

Br. Ladislaus Segers

Joseph Segers was born October 2nd 1890 in Zondereigen, Belgium, son of Peter and Maria Remeysen a devout family with nine children four of whom became religious. He himself chose the Capuchins after the example of his uncle and namesake Br. Ladislaus of Zondeereigen. Joseph studied in the Minor Seminary of Bruges and started novitiate September 15, 1909. He made first profession September 16, 1910 and solemn profession September 17, 1913 taking the religious name Ladislaus. Br. Ladislaus was ordained a priest August 1st, 1920 in Izegem. In 1914 he interrupted his studies to join the Belgian army as a stretcher bearer completing his World War I service as a sergeant with many citations and decorations.

On August 29, 1927 he departed for Canada. He remained active in Blenheim from 1927 to 1950 but he got permission to study the Slavic languages in Moravia (the present Slovakia) from November 1931 to April 1932. Upon his return he was able to minister to Immigrants in Flemish, Dutch, French, Czechs, Slovaks, Bohemians, Moravians, Poles and Ukrainians.

From 1940 to 1946 he was also appointed as Custos-Provincial when contact with Belgium was pretty well interrupted during the war years. In Blenheim he did everything on foot with walking stick and knapsack walking to Mull to say Mass for his Moravian community or to Erieau located on a peninsula between Lake Erie and the Rondeau Bay about 15 miles from Blenheim. The service in Erieau were initially held in a private house and later a Chapel was built with a sacristy which also served as a bedroom for the friars. He also organized pilgrimages and processions and at Easter time he made a tour of settlements such as Tillsonburg and Leamington in Kent and Essex counties preaching short missions to give immigrants the opportunity to fulfill their Easter duties. With his great and understanding heart, which was open to everyone, he made himself innumerable friends even among non-Catholics and many dissenters found again the way to the Church via his personal friendship. He not only tried to do everything for everyone but he also gave away all he had. I am truly without property he used to say.

In April 1950, he left Blenheim for Toutes Aides, Manitoba, 300 miles north of Winnipeg and far from the hustle and bustle of the cities. His letters from this time are enthusiastic when he writes about the solitude of the woods, the heat of summer, and the atrocious cold of winter and the long rides through the snow visiting his people in Portage Meadow and Spence Lake. Spence Lake was very near to his heart where there lived a dozen or so Métis families, horse-trainers by profession.



AUGUST 19

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In August 1954, Bro. Ladislaus was called back to Blenheim where he would go monthly to Pelee Island and in 1956 he got permission to establish himself definitively on the island. He was a faithful contributor of articles to GAZETTE VAN DETROIT the only Belgian newspaper in America. But Br. Ladislaus was more than a journalist, he was also a poet and three of his poems were published, the most famous one being The Song of Hulda's Rock, the story of an Indian legend of Pelee Island.

In April 1960, he developed heart disease and so he was transferred back to Blenheim. Br. Ladislaus died in hospital in Chatham, Ontario on August 19, 1961. The people of Blenheim and surrounding areas still remember him fondly as a living saint. His funeral took place on August 22, 1961 and he was buried among his Capuchin brothers in the Evergreen cemetery in Blenheim On.

