

Br. Mark Nelissen

Lambert Nelissen was born in Koersel, Belgium on February 24, 1913, the son of pious parents, Ferdinand Nelissen and Philomena Picart. He was invested into the Capuchin Order on September 15, 1931 and given the religious name of Mark. He did his first profession on September 17, 1932 and solemn profession on September 17, 1934. He was ordained in Brugge to the priesthood on June 11, 1938 by Msgr. Lamiroy.

While a student of Theology he co-edited the book "In the country of the five rivers" (Pakistan). After completion of his studies he was appointed to the Punjab Mission, Pakistan on July 27, 1939. Due to the general mobilization and the subsequent World War II, he was unable to leave. Forced to become a war refugee (all men under 35) he became chaplain of the Belgium refugees in Nimes, France (July 1st, 1940). After the fighting in Belgium was over, he resumed his teaching duties in the Minor Seminary in Lommel-Werk-Plaatsen. On January 30, 1946 he was appointed for Canada leaving Belgium March 31st, 1947.

He was appointed teacher at the St. Francis Minor Seminary in Blenheim, Ontario teaching mathematics, sciences and music. In 1949, he was in Cayer, Manitoba as temporary replacement and later that year he was appointed vicar in the Cathedral of Saskatoon. This was the beginning of a long career in parish ministry where he devoted himself totally for his parishioners. He served eight years in Portage-la-Prairie Manitoba with missions in Austin, Layland and Oakville living in a basement. He would also serve as Pastor in St. Mary's Parish, Blenheim, St. Philip Neri Parish, Downsview Ontario and later as assistant priest in Holy Cross Parish, Georgetown, Ontario. In his parish ministry, he supported groups such as the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Women's League, Marriage Encounter, the Cursillo Movement, Youth groups and others. He loved Capuchin life and served numerous times on the provincial council. In 1971, sad to be leaving parish ministry, he was appointed director and bursar of the Mount Alverno Retreat Center in Orangeville, Ontario. It can be said of him that Mark sacrificed himself totally for the People of God, without attaching himself to one place, but always starting anew with the same enthusiasm.

It was from his last post in St. Mary's, Blenheim that this zealous shepherd of souls, this hard worker, this faithful friar was to receive the last summon from God, the Ruler of all. It happened in a strange unusual way. The week before his death he had taken part in a priestly Renewal program in Toronto. This program required that the Pastor was to ask forgiveness from the pulpit the following Sunday for all external visible faults he might have exhibited in his dealings with his parishioners. So he did, and of course the response of the parishioners after Eucharist was moving, loving and even tearful. After his passing away, the parishioners presumed that he had a presentiment of his death.



NOVEMBER 25

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On November 24th, Br. Ignatius Feaver came to see Br. Mark in a fraternal visit. Around 11:00 p.m. that evening, he heard a scream and went to Mark's room only to find him in great pain. He was brought to the hospital in Chatham, Ontario. The doctors examined him and diagnosed that he suffered from kidney stones.

Next day, the hospital chaplain administered the sacrament of the sick. Later that day, he took a turn for the worse and died at 7:30 pm .November 25, 1981. Doctors performed an autopsy and realized that their diagnoses had been wrong. Br. Mark had died from a burst vein below the heart and bled to death, he was buried in the Blenheim Cemetery.

