

REV. BERTHOLD O. LAUZAU, O.CARM.

1861-1928

By the REV. ANTHONY C. DRESSEL, O.Carm.

The Sword, January 1941

JAMES Oliver Lauzau, later to be known as Father Berthold, applied for admittance into the Order in the fall of 1876 at the "old monastery" at Niagara Falls, Ontario. He was no stranger to the Fathers and needed no special recommendation as he had been an altar boy in the Shrine Church of Our Lady of Peace. Father Berthold was born August 2, 1861, at Chippewa, Ontario, a mission attended from the Falls. He was the son of Francis Lauzau, a tug captain on Lake Ontario, and Mary Lechien — both French-Canadian — and was baptized at Our Lady of Peace Church August 30, 1861. He himself often said that his religion, his education and his vocation all took root at the same spot, and it was his dying request that he be buried in the Carmelite plot beside the same church.

He attended the public schools and the Sunday catechism classes. His robust health stood him in good stead when he began his higher studies under the rather primitive conditions of the old monastery. He received the Habit of the Order and the name Berthold at the Falls on May 26, 1877, and was professed on July 16, 1878. On March 13, 1889 he was ordained at New Baltimore by the late Rt. Rev. Richard Phelan—New Baltimore still belonged to the Pittsburgh Diocese.

Congenial by nature, Father Berthold was always happy and interesting. He gathered hosts of friends wherever he was stationed. After assisting in Pittsburgh for a short while, he was appointed pastor of Mount Carmel Church, Tenaflly, N. J., a mission at that time attached to the Englewood house. The Fathers travelled back and forth either by horse and buggy or, when schedules agreed, the Erie Railroad. In Tenaflly Father Berthold spent four successful and very active years, 1890— 1894. At that time the church and school were temporary buildings on County Road. He was loved and admired by all and did splendid work in Mount Carmel parish. He returned to Pittsburgh but was shortly afterwards transferred to New Baltimore, being made prior and pastor of St. John's Church. He succeeded Father Ferdinand. At this time (1901) the Novices returned to New Baltimore from Chicago. The Novices found him kind and fatherly. In fact, in his anxiety to make Christmas a real holiday for the Novices, he ventured out into a snowstorm on a shopping tour. The snowstorm became a blizzard and on his return trip as he neared Berlin, on the Allegheny Mountains, the sleigh upset. The horse came home with the wreckage of the sleigh, minus the pastor and the Christmas purchases. A searching party found and brought him home a bit battered but none the worse for his experience and proud that he had saved nearly all the presents.

As may be judged, his experiences with horses sometimes were neither happy nor delightful. There were rumors that the spirited mare, which he used when he commuted between Tenaflly and Englewood, tried to take him—buggy and all—up a telegraph pole. Rumor further states that she knew and stopped in front of each and every saloon on the way. In this latter case we are certain that rumor was helped by some Muenschausen of the Province; but Father Berthold always enjoyed a joke, even when it was on himself, helping out the actual circumstances of the occurrences by fictional improvisation if it would improve the laugh.

Father Berthold spent the best years of his priestly life in Pittsburgh where there was a wider field for work. He was elected prior of the Pittsburgh community in 1906 and served there until 1909. Holy Trinity Church was a German parish at that time. Father Berthold learned to recite the prayers in German and could make announcements and preach a short sermon in the same language. His ability to hear both German and English confessions made him very popular during Forty Hours Devotion and in helping our own Fathers during missions and also : in responding to calls from Freeport, Altoona, Uniontown, Braddock, Connellsville and other industrial towns in the old Pittsburgh Diocese. He made many friends among the secular clergy

of the diocese. Particular mention might be made of Fathers Bernard Hines, Charles Poetz, Frank Hertzog, Peter Brady, James Wertz and John Burns.

In 1915 he was again stationed in Englewood and was appointed pastor of St. Joseph's Church, Bogota, N. J., another Englewood mission. It was he who purchased the frame house on Fort Lee Road which still serves as St. Joseph's rectory, and he was the first resident pastor. But age was beginning to creep upon him; and, as the Bogota parish expanded, the work grew too hard. In 1921 he was appointed pastor of St. Mary's Mission in Closter, N. J., with his residence in Englewood.

However, in the Spring of 1927 his last illness began, and he was confined to bed. During the slow, lingering illness he received the last Sacraments several times. He died a peaceful and resigned death on January 23, 1928, in Holy Name Hospital, Teaneck, N. J. On the day of his death he requested, as has been said, to be buried beside Our Lady of Peace Church. Father Anthony Dressel preached at the solemn Mass of Requiem that was held in Englewood and accompanied the remains to Niagara Falls where another solemn Mass of Requiem was celebrated at Mount Carmel College, at which Father Cyril Kehoe gave the sermon.

Father Berthold was an ideal community man who found all his love, his happiness and his best interests; nowhere but in the Order. His happy disposition and his interest in the Order made him an excellent companion. His kindliness, his generosity and general good humor towards all often caused people to remark that he did not know how to hate anyone. He was never hasty, impetuous or ill-tempered. The words of Father Faber:

"Kind words are the music of the world. -The gift of speech makes man as the leader in that grand symphony of praise which is rising up day and night from the teeming world around him," seem to be written especially for Father Berthold.