

MONSEIGNEUR LOUIS-CHARLES IRENEE WINNAERT



Born on June 4, 1880 in Dunkirk, Monsignor WINNAERT, by his childhood will by divine grace, became a priest of the Church of Rome on June 17, 1905.

A man eminently simple in heart and awake in spirit, of superior intelligence,

knowing the history of the Roman Church in the West, liturgist, theologian, eloquent preacher ... he is gripped by all the problems internal and external to the Church in the West .

Let us quote: modernism, the liturgy, the question of the church = ecclesiology (the hierarchical church and the community church), the social question in the nation, the war (1914)? He places all these subjects, all his life and all his service under the thought of the Universal Christ and of the Church ?Body of Christ?.

The experience of the daily reality of the Church of Rome and the conscience of Abbé WINNAERT, will gradually lead him to doubt his church where he no longer sees the capacity to dilate hearts but only to compress consciences.

He then perceives a new ecclesiology, not knowing where he could find the reality of it or even if there are aspects of it in the universe.

For reasons of conscience, he leaves the Roman church internally and externally. It was the year 1919. He explained his thinking and his new destination by publishing a manifesto (1919: ?Towards a free Catholicism?). Like Abraham, he leaves his country (the Church of Rome),

pushed by the Holy Spirit towards an unknown outcome.

A pilgrim in the churches, founded on his fidelity to the priesthood, he seeks the truth of the Church and the truth about the Church with Protestantism, Anglicanism, Old Catholicism, the Catholic Church ? liberal (the Theosophy).

Elected (1922) and consecrated bishop in this last church where he thought he had found the gospel truth and the apostolic succession, he understood that he had been deceived about the content.

Christianity founded on the universal Christ, he discovers a reference to the "masters" which amazes him. He emerges from this wisdom and, solitary, he establishes a community that he considers to be the most in conformity with the gospel and the apostolic tradition, naming this refoundation: "the Free-Catholic Church".

Keeping the title of Monsignor, he considers that he has received the apostolic succession.

His personal integrity and his prophetic movement to obey the living Christ: "It is to your advantage that I go away because if I do not go away, the Comforter (the Holy Spirit) will not come to you (St Jean XVI 7)? led him to associate himself with the development of Christian ecumenism in the 20th century. Without knowing it, Bishop Louis-Charles WINNAERT then advances towards Orthodoxy, towards the Mother Church of undivided character. His first concern is to think rightly and not to live new without changing the thought.

The Holy Spirit made him meet, during the 1930s, in Paris, where he never ceased to reside, the young heirs, emigrants of the Russian Orthodox Patriarchal Church (Moscow). And through them he will be able to know Orthodoxy.

From Mount Athos, transmitted by the eminent theologian Vladimir LOSSKY, he received this vow (November 15, 1936): ?May God grant Bishop WINNAERT to know the love of God through the Holy Spirit. He comes with his flock, from the small light to the great light of Orthodoxy?

(excerpt from a letter sent by the deacon monk Sophrony in his name and in that of Father

Silouane,(1) monks of the Russian monastery Saint-Pantaleimon) .

Immersed in the knowledge of the Orthodox Tradition, Bishop WINNAERT cried out in 1932: ?I am Orthodox?!

The outcome prepared by the Spirit since the childhood of Monsignor Charles-Louis WINNAERT presents itself. He is received into the Orthodox Church with his community by the Patriarch Sergius of Moscow (patriarchal decree of June 16, 1936). His church, which he had ended up naming "the Evangelical Catholic Church" received from Moscow the designation: of the "Western Orthodox Church".

Monsignor Louis-Charles WINNAERT, who became Archimandrite Irénée, awaiting episcopal consecration in the Orthodox Church, was born in heaven on March 3, 1937 after having entrusted his family and his work to Father Eugraph Kovalevsky. John of Saint-Denis)

The staretz Silouane, born in Russia, became a monk in 1892 on Mount Athos. He is now canonized as one of the Saints inscribed in the calendar of the Russian Church.