



FR. FRANS BERGMANS, S.D.B.

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Born: July 25, 1912

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Ordained: May 7, 1950

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Died: February 9, 1974

Archbishop Shaw High School
Marrero, Louisiana 70072

Dear Confreres:

After more than one year of ill health, Father Frans Bergmans suffered a severe heart attack, rendering his soul to God on February 9, 1974. He was 61 years of age.

Frans was born of good Catholic parents on July 25, 1912, in Achterbos, Bruggeske 1, Mol, Belgium. The youngest of four children, Frans helped his father with the farm work on their small farm. He served one year in the military after graduating from agricultural high school, and the period he spent in the army was instrumental in bringing him to deeper religious sentiments and commitment.

Frans became very active in Catholic Action and in the Eucharistic Crusade movement after his military service. In February, 1936, he met the Salesians for the first time in the Salesian house for late vocations at Kortrijk. He began his studies for the priesthood there in the fall of that year. Frans made his first religious profession on September 2, 1942, after one year of novitiate at Groot Bygaerden. Completing his philosophical studies at Grand-Halleux in 1944, he spent one year of practical training at Don Bosco College, Louvain, and one year at St. John Berchmans Institute in Liege. Frans made his perpetual profession on August 14, 1945, in Oud-Heverlee. In the same city, he pursued his theological studies and was ordained a priest on May 7, 1950.

His generous soul prompted him to volunteer for work in the missions. On July 6, 1950, he was assigned to the Eastern Province of the United States. The following are the areas in which he carried on his priestly work:

Jacquet River, N.B., Canada (1951-53)
St. Louis de Kent, N.B., Canada (1953-57)
Port-au-Prince, Haiti (1957-59)
St. Louis de Kent, (1959-61)
Marrero, Louisiana (1961-62)
Huttonsville, West Virginia (1962-64)
North Haledon, New Jersey (Chaplain) (1964-65)
Marrero, Louisiana (1965-74)

Fr. Bergmans was assigned to be the Chaplain of West Jefferson Hospital in Marrero. It was there that he carried on such a fruitful apostolate: bringing Holy Communion to the sick, making visits several times a day to carry on friendly conversations with the patients. Because of his very active and tiring hospital work, Fr. Bergmans suffered a physical and mental breakdown in January of 1970. He was treated at De Paul Hospital and recovered in three weeks. After spending a few months with his relatives in Belgium, Father went to the Salesian Junior Seminary in Goshen, New York, for more rest.

Unable to stay away from his work in Marrero, he was allowed to return there. Although advised to reduce his visits to the hospital by his doctor, Fr. Bergmans continued to overwork. Toward the end of 1972, Father was forced to retire from his work, being physically unable to continue. This retirement was one of the most difficult things in his life to accept. He did not cease to be concerned about the spiritual welfare of the sick he had so faithfully served. The Lord was preparing his servant for a different type of apostolate. A few months before his death, Fr. Bergmans wrote: "I thank you, O God, for your goodness, and I offer the rest of my life as a grateful sacrifice for your goodness, your love, and for the souls for whom Jesus died on the cross." His apostolate would now be one of suffering for others. Being a man who had seen many die suddenly and unexpectedly, he wrote in his sickness: "Thank you, Lord, for giving me time to prepare myself to meet you face to face."

Father Frans Bergmans was a very spiritual man. Each night at eight o'clock he would turn on the radio to pray the rosary with the Holy Name men. He actualized his deep interior life in serving the sick and the dying. This was truly heroic since he was not strong in health, and yet he continued to work hard so that others might profit spiritually from his work.

Please pray for the repose of his soul and pray that God may inspire us to a similar sacrificial life for our neighbor and inspire other men to follow in the priestly life. Also pray for the close relatives who were not able to be near him in his sickness nor physically close to him in his last days on earth.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. John Blanco
Director

