

FATHER YZERMANS VICTIM OF HEART ATTACK

THURSDAY AT PERHAM; SERVICES HELD MON.

Resident Priest of Verndale 26 Years;  
Came to U.S. in 1910 with Colony of  
Dutch Immigrants

Burial at Crosier Monastery

Bishop Busch and Forty Priests Take Part in Services  
Held in Verndale; Church Filled to Capacity

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The entire community and other communities in the state who knew Father Yzermans were shocked and grief stricken last Thursday on learning of his sudden death from a heart attack on that day at Perham.

Father Yzermans had gone to Perham on the Monday preceding his sudden death to relieve Father Walcher, Chaplain at the St. James Hospital, for a few days. On Wednesday he suffered a severe heart attack and all medical care available failed in rallying him from this illness which brought his death the following morning at five o'clock (Thursday).

Father Yzermans wrote a series of articles in this newspaper in 1933 telling how he happened to come to the United States from Holland. At that time he related in one of his articles, that a priest from America had come to the Monastery in Holland and told them about a St. Paul, Minnesota land company having a large number of acres of land in Onamia and Butler, Minnesota that they would like to have settled by a "Dutch" colony. With the possibilities of wealth and good living conditions in this land a colony of 80 Hollanders volunteered to take up the proposition. With Father Yzermans, Father Van Dinter and another lay brother from the Monastery as their superior guides and leaders, the colony left the harbors at Antwerp March 10, 1910 on the Lapland, then the largest steamer operated by the Red Star Line. It took them eight days to make the voyage, arriving in New York City on Sunday, March 18. And on the following Wednesday, they were in New York Mills ready to journey to their new homeland at Butler.

Butler, their destination being an inland place necessitated all members of the colony being transported across country with their baggage by a caravan of wagons and buggies. After a slow journey across country through mud and rough roads so common at that time in the spring of the year they arrived at their new

homeland. Here, temporary dwellings that had been erected with beds, chairs, tables, ranges, food, etc., therein awaited them.

The first year at Butler, Father Yzermans related that the colony met up with a very dry year that brought on many hardships and resulted in 20 of the immigrants returning to Holland after the first year in America, and some of the younger folks leaving for places in the southern part of the state to work out.

Father Yzermans was in Butler with the colony for six months before being replaced by the late Father Keyzers, who died in 1932. From Butler Father Yzermans was sent to Henderson, Minnesota to replace the priest of that city for six months while he took a trip to Europe. When the Henderson priest returned to his charge, Father Yzermans was sent to Lessrup (sic) on a like charge for a few months. From Lessrup, he returned again to Butler, from where he was designated to take over missions at Verndale, Aldrich, Motley and Philbrook once a month. It was during the months that this procedure was going on that the Catholics of Verndale got together and made requests for a resident priest. This they were granted and bought the old Adventists church in the south part of town for \$600.

With the church being obtained, they were then fortunate in receiving Father Yzermans as their resident pastor who came here in the spring of 1911 and took up living quarters in rooms over the S. W. Reynolds residence. Besides his Verndale charge he made frequent trips to Motley, Philbrook and Bertha and regular trips to Aldrich to hold services.

After the original Catholic church in Verndale had burned to the ground, Father Yzermans at once got busy and negotiated the erection of the fine St. Fredricks church building in 1918, which still stands and will remain standing for many years to come as another monument of achievement in his honor.

It is needless for us to repeat the life of this man, whom you all know lead such an exemplary livelihood above reproach socially, morally, usefully, faithfully and loyal to his religious order.

Father Yzermans will be missed greatly by us all, and especially to those who may be confined to their homes with illness, as Father Yzermans could always be counted on to visit the sick, regardless of what religious faith they may have believed.

Henry Yzermans was born July 3, 1870 at Valaardingen, Netherlands and died Thursday, April 28th, 1938 in the St. James Hospital at Perham at the age of 67 years, 10 months and 28 days. He began his profession in the Order of the Holy Cross at St. Agatha, Netherlands September 25, 1890 and was ordained as priest June 14, 1895. He was Professor of Dogmatic Theology in the Motherhouse at St. Agatha. He came to the United States in 1910 with the Rt. Reverend William Van Dinter, who for many years was pastor of the Blue Grass church and Prior at Onamia, and is now Master General of the Order. The deceased is survived by two brothers and two sisters in Holland.

Following is an account of the funeral services at Verndale and at Onamia as submitted to us by Reverend W. Van Rooy, O.S.C., pastor of the church at Blue Grass:

### Funeral Services

Funeral services for the Rev. H. Yzermans O.S.Cr., pastor of St. Fredrick's parish Verndale and Aldrich began Sunday afternoon when the remains of the beloved and sidely known parish priest were brought from the Schoenberger funeral parlors at Perham. The Rev. W. Van Rooy O.S.C., pastor of the Blue Grass (sic) and the Very Rev. A. Van Zutphen O.S.C., prior of the Crosier community of Onamia, wherto Father Yzermans belonged, had made extensive arrangements for the funeral solmnities. With the Very Rev. A. van Zutphen as celebrant and the Rev. J. Tertooogen of Butler and the Rev. Langer of Wadena functioning ad deacon and subdeacon the body was awaited at the entrance of the church. Members of Verndale's Booster Club were pallbeareres. The church and surounding grounds were filled with friends of the dear deceased priest, and the Rosary was recited for the repose of his soul.

From 4 p.m. until the next morning a continuous wake was held by the men of the parishes, who gladly offered an hour of prayer during the night for the shepherd of their souls. The ladies in the meantime were preparing for a general dinner to be served to the clergy, who would attend the service on Monday. Also in the evening at 8 p.m. a Rosary was said in the crowded church, in spite of a flood-like rain.

Many Masses were ordered to be said for the benefit of Father Yzermans; the appreciation for a friend of all was spontaneous, loyal and generous. A spirit of depression and mourn hung over Verndale and Aldrich alike. And from far came strangers, who had been acquainted with the active priest, to pay a last respect.

Monday morning three Holy Masses were offered up in the Verndale church during which the faithful of both parishes received Holy Communion in large numbers. The first Mass was said by the Rev. W. Van Rooy, of Blue Grass, the second by the Rev. H. Scholtens, professor at Crosier College, Onamia, and the third was the solemn funderal Mass, clebrated by the Very Rev. Prior Van Zutphen assisted by the Rev. J. Tertooogen of Butler as deacon and the Rev. J. Bloomestein of Onamia as subdeacon. The Rev. J. Van der Hulst temporarily in Chicago, Ill., functioned as master of ceremonies. In the sanctuary was the Most Rev. J.P. Busch, bishop of St. Cloud, assisted by the Rev. Zitur of Osakis and the Rev. Joseph O.S.B., subprior of St. John's College. Also in the sanctuary had taken seats the Very Reverend Mgr. Thiebaut, Vicar General of the dioces, Mgr. Plachta of Sauk Oentree and Mgr. Mahoald of the St. Cloud Cathedral. In the first pews were the Reverend Clergy from different parishes of the diocese, and a delegation of the Sisters of Perham hospital where Father Yzermans died last Thursday morning, of the sisters of Wadena and the Sisters of Belle Prarie. Among the capacity crowd in the church we observed Father Yzermans' faithful housekeeper for the last 14 years, Mrs. Dena Reichel, a cousin of the departed priest with his family from St. Paul and the entire community of

priests and brothers from the monastery of Onamia. The Rev. Terence Carroll O.S.B., son of the parish, who is stationed in Duluth, was also present. An enormous multitude filled the church and the surrounding grounds once more.

The Solemn Funeral Mass was sung by an occasional Schola of Crosier-priests with the Rev. Schirmers of Perham as cantor. The Rev. J. Van den Bosch O.S.C. was at the organ.

After the Mass Bishop J.F. Busch gave the absolution over the corpse and preached an eulogy on Father Yzermans. "This parish"--thus the sacred preacher commenced--"has lost a very devoted pastor, the Order of the Crosier Fathers lost an exemplary member and the diocese of St. Cloud lost a true apostolic priest. His life for the last 25 years was for all of us an open book, of which the pages are telling of many fold outstanding features (sic) of exemplary christian life. Father Yzermans as a youth had taken to heart the Savior's word: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all what thou hast," for he was from a more than ordinary well-to-do family and the future was looking bright for him with all the comforts of life; nevertheless he chose to join a religious Order, he left his home and his country to be a true priest of Christ in our midst. He filled himself by self-denial and humble obedience for his great responsible task of gaining souls. His life was a continuous strenuous effort of bringing light and virtue into a dark and immoral world. He has been a real "Good Shepherd," who gave his life for his sheep!" Verndale and Aldrich," the orator continued, "are small units of our diocese indeed, but they are great and privileged for the fact that they had Father Yzermans as pastor. Here he has built a beautiful, strong and solid monument to express his apostolic zeal, but many more permanent buildings has he put up in the souls of his parishioners. whom he steadily built up to be sanctified temples of the Holy Ghost. And no energy, no time, no effort was too great for this duty, which he has grasped so eminently well. But, now he has gone from us, how his example has burnt into our very souls and it may work even more influence than while he was in our presence. His going is a tremendous loss, but it might be all the more impressive, as Our Lord Himself has once said: "It is good for you that I go." His memory, after he departed, will make us live with him in the eternal habitation which he now shares with the angels and the saints; it will lead our thoughts and hearts on high; it makes us think of the life after this and makes us more supernatural, more like to Father Yzermans.

"It is undoubtedly very difficult to duplicate Father Yzermans and his religious activities. If there were records, they would show some outstanding revelations of his number of converts, of charities and influences by good example; and I wish my diocese to learn from this devoted priest the inspiration that not only the routine duties of teaching and guiding of souls is the task of a priest, but self-denial and sacrifice in the first place.

"It is a pious opinion in the Church that a child of Mary will be redeemed from pains and suffering on the first Saturday after his death. Father Yzermans certainly was a child dear to Mary and we may be sure that he shared this privilege recollected by the Church. He died just before a Saturday and just before the month of May, Dedicated to the Blessed Mother Mary. It is not to us to canonize Saints; only the Holy See possesses that prerogative, but we can and may greatly appreciate a saintly life. And we may imagine how kindly God Himself must appreciate such a devoted life.

"However, since "nothing defiled can enter Heaven," we may do him the injustice of not praying for him. We must long continue to pray for him, since the future is for us uncertain, and even if Father Yzermans does not need our prayers, he will make good use of them for others whom he perhaps so often tried to bring to better life, but still without success. You, especially, people of Verndale and Aldrich keep his memory alive, it will be a blessing for you."

Bishop Busch ended his speech, spoken with a touched and suppressed voice, with this call on the people of the two parishes. The clergy then accompanied his Most Reverend Lordship to the parish house, from where all went to the basement of the church, where the ladies of the parishes had prepared a tasteful dinner.

At 1:15 the funeral procession left for Onamia where at 4 p.m. interment took place on the Crosier cemetery lot. In the Church of Onamia the students of the college sang the sacred chant under the direction of the Rev. R. Klaver O.S.Cr. The stations of the cross were recited and a prayer for the deceased priest ended the ceremonies, after which the guests took lunch in the students refectory of Crosier College.

Another item from the same newspaper on the death of  
Father Yzermans, Verndale Sun, Thursday, May 5th, 1938.  
Onamia archives, under Father Yzermans.

#### A GRAND OLD MAN PASSES ON

In tribute to the late Father Henry Yzermans, the above caption does not come close to describing this man who meant so much to the religious order he represented and the community he served so wonderfully in the twenty-six years he was in Verndale.

We dare say, Father Yzermans passed out of this world without an enemy, something that few, if any people living could boast of, as well as many who have passed on. His kind deeds, thoughtfulness and ready advice to any that may have asked it are beyond value. In further tribute to Father Yzermans, we do believe he knew hardly an idle minutes (sic) in his life; he would of course, first attend to his church duties, his sick calls, etc., then, if there were time, he may write a story with an abundance of humor for this newspaper or some magazine, or he may spend the time in his artistic paintings of which he has made many. He was in the process of making an elaborate painting during his spare minutes, before his death.

The church bell which he rung faithfully so many years as Angelus at 7:30 in the morning, at noon and at six o'clock will be missed not only as its prayer symbol, but as its mark of time. This, of course, was in custom with the church but not always carried out so faithfully in other towns.

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From same copy of VERNDALE SUN, Thurs. May 5th, 1938 --  
the Aldrich News section, page 8.

#### IN TRIBUTE TO FR. YZERMANS

A delegation of women were called to Verndale Thursday to cooperate with the women of Verndale to plan on the dinner for the numerous priests and Bishop who would be present at the sad, but solemn rites of their beloved priest, Father Yzermans, whose funeral took place at the church of St. Fredrick on Monday morning.

Father Yzermans has gone from our midst to his eternal reward. No greater friend had humanity than the talented, cultured, artistic priest, the Rev. Fr. Yzermans.

For over 26 years the best part of his life he watched over his people.

The night was never too dark and stormy nor the way too long for him to leave the comforts of home and journey far to some humble home and to administer the last comfort that could be given to some worthy soul about to depart from this earth "this vale of tears."

It was not alone among his own flock that he labored, but among those that were not of his fold. All people were dear to him, little children would pause in their play to give him a smile as he passed their way, and would flock around him in homes which he visited, to hear a story, or have him pencil sketch themselves, or other things so true to life. He has been called by many "The Good Shepherd" of his flock. Though in poor health for several years, he was never heard to murmur against the trials and hard work that his ebbing strength had to bear, but like his beloved Master he bore his cross along the weary way to Calvary. Then he heard the voice of His beloved Master, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And as he lived he died at the foot of the Holy Cross that he loved so well. But mere words cannot do him justice. The good deeds of this humble and pious priest will live in the hearts of the people. -- Rose A. Kelly.