

Br. Emmanuel Roets

Victor Roets was born in Beernem, West Flanders, Belgium on November 14, 1875. He entered the Order at the age of nineteen. He was invested in the Novitiate on September 27, 1894 and given the religious name of Emmanuel. He made temporary and final vows respectively on September 27, 1895 and 1898. He was ordained a priest on June 1st, 1901. After receiving the preacher's patent, he was sent to Blenheim in the capacity of preacher in 1902. The following year back in Belgium, he asked to go to the Missions. On October 12, he embarked in Genoa, Italy with destination Bombay on November 15. He reached Lahore by slow train on December 8th 1903.

Having studied the native languages for a whole year, he was appointed professor at St. Anthony's College, in Lahore on December 1st 1904. He then served as assistant pastor in Adah in 1907 and Jullundur 1908. On August 22, 1908 he became chaplain of St. Anthony's Railway Church and three years later as army chaplain in Amritsar. After a few months of service he was appointed assistant at the Cathedral. In May 1914, he returned to Belgium for his holidays.

During his furlough war broke out in Belgium and having reached England he worked among the Belgian refugees. After the armistice he returned to Belgium and obtained permission to return to Punjab in September 1919. He worked in India until 1925, when he was chosen by his superiors to represent the Mission of Punjab at the International Missionary Exhibition held at the Vatican on the occasion of the Holy Year. His booth contained 232 objects including books from the Government of Punjab, photos, manuscripts, maps and statistics and models of the cathedral of Lahore, the golden temple of Amritsar, and an Indian farm completely furnished with a waterwheel. Afterward he was decorated with the pontifical "Bene Meriti" for his dedication.

Br, Emmanuel then left Rome for the United States on July 26th 1926 when the Mount Calvary Province had taken on the Mission of the northern Cheyenne tribes. The mission had been founded by Msgr. Brondel of Bruges and then served by the Jesuits. It was now abandoned and Br. Benno Aichinger minister provincial of the Calvary province had made appeal for missionaries. On September 3, 1926, Emmanuel presented himself but his health was no match for the exhausting work so he returned to Belgium for two years.



OCTOBER 10

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On September 24th 1929, he left for Canada. He arrived in Manitoba on October 18th and was assigned in Plumas. He and Br. Angelicus ministered to farmers belonging to divergent nationalities: Dutch, Flemish, German, Hungarian, Polish, Romainian, Spanish, Italian, Bohemian, Czechoslovakian , Slovenian and Russian. In the summertime he visited his people in a creaking little Ford, in winter by sleigh or foot. He founded a Mission Station in Tenly and bought an abandoned Lutheran Church where he had services.

On September 10, 1937 he served in Blenheim, Leamington, Kingsville and Pelee Island while being Chaplain for the Ursuline Sisters in Chatham. On August 28, 1943 he was named director of the Seminary of Philosophy in St. Boniface, Manitoba. During the summer months he looked after the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes welcoming the pilgrims. On November 25, 1949 he returned to Belgium to rest. In all, he had worked 15 years in Punjab and 20 years in Canada. He died in Bruges, Belgium in the St. Francis-Xavier Clinic on October 10, 1955.

