

CENTENNIAL SNAPSHOTS

10. Brother Casimir Brasseur, CSSR

Born 23 January 1894 of a Walloon family in Hoegaarden, Belgium, Henri Brasseur applied to join the Redemptorists in 1912. In those years, the formation period before vows was a long testing period since there were no temporary vows; they were permanent. After his postulancy in Beauplateau, he became a candidate, and entered the novitiate directed by Father Hippolyte Clement. An old Belgian Redemptorist Brother Casimir who had lived in the "New World" had just died, while the Belgians had just opened their mission in Eastern Europe. So, Henri was vested in 1917 and took on the old name and became a new Brother Casimir with the desire to help the Eastern Europeans in the New World. He left his candidacy years in Jette to enter the second novitiate in Saint-Trond. He was finally professed on 3 May 1918. Brother Casimir was assigned to Saint Joseph's in Brussels for a year. On 8 September 1919 four Belgian Fathers and two Brothers were assigned to the new Vice-Province of Yorkton in Canada: Fathers Frans Van den Bosch, Delforge, Janssens, Gelin, and Brothers Modest and Casimir. By 16 October 1919, Brother Casimir was in St. Mary's, Yorkton, where there was a novitiate, minor seminary, and the administrative offices of the new Vice-Province as well as a flourishing parish, out-mission chapels, and a large garden to feed everyone. He worked there mainly as a cook, feeding a few dozen people at every meal and many more during special occasions. He helped occasionally in Ituna, on the farm and in the building and maintenance of a number of chapels. He was a master of all trades: cook, gardener, porter, refectorian, sacristan, tailor, everything that needed to be done to free the priests for their work in church and chapel. When the Belgians withdrew in favour of the English Canadians in 1927, Brother Casimir sadly left Canada and returned to Belgium. As a veteran missionary, however, he was immediately sent to the Belgian Congo. Matadi, Tumba, Kionzo, and Bandakani became his stations and from Canada's winter cold he experienced Africa's summer heat. With the outbreak of the Second World War, he and other Belgians again returned home. The bombs, fires, and evacuations forced him to move often and to help rebuild several places: Saint-Trond (1939-40), Bergen (1940), Brussels (1941), Antwerp (1942-43), and Saint-Trond again (1943-46). After the war, he was stationed in Louvain (1946-51) and Beauplateau (1951-58). In 1958, he retired to Louvain where he helped to keep up the monastery and welcomed Redemptorist visitors who came to study at the Catholic University from around the world. He was a man filled with gratitude for all of the graces he received in life and kept the motto "Pray and Work—Ora et Labora" as his touchstone. When he was not working, he could be found saying his rosary. For relaxation, he visited his family and sent his brotherly affection, hymns, and acrostics in his letters. He had been a missionary brother and pioneer for the Ukrainian Catholic Church of Canada and the Roman Catholic Church in Zaire. He died in Louvain on 5 June 1972. He was 76. 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