

CENTENNIAL SNAPSHOTS

5. Brother Thomas Kucheravy, CSSR

Early in the morning of the 18th of January 1922, Tomko Kucheravy was found in his bed dead of tuberculosis (known as consumption in those days). Time of death was fixed at a few moments earlier, since he was still warm and clutched a glass of water in his hand. Many people visibly wept at the funeral and followed the burial party to the cemetery in Yorkton, moved by the death of such a promising young man. Thomas Kuczerawj (simplified to Kucheravy) was born in Canora, Saskatchewan on 2 February 1904. He attended Father Sabourin's school for Ruthenian children in Sifton, Manitoba for a year, but with the death of both his parents, Helena Lewicki and Conrad Kuczerawj, he was taken into the orphanage run by the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate in Yorkton in 1916. Since the Redemptorists had just begun their minor seminary in Yorkton, he was enroled as the first minor seminarian of the new school on 2 August 1917. A cheerful, friendly boy, he was a hard-working, exemplary, pious student who gave great hope for the future as a priest. He also had a highly developed talent as a poet and during Metropolitan Sheptytsky's visit with Bishop Budka in 1921, he impressed them both with his verses. Unfortunately, Tomko began to spit blood and spent many days in the Redemptorists' infirmary. When he seemed to have conquered the illness, on 2 July 1921, he entered the novitiate with the Redemptorists and was vested on 31 July 1921. Unfortunately, he had developed a fever the day before and he again went to the infirmary. While there, he showed a great devotion to Mary—reciting the rosary up to twenty times a day—and to St. Gerard Majella, whose life he began to translate into Ukrainian. His minor seminary director, teacher, and novice master, Father Noel Decamps, was sent to inform him that the disease would claim his life. Tomko received the news serenely and, showing great strength of character, turned to console the distraught messenger. Brother Thomas made his confession and declared that he offered up his life for the Redemptorist Congregation and its work among the Ruthenian (Ukrainian and Slovak) people of North America. He was immediately accepted into the Congregation and professed his vows before Achiel Delaere, who also administered the Last Rites. Brother Thomas' last day was spent in prayer. He became the first minor seminarian and novice of the Yorkton Vice-Province to die as a member of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. As Fr. Decamps wrote in French and Latin, "May he live forever with Jesus and Mary, next to Saint Alphonsus and his blessed sons and there, by his prayers, may he be, as he had been during his life, our consolation and our model! Sweet Jesus, give him eternal rest." He was 18. *Vichna Pamiat'!*



Ukrainian Redemptorists 100 years

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