

AUGUST 25

Br. Angelicus Ghys

Desideratus was born October 10, 1884 at St. Maria-Oudenhove, Belgium. Prior to coming to the Capuchins Brother Angelicus was a member of the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity. On March 4, 1909 he transferred to us and did two years as a Postulant. On March 5th 1911 he was invested at the Novitiate in Bruges-Ste. Claire. He made his simple vows on March 6, 1912 and perpetual vows on March 7th 1918.

In those years he ministered as a nurse and then a questor. On various occasions he had asked to leave for the Missions and his wishes were fulfilled on June 8, 1921. He left for the Mission of Punjab, British India. Five Capuchins embarked in Antwerp on November 23rd and arrived in Bombay on December 17 after experiencing heavy storms. He was then sent to Sahowala where he cared for the dispensarium and the lazaretto. He cared for the sick and the friars for six years.

He returned to Antwerp and was appointed for Ypres October 11, 1928. Already he applied to go to Canada and a year later September 27, 1929 he was sent to Plumas, Manitoba in order to establish new missions in Toutes Aides, Meadow Portage and Cayer, together with Br. Gilbert Blondeel. He lived in the West until 1937 and then returned to Antwerp and then Bruges-Boeverie where he ministered as a nurse or a porter. The porter, he used to say, is the mirror of the friary and therefore he tried to receive each guest in a decent and civil fashion, whether poor or rich.

But he is best remembered as a nurse and botanist. Nursing the sick ran in his blood and the training he received from the Brothers of Charity came in handy later on both in the Missions and in the province. Especially during the epidemics, like when in 1923 the entire district of Sialkot was ravaged by the pestilence and later on in Toutes-Aides when a contagious illness broke out on the Reservations of the Native Indians and Métis people. Burdened with a suitcase "filled with an entire dispensary of medicine and herbs, knives and thongs" and accompanied by a native guide, he was on the road for weeks caring for the sick. From far and wide they came to him. His presence alone and cheerful personality already gave the sick a feeling of safety and confidence.

Br. Angelicus was also well known as a botanist. He had a large Herbarium Exoticum, an unequalled collection of plants from the Himalaya Mountain range. This collection began as an innocent hobby in British India and grew into a work of rare scientific value. Experts in botanica considered it a great favor to be allowed to consult this collection in view of their own research.



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He participated in many exhibitions in Aalst, Bruges, Roselare, Gent and many other cities in addition to the International Missionary Exhibition. Br. Angelicus is also known for his writings. A few letters written by him about Sahowala and Toutes Aides appeared in the Franciscan Standard. In addition to his contribution on the flora of India, there is an unfinished work "Plants in the Bible". Just for his own pleasure, he went through the entire Bible and took notice of plants, flowers, shrubs and trees mentioned therein.

Br. Angelicus died suddenly in the friary of Leuven on August 25, 1955. His funeral Mass took place Monday August 29, and he was buried in the cemetery of the "Abbey of the Park".

