

REV. ELIAS MEYER, O. CARM.
(1846-1893)
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AMONG the sturdy pioneers and founders of our Province three-quarters of a century ago, when priests counted their missions not by cities or towns or villages but by counties, we find the name of Father Elias Meyer, a native of Germany, but who spent most of his life in the United States. He was born in Trudpert, archdiocese of Freiburg, Baden, Germany, February 2, 1846, of very pious parents. On June 20, 1851, at the tender age of five years, he was brought to the United States where he and his parents settled in Brooklyn, New York. He attended the German parochial school, and his high school and college studies were made in Brooklyn. During the course of his schooling he became acquainted with the late Very Reverend Anastasius Smits, who was doing mission work and who was also seeking boys for the Carmelite novitiate and priesthood.

When twenty-one Father Elias applied to Father Smits for entrance. The Commissariate, however, newly formed, had neither Novitiate nor a regular house of studies. For this reason he was sent to Rome for his Novitiate and theological studies. He entered the Novitiate in the monastery of Transpontina on August 15, 1867, and was professed a year later together with several other young men who later were to become connected with the American province—Fathers Joseph Walsh, Angelus Forrestal, Brocard Murphy and Cyril Feehan.

On December 17, 1868, at the request of Father Albert Caruso, Prior of Transpontina, these simple professed clerics received Minor and Major Orders. Elias being one of the younger clerics was not admitted to Major Orders. However, he was ordained in Rome on May 10, 1869; even then a dispensation was needed because of his simple vows.

Shortly after his ordination he returned to the United and reported to Father Cyril Knoll, the Commissary General, in Cumberland, Maryland. After a stay of almost four years, in 1875 he went to Pittsburgh, Pa., with Father Knoll. A year later he was assigned to St. Joseph Church, Leavenworth, Kansas, as an assistant to Father Louis Guenther. In 1877 he was sent to New Baltimore, Pa., but returned to assist again at Leavenworth in 1878 during the pastorate of Father Otto Wiedeman. Father Elias also spent a short time in Scipio in 1885 as an assistant. During his stay in Leavenworth he was chaplain of St. Mary's Academy.

Those who knew him praised his piety, energy and his gentle and pleasing manner and regarded him as a very saintly man. He had a slight hesitation in speech but preached very edifying sermons. His personal piety was a sermon in itself. When not otherwise occupied, he was to be found either in his cell or in the chapel. The better part of his priestly life was spent in Kansas serving principally in Leavenworth and in the mission attached to that Community—Emerald and other small missions where Carmelites were in charge for many years. Those days in Kansas were strenuous—not so much from the size of the parishes or missions but rather because of the distances to be covered and the poor roads to be travelled. Indeed horseback riding was the best mode of travel and in bad weather the only means.

He was a man of peaceful and simple habits; so simple and retiring in his ways was he that often he passed along quite unnoticed. Yet only God knows what miracles happen in the souls of such humble and seemingly ordinary men.

Father Elias died in Leavenworth on January 10, 1903, at the age of forty-six, and was buried in the Carmelite plot in St. Boniface Cemetery, Scipio.

The outstanding mark of his life was his simple personal piety and his excellent spiritual leadership. He left no material monuments after him but the spiritual structure might well carry the inscription (John 18-15): "I have given you an example that, as I have done, so do you also," which is evidenced from the happy memory in which he is held by all who remember him.