



PROMINENT ASSUMPTIONIST FR. MATHEUS VAN HERKHUYZEN, A.A. (1915-1973)

Cause for beatification to be opened in the diocese of São João da Boa Vista (Brazil), 2017

Piet-Canisius Van Herkhuyzen was born in Nijmegen, Holland, on July 5, 1915. He attended minor seminary with the Assumptionists at Boxtel, Holland and completed his novitiate at Taintegnies, Belgium in 1934, taking the name Matheus.

His superior during his early years of religious life described the struggles he had with his discernment to the point of leaving at least once before committing himself definitively to this vocation. His brother, Stefanus, entered the Assumptionists several years before him.

He undertook his philosophy studies at the Assumptionist seminary of St. Gérard (Belgium) and began his theology at Louvain (Belgium) before the invasion of the German army forced him and his brothers in religion to complete their studies back in Holland at Bergeyk, where, on May 31, 1942 he was ordained.

Over the next three years he prepared himself for his future ministry by following a special program for missionaries. Already the Province of Holland had been heavily involved in missionary work, especially in the Belgian Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and in Brazil. In 1936 the province authorized a foundation in the diocese of Juiz de Fora in the state of Minas Gerais (Brazil), a presence that would soon spread to other dioceses as well. Some 150 Dutch Assumptionists served in the Brazilian missions over the years.

Matheus arrived in 1946 and stayed there most of his life except for a significant hiatus in the Belgian Congo from 1953 to 1961. Much of his life was spent at the Assumptionists' high school seminary and Assumptionist parish in Espirito Santo do Pinhal, some three hours west of São Paulo.

He died suddenly of a heart attack on Palm Sunday, 1973 (April 15).

Immediately the impact he had on the local population became apparent. The mayor of Pinhal, in a rare decision for a state official, declared a period of three days of public mourning and thousands of faithful attended his funeral. To this day, more than 40 years after his death, faithful visit his tomb at the Assumptionist cemetery in Pinhal and flowers can be found at his grave site throughout the year together with notes thanking God for graces received through his intercession. His reputation for holiness is so much alive that lay-people and local clergy alike have requested that the Assumptionists open the cause for his beatification.

In response to this request, in 2015 Fr. João Gomez, master of novices in Pinhal, began a monthly Mass bringing together those touched by the life and example of Fr. Matheus and those interested in pursuing the cause of his beatification. Plans are currently underway to do so in the next few months.

From a prayer written by Fr. Matheus on August 31, 1971:

"Created to love and be loved, I wish to live out my vocation of love consecrating to God all the love I can give and receive.... At the invitation of Christ, I place my trust in the Father and place everything that I am and everything that I have in the service of others.....Following the example of Christ, 'obedient unto death,' I wish to discern God's will in my day-to-day life, in accordance with the demands of the Gospel and the directives of the Pope, who governs the Church of

Christ. Lord, I joyfully give everything to you. Bless my offering.....May your light and your strength, Lord, offset my weakness."