

Br. Anacletus Mennen

Andre Mennen was born during the great war on April 1st 1917 the son of Renaat Mennen and Rosalie Van Rompaye. At the beginning of the war his parents fled into Holland, later on England and then France where they settled in Ault-Onival where he was born. After the war, the Mennen family returned to Wommelgem Belgium.

Andre went to elementary school in Wommelgem, then Schilde, and in 1927 he did his seventh and eight year at the Capuchin Seraphic school in Aalst. On September 15th 1934, he entered the Order and began his novitiate in Edingen where he was given the religious name Anacletus. He did his first profession on September 17, 1935 and solemn profession on April 13th 1941. From 1938 he was in the army. On May 28th 1939 he was captured and taken to the camp Stalag II Greifswald in Pommern Germany, six kilometers south of Stralzund. There he had to work at a farm in the area. On December 16, 1940 he was allowed to go home and next day he arrived in Antwerp. He carried on his theology in Izegem and on September 20, 1942 was ordained a priest by Msgr. Cuvelier, a Redemptorist missionary Bishop of Congo. From 1943 to 1945 he was stationed in Lommel, Brugge Aalst and Izegem where he preached in the surrounding areas.

Four friars including Anacletus left for Canada on March 29th 1947 in Ostende where they embarked for Dover. From there by train to Southampton where they embarked on the “Batory” a Polish passenger ship arriving in New York on April 17th and next day by train to Blenheim. These four bearded friars got a lot of interest and some Americans took them for Jews.

In Canada he served many small parishes in Manitoba, Sacred Heart and St. Francis in St. Boniface, St. Hyacinth in Portage La Prairie, St. Augustine in Brandon, St. Joseph the Worker in Russell. He also served in Ontario, in Blenheim, and Erieau. He was a good preacher for the Flemish people who liked his sense of humor and his deep base voice. He would paint mostly sceneries as a hobby and played the organ. He was from 1956 to 1957 chaplain for the Canadian Air Force.

When he was pastor in Portage he was also assigned to a Mission Church on an Indian reservation. One day the provincial visited him and so he decided to take him out to show him the Mission Church. When they got there, to his surprise they found only burning ashes since someone had burnt down the Church. He would often write articles for the Flemish paper Gazette de Detroit. After his mother’s death, his father immigrated to Canada and he died in Chatham in 1951.



September 06

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At the age of 79, he asked to return to Belgium because of poor health and with the knowledge that they had an infirmary that could give him the best of care. His health did not recover and on Sunday August 27th 2000 he received the Sacrament of the Sick. His two nieces, to whom he had announced that he was ready to die, were present. His nephew Fr. Guy Mennen, responsible for the Pastoral Care of Youth in the diocese of Antwerp, was also present with the friars of the community. Quietly Br. Anacletus died on the morning of September 06, 2000. The friars sang the Blessing of St. Francis and with his family they brought him to the cemetery of Herentals.

