

Br. Eleutherus Olivier

Frans was born at Lichtervelde Belgium on January 24, 1873 out of the second marriage of Johannes Olivier and Ludvika Puype. His father was a well to do resident of Lichtervelde, the owner of sixteen houses and a considerable bank account. His first marriage had been without children, and on the advice of his confessor, he re-married in 1872 at the age of 64 with a 30 year old parish maid. The woman gave him three boys and one girl. In acknowledgment to God for these late and unforeseen blessings of children, his father offered his first born for the priesthood: “you are the oldest; he used to tell little Frans, I gave you to the Lord. You must become a priest!” His father died when he was ten years old. At 14, he was able to attend the Capuchin Seraphic School in Bruges. Two years later his mother died. A year later 1890, he entered novitiate and given the name Eleutherus. He made simple profession on September 17, 1891 and solemn profession on September 17, 1894. He was ordained a priest on April 3rd, 1897. For many years, he devoted himself as a preacher, and teacher and he established a minor seminary in Aalst.

In 1932 he was asked to go to Canada at the age of 59 in his 41st year as a religious. On November 9th 1932, he boarded the “Malines” of the Harwich Steamship Lines at Antwerp. On November 30th he reached St. Boniface, Manitoba. In September 22, 1937 he was named Superior in Blenheim and on September 5th 1939, he started a minor seminary for Canadians. He was director of St. Francis Seminary until January 7th 1950 when he remained active as professor of French and Latin until 1956. At 77 years of age, he had the ambition to learn the Czechoslovakian language and on March 10 1954, he became a Canadian citizen.

His spirituality was as uncomplicated as himself. He did not keep it a secret that he cultivated a very particular devotion to the little Theresa of Lisieux. He called her his “twin-sister” and was devoted to the Theresian spirituality of “The Little Way”. “When you compare the data of St. Theresa with mine”, he used to say and write, “then you will notice that we were born in the same month, that she was twenty two days older than myself, and that I was a priest for half a year when she died.” Posthumously we can add: “And that I died in the same month that the Church commemorates her death”. Now during his last visit to his family in Belgium, in the early fifties, at the age of 80, he decided to make a last visit to the Saint he called “my little sister”. The day he was to travel, the Provincial Superior, Br. Martinian, presided at the noon meal in the dining room of Izegem’s large monastery. He was a Doctor in Canon Law and also a tease.



As Br. Eleutherius had to leave early, he approached the head table and asked for the superior's blessing. He asked him where he was going. Br. Eleutherius said, "of course to St. Theresa of Lisieux". For that I cannot give you my blessing," the Provincial said, Eleutherius turned toward the huge Crucifix hanging above the head of the Superior, genuflected, saying clearly: "Bless me Jesus!" and left the dining room on his way to Lisieux. He would also write at the top of all his letters G.J.W. meaning in Flemish: "Whatever Jesus wants!" to which his confreres added "Yes, indeed but Eleutherius has to will it first!" Br. Elutherius died rather unexpectedly on October 29, 1960 and buried in the Blenheim cemetery. As he waited for the ambulance to take him to the hospital, he sat on his bed with a rosary in one hand and the relic of St. Theresa in the other and he said: "With these I go to heaven!"

