

09 SEPTEMBER

Br. Eugene Verhulst (Cyprian)

Eugene Verhulst was born on September 13, 1915, in Aalst, Flanders, the son of Jean-Baptiste and Maria-Leontine Van Hove. His first six years of education were at a boarding school of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, Aalst, where he learned the French language. He also spent a short time in a diocesan High School. Eugene then entered the Capuchin Minor Seminary and graduated in 1937. He later entered novitiate in Edingen on September 15, 1937 where he took on the religious name of Cyprian. He made first profession on September 17, 1938 and solemn profession on September 17, 1941. He then began his three years of philosophical studies in Bruges and three years of theological studies in Tzedem, Flanders. On July 29, 1944 he was ordained to the priesthood by Msgr. Cuvelier in Brussels. Br. Cyprian's first priestly assignment was to teach in a minor seminary at Doornick Flanders from 1945-1946. He was then transferred to Brussels where he conducted mission and retreat work. He was also chaplain of a school for blind boys during his nine years stay in Brussels.

On October 28th 1955, he left Belgium for Canada. He then went to St. Boniface Manitoba as assistant priest at Sacred Heart Church for three years. There he learned the English language. In 1958, Br. Cyprian found himself in Lansing, Michigan as the assistant parish priest of Holy Cross Parish until 1961. St. Philip Neri Parish, Downsview, Ontario was his next assignment as associate pastor where he heard confessions, taught catechism and visited the sick. He received his Canadian citizenship in 1962.

In July 1963, he was assigned in Toutes Aides Manitoba where he also served the parishes of Rorketon, Magnet, and Meadow Portage. He was a talented man as preacher, artist and musician. He is known as the last Capuchin to serve in Toutes Aides which the friars in jest named the Cathedral of the North which the Archbishop of St. Boniface then assigned to the Oblates Fathers. So after nine years at Toutes Aides, he left in 1972 to be the parish priest of Sacred Heart Church, Roblin, Manitoba where he would reside and work for the next 21 years of his life.

Br. Cyprian was known by his people as a man with a great sense of humor. He told many stories. One story he told was when he drove his car through a traffic sign which was unlawful. No one appeared to be around but a traffic officer saw him. He stopped Br. Cyprian and asked him: "Didn't you see that traffic sign?" Promptly he answered: "I did see the sign but I didn't see you!"



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In the early nineties he had been hospitalized and undergone a serious lung operation. Consequently in November 1993 Br. Cyprian retired in St. Philip Neri parish Toronto, Ontario. In June to August of 1994, he went on holiday in Belgium where he had an eyesight examination. The doctor diagnosed a growth inside the skull which pressed on the nerves of his eye and would eventually lead to him being blind. So he was operated on and had the growth successfully removed. But some ten days later, Br. Cyprian suffered a stroke while shaving in the washroom of the Hospital. He fell and the hot water kept running over part of his body burning him badly. He was then moved to the burnt unit of the University Hospital in Gent, Belgium. His condition vacillated between hope and fear. Then his lungs started to bleed and he died early Friday morning September 9, 1994 at the age of 78 after 50 years of priesthood. His funeral Mass took place in the parish church of St. Anthony in his home town of Aalst on September 17, 1994 and interment in the family burial place.

