on the 3rd of October 1897, which means that they studied together from 1897 till 1902. In the summer of 1905 he graduated from the seminary and on the 4th of September 1906 returned to Beauplateau as a professor of Holy Scripture and worked there until 1912. Also he was the socius of students and helped Father Joseph with formation (1909-1910; 1911-1912).

⁸⁶ All data taken from the chronicle: *Chronica Studentatus*. – T. 1. 1882-1929. AGHR, VI Belgica, Studentat Beauplateau ad 1882.

2. Louis Regaert, December 1919 – made his first profession of vows on the 29th of September 1901, they studied together for one year, after which Father Joseph became his professor of philosophy in 1902-1903; during two final years of studies Father Joseph was his prefect (1907-1909).

3. Louis Vangansewinkel, 3rd of October 1920 – made his first profession of vows on the 29th of September 1910, Father Joseph was his prefect for his first three years at the seminary.

4. Maurice Van de Maele, autumn 1922 – made his first profession of vows on the 29th of September 1912, Father Joseph was his prefect and professor of philosophy in his first year of studies.

5. Richard Costenoble, 2nd of November 1922 – made his first profession of vows on the 29th of September 1908, Father Joseph was his prefect until the summer of 1913.

6. Albien Van Biesen, 8th of September 1924 – made his first profession of vows on the 29th of September 1910, Father Joseph was his prefect for three years.

7. Jozef Deweerdt, 5th of September 1925 – made his first profession of vows on the 25th of February 1911, Father Joseph was his prefect for two years and his philosophy professor in his second year of studies.

8. Hubert Collet, 8th of December 1926 – made his first profession of vows on the 29th of September 1912, during his first year of studies Father Joseph was his prefect and philosophy professor.

9. Frans Van den Bossche, 1928 – made his first profession of vows on the 29th of September 1912, during his first year of studies Father Joseph was his prefect and philosophy professor.

10. Albert Delforge, September 1928 – made his first profession of vows on the 29th of September 1905, Father Joseph was his prefect until he graduated from the seminary in 1912.

11. Jozef Ghekiere, 30th of March 1930 – made his first profession of vows on the 24th of May 1908, Father Joseph was his prefect until 1913.

12. Achiël Delaere, 22nd of November 1931 – made his first profession of vows on the 6th of October 1889, for his two last years in the seminary (1895-1897) he studied together with Father Joseph.

To sum up, sixteen confreres out of the thirty who worked in Galicia with Father Joseph were well-known to him and some of them were even formed as missionaries by him.

9. – *On the mission to Galicia*

The discussions about an Eastern-rite monastery in Galicia started in 1910 when Andrey Sheptytsky saw how Belgian Redemptorists served Ukrainians in Canada⁸⁷. However, the final decision was only made on the 11th of May 1913. The contract between Metropolitan Sheptytsky and Patrick Murray, the General Superior of the Congregation, was signed at the end of the month. On the 3rd of July Father Schrijvers was assigned to go on the mission to Galicia. A year earlier Father Camille Van den Steene, who had visited Galicia, wrote in his report to the General Superior, that the first group should consist of

two older priests who would become the cornerstones of this new foundation; they have to be extremely talented people, judicious, observant, delicate and true friends of the Rule. They cannot be too old, as they have to master the Ukrainian language. Also they need to have enough virtues to be able to give up everything in their own Latin rite – religious exercises and practices – in order to be able to embrace the Ukrainian tradition, and finally – to stay strong despite many problems and endure everything. In my humble opinion, reverend Father Schrijvers and Father Kinzinger are the most suitable to represent the Congregation. It is absolutely clear that the sooner the priests who are assigned to this important but difficult mission are warned (secretly) the better it would be as it is important to start learning the language, especially the future superior who must speak it and serve the Liturgy in this (Eastern) rite⁸⁸.

We may undoubtedly assume that soon after this report Father Joseph was informed about his future assignment. Having no documents, Roman Bakhtalovskyi made his conclusion:

⁸⁷ Roman KHOMIAK, *Mytropolyt Kyr Andrey Sheptytskyi v Kanadi* (The Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi in Canada). *Redemptorists' Jubilee Almanakh 1906-1956*, Yorkton 1956, 109-118. DE VOCHT, *Pater Achiel Delaere...*, 158-165.

⁸⁸ A letter written by Camille Van den Steene to Father General Patrick Murray, 8.12.1912. AGHR, VI Belgica, Provincialia, 1909-1930, Camillius Van den Steene 1909–21 Julii 1912.

It is impossible to find the roots of Father Joseph's vocation to go live and work in Galicia. It is still unknown if the initiative came from him or from his superiors. But his will met theirs and Divine Providence merged them together, despite the fact that at home he would have had a good career⁸⁹.

A celebration and farewell for Father Joseph was organized in the dining room on the day of the new mission assignment, on the 3rd of July 1913⁹⁰. The next day he left Beauplateau⁹¹. Many documents had to be prepared before the departure to a foreign country, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Surely, he also visited the graves of his relatives and parents in Zutendal.

On the 7th of August 1913 the next Provincial of the Belgian Province Father Honoré De Nijs wrote a letter to the General Superior, where he informed the General that:

The first caravan has already departed to Ukraine with Fathers Van den Straeten, Schrijvers, Bonne and Poisson, and brothers Modest and Ippolyt; the second one with Kinzinger and Van den Bossche is going to join them later»⁹².

The first caravan left Brussels on the 2nd of August⁹³. On the 21st of August they arrived in Galicia and settled at Andrey Sheptytskyi's summer residence in the village of Univ. Father Joseph was 37 years old at that time.

⁸⁹ BAKHTALOVSKYI, *Joseph Schrijvers...*, 357.

⁹⁰ *Chronica Domestica domus ad S. Joan. Evang. In Pulchro Jugo. – V. 1. – 1881-1927*. No page numbers, the note dated 3. July 1913. AGHR, VI Belgica, Beauplateau. *Chronica Domestica domus ad S. Joan. Evang. In Pulchro Jugo, T. I, 1881-1927*.

⁹¹ *Chronica Studentatus. AGHR, VI Belgica, Studentat Beauplateau ad 1882. – V. 1. – 1882-1929*, p. 240.

⁹² «La première caravane est donc partie pour la Galicie: les Pères Van der Straeten, Schrijvers, Bonne et Poisson, et les Frères Modest et Hippolyte; la seconde caravane le p. Kinzinger et le p. Van den Bossche partant plus tard». From a letter from Father provincial Honoré De Nijs to the Father General, written on 7.08.1913. AGHR, VI Belgica, Provincialia, 1909-1930. Honoratus de Nijs 21 Julii 1912 – 12 dec. 1915.

⁹³ «Op 2 Augustus 1913 feestdag van heilige Alfonsus, vertrokken uit ons land enige Redemptoristen naar Ooste Galicië op Oostenrijks grondgebied, met het inzicht er een nieuwe missie te stichten». KADOC, ANBPCAV, Jozef Schrijvers 3.3.2.17.5.1. De Redemptoristen missie, bij de Oekraïeners, van Galicië, en Wolynië, moeilijk begin. Manuscript, p. 1.

Conclusions

Answering Father Bakhtalovskyi's question "Whom did Belgium send us?" we can say that Belgium gave us a 37-year-old Flemish priest, who was not particularly healthy but with an excellent education which he had received from his Province, who was a professor of philosophy and the theology of asceticism, who had been involved in formation of young Redemptorists for six years, being their spiritual advisor. In addition to that he wrote books which made him very popular even beyond his homeland. Belgium gave us a deeply spiritual man: "...his whole spiritual system is built as one magnificent building, based on philosophy, from deep down to the top he is practical, direct and immediate", he "follows logical conclusions" and "is ready to act" as well as being completely devoted to Divine Providence⁹⁴.

⁹⁴ БАХТАЛОВС'КІЙ, Роман, *Apostol ziednannia nashykh chasiv; spohady* ("The modern Apostle of unity, memoirs"), Lviv 2001, 43.