



Religious Priest of the Order of Friars Minor

Roman martyrology: In the city of Hasselt, near Maastricht, Belgium, Blessed Valentin Paquay, priest of the Order of Friars Minor, was distinguished by the admirable example of his Christian charity in preaching, in the ministry of reconciliation, foster devotion to the Rosary, and spirit of humility; making him achieve great holiness.

Etymology: From the Latin meaning "strong, vigorous, healthy".

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Valentin Paquay was born on 17 November 1828 in Tongres, Belgium. Fifth of 11 children to Henry and Anna Neven. His parents were profoundly religious and honest, and raised their children according to these standards. Following elementary school, Valentin entered the school of Tongres directed by the Canons Regular of St Augustine in order to continue his literary studies, and in 1845 he was accepted into the seminary of St-Trond where he studied rhetoric and philosophy.

In 1847 Valentin's father died unexpectedly; with his mother's approval the young man entered the Order of Friars Minor at the age of 21, beginning his novitiate in the convent of Thielt on 3 October 1849.

On 4 October the following year, he made his religious profession at the hands of Fr Ugoline Demont, guardian of the convent. Immediately after, he went to Beckheim to attend a theological course, which was concluded in the convent of St-Trond.

Valentin was ordained a priest on 10 June 1854 in Liegi. He was then sent by his superiors to Hasselt, where he remained for the rest of his life, serving as a guardian and vicar of his Order. In 1890 and in 1899 he was also appointed provincial.

Fray Valentin lived deeply the Franciscan spirituality, stressing the value of every

moment and educating all to appreciate even the smallest and most simple of things that life brings. All of this was carried out with the most sincere and spontaneous humility. He was also tireless in the field of apostolic work and preached "non-stop"; indeed, he was well known for his simple yet persuasive words.

He was an especially devoted confessor and had the gift of penetrating in an extraordinary way the conscience of penitents, who would travel great lengths to make their Confession to this holy, humble priest of God. In addition, he served as the director of the Fraternity of the Franciscan Secular Order of Hasselt for 26 years.

Fray Valentin was extremely devoted to the Eucharist and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He also possessed a deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary stemming from his childhood days in the parish church of Tongres, where Our Lady was venerated under the title of "Cause of our Joy".

As a Franciscan, however, he venerated her especially as the "Immaculate Conception"; he had been ordained a priest in the same year that the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed.

Fray Valentin Paquay died in Hasselt on 1 January 1905 at the age of 77.