

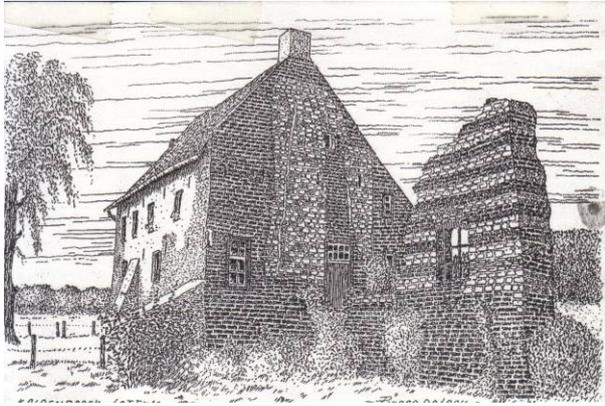
Monsignor Franciscus Hubertus Schraven c.m.

* 13 October 1873 at Lottum Limburg.

Ordained a Priest at Paris 27 May 1899.

Consecrated Bishop in Zhending 10 April 1921.

+ Zhending 9 October 1937.



Frans Schraven was born at Lottum, municipality Grubbenvorst, 13 October 1873, as the third child of Jacobus Arnoldus Schraven, in his second marriage with Jacoba Hubertina Wijnhoven. The family counted three boys and four girls. Frans must have been about six, when the family moved to Broekhuizenvorst, to take over the farm ‘Op Wis ‘ from the parents Wijnhoven.

At the photograph: Castle farm Kaldenbroek, where Frans Schraven was born.

His education.

Frans took his grammar studies at the Episcopal College in Roermond. His whole life he remained grateful to the College, for the good education he received in the classical- and modern languages. He learned to play the piano and the organ and was an excellent singer. In 1892 he moved to Rolduc for his philosophy studies. During his stay at Rolduc, near Kerkrade, he decided to join the Congregation of the Mission (Lazarists) where also his uncle, Frans Wijnhoven, and his cousin Frans Geurts belonged to. The director of Rolduc, R. Corten, wrote in his letter of recommendation on 21 May 1894: “ I can only congratulate you when this young man wants to join your Congregation. He has a great piety, an excellent behaviour and a more than average intelligence”.

A few weeks later, the sad message reached The Netherlands, that his Priest Uncle, Frans Wijnhoven, died in China on the 26th of May 1894, after a short illness.

On 30 September 1894, he started his noviciate at Paris. In 1898, the Lazarist, Jean-Gabriël Perboyre, (* 1802 - +Wuhan China 1840) was beatified in Rome. On his feast, the student Frans sang as cantor in the Motherhouse the verses of the just composed hymn, among those: “ O Saint Martyr, à travers les espaces d’autres soldats s’en iront apres toi. Accorde leur de marcher sur tes traces et s’il le faut, de mourir pour leur foi.” (O Holy Martyr, now from the



whole world, new fighters for Christ go there. Give them strength to follow in your footsteps, and, if needed, to die for their faith.)

On the 27th of May in 1899, Frans was ordained a priest by Msgr. J.Thomas c.m. After he said his first solemn Holy Mass at Broekhuizenvorst, and had taken leave of his parents he left for China.

The Photograph was taken at his first H.Mass in Broekhuizenvorst. He sits between his parents. On the second line: Nella, Maria, Stina and Mina .Behind them the brothers August and Henri.

To China.

30 September 1899 he arrived in Shanghai. He was appointed for the Apostolic Vicariate Zhending (260 KM below Peking). His cousin, Frans Geurts, left China a few months later for the Netherlands, where he, on the 4th of Februari 1900 in Den Bosch was consecrated a Bishop for the just founded Vicariate of Yungpingfu. (to the east of Peking)

As was customary, the newly arrived priest was send to the old christen mission of Kiatchoang, to learn the language and the customs. He received a Chinese name: Wen Zhihe, which means: Bearer of peace. In that part of the Vicariate Chenting, the troubles of the Boxer Revolt in 1900, passed him almost unnoticed.

In 1904, his Bishop called him back to Zhending, to replace the deceased economist. After the dead of the Bishop on 19 October 1906, Frans became, in spite of his young age, Pro-Vicar of the Vicariate. He held this function, until Msgr. Auguste Coqset was appointed Vicar of Zhending in 1907.

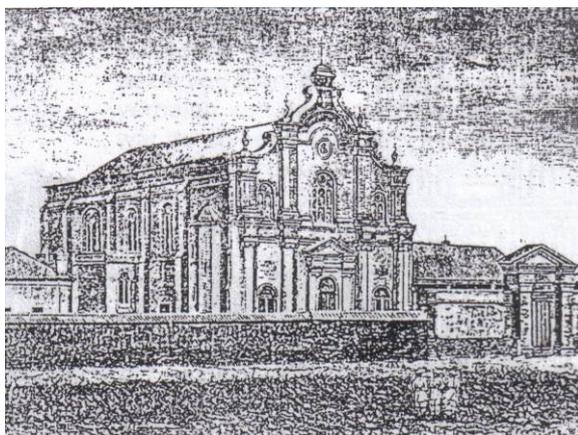
In those two years, he attracted the attention of his superiors on the way he led the Vicariate with all its mission works also financially. Therefore, he was called to the procure of Shanghai in 1908, where all the coming and leaving missionaries pass, and also the financial activities of the Lazarists and the Daughters of Love in the whole of China, were coordinated.

In 1910 it was decided to open a dependency of Shanghai in the northerly Tianjin, in order to give better service to all the missionary works in Northern China .



At the photograph: Frans as a young missionary, in Chinese clothing and with a Chinese tail.

Frans Schraven received the leadership. For the coming and leaving missionaries, he was a very good host. After five years he was called back to Shanghai again, to take there, temporary, the complete leadership of the procure.



At the photograph: The St. Louis church at Tianjin, where Frans Schraven, for a short time, was a pastor and procurator at the same time.

In 1920, after an absence of twelve years, he returned to the Vicariate Zhending.

The change from the office life to the busy pastoral life must have been difficult for him. His colleague priests also had to get used to this 'ruler', who made clear what was allowed, financially, and what was not. Just in those

years, the whole vicariate suffered a great famine, because of a long period of drought, after the disastrous floods of 1917. In 1920, there fell no rain at all.

!6 December he was appointed titular bishop of Amyclea and Apostolic Vicar of Zhending. The vicariate, an area of 30.000 km², counted 8 million inhabitants, among them 70.785 Catholics. 40 Chinese priests and 20 foreign priests lived in 19 residences, and from there

they moved to 855 places on mission. There were 86 churches, 461 chapels and 89 prayer houses. 17 Mayor seminarians and 112 minor seminarians gave hope for priests of the future. In 450 schools, 285 Teachers and 276 female teachers gave religious education to 6300 pupils. Furthermore, the mission had two hospitals and 4 orphanages which were led by 43 Chinese brothers of St.Paul and a large group of the Daughters of Love and Chinese sisters of St. Joseph.

“The cathedral of Zhending”.

The Vicariate was ruled from the so called “cathedral”, a former imperial halt place, 20 hectares large. The whole walled terrain bordered on a centuries old Buddhist temple, and was divided into two halves by a wide avenue. Walking from the South gateway to the North, the house of the sisters of St.Joseph and their noviciate, was situated at the left side, with the secondary school of the Daughters of Love next. A large garden of two hectares followed with next the house of the Daughters of Love, an old peoples home for old men and one for

old women, an orphanage for 500 till 600 girls, and cowsheds. Finally, the hospital, the outpatients department and an atelier for sowing and embroidery.

From the South gate were situated at the right side: the French school, a technical school for boys, the factory for preserved food “St. Benedictus” and the old orphanage for boys. After that, there also came a garden of two hectares, with next the secondary school for boys and sheds. Walking further, one approached a large gateway which gave entry to the bishop’s residence. At the left of that gate was the house of the Brothers of St. Paul with noviciate; at the right side, the printing office.

The bishop’s residence was divided into three living apartments, each at a distance of 50 meters. The first apartment, with 12 rooms and the large clock, had the porter’s lodge. In the second apartment with 12 rooms, the bishop lived and there were the offices with the house chapel behind them. There was also the dining room where Msgr. Schraven and Companions were captured on the 9th of October 1937. Next to it was a large building with basement rooms, the recreation room and the large library. Behind all these there was still another apartment with 12 rooms. Each of the four apartments of this large complex had its own entrance gate. The main gate at the South gave a view on the cathedral church, which dominated the whole mission terrain.

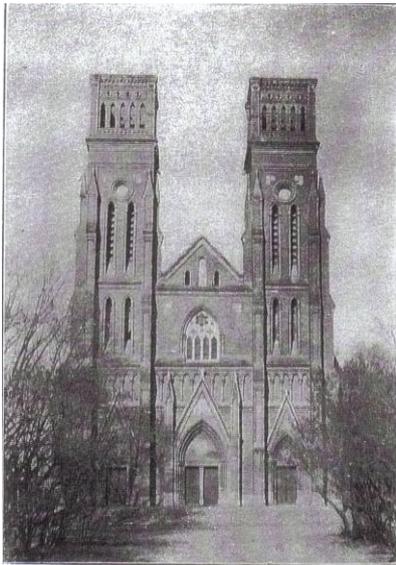
The Bishop consecration.

On Sunday 10 April 1921, Frans Schraven was consecrated Bishop by his cousin Msgr. Frans Geurts. ”After the ceremony, which was participated by almost all the priests of the Vicariate, there was a sober meal for the guests. The next day, most of the priests returned to their own places, as the poor starving people needed them more than ever”.



At the photograph: Above in the middle Msgr. Geurts, right down Msgr. J. de Vienne de Houtefeuille. At his left Msgr. Schraven and in front Mr .Morelli, the oldest missionary of the diocese and co-consecrator.

The builder.



Beside the mission graveyard of Paitang, 4 km from the town, was a minor seminary build in 1894. There were 130 pupils with 4 priests and 6 teachers in 1919. Father Jan Ramakers, from Echt, was the superior. The old buildings did not satisfy any more. With financial help from the “Sint Petrus Liefdewerk”, the bishop was able to start a new build in 1922. In the school year 1924-1925 there were 150 pupils, divided in eight classes. The state program was followed as much as possible.

In 1922, a girls training school was also build near the cathedral of Zhending, and was led by the sisters of St. Joseph. In 1924, the cathedral church was considerable expanded. Father De Moerloose CICM, who drew many churches for North China, was also here the architect. For the build, one could use marble stone, which was as cheap as brick.

At the photograph: The cathedral church of Chengtingfu.

A priest for 25 years.

In 1924, Msgr. Schraven took part in the Council of Shanghai, where all the Bishops of China, with their consuls were present to give direction to the Church of China. On the 16th of September, the 25 years jubilee of his missionary life was greatly celebrated. The boys of the

minor seminary were supposed to sing in the cathedral, but because of the rain, they were one hour late. They were waited for, so that the other festivities became a bit out of order. Nearly all priests were present. He wrote about it himself: “Time goes fast: if I think of all what happened in those 25 years, it seems a dream to me, but in reality it is God’s Hand that leads all of us, so, please, help me to thank Our Dear Lord for all the graces he gave me abundantly, and ask to forgive me the faults by which I offended Him. Ask Him also that I may more and more attach to and hide in His Divine Heart”.



The ad limina visit to Rome and the first and only leave in The Netherlands.

In 1925 Msgr. Schraven left for Rome for an ad limina visit. At the same time, it was his first holiday period. In the months after he came to The Netherlands. All the nephews and nieces that are still alive, children of his brothers and sisters, have then met him; some of them received the Sacrament of Confirmation from their priest uncle in Broekhuizen vorst, Lottum or Tilburg. In the Mission house of Panningen, he ordained four priests. And in 1926, he just had the experience of the flood.

At the photograph: The official photo; most probably taken in Venlo, during his vacation in The Netherlands.

The Trappist convent “Notre Dame de la Liesse”.

In Baitang, some 7 or 8 km from Zhending, rural properties were bought in 1915, to give the orphanage boys of the ‘Holy Childhood’ a good training in agriculture and horticulture. The terrain was 100 hectares large. The project started very well, but the flood of 1917 swept away all. When Monsignor left for Europe in 1925, he asked his Pro Vicar to draw the attention of the Trappist monks to that place, as they were seeking a suitable place for a new foundation. On 21 April 1928, the first monks arrived and on the 29th of April they started their monastic life in the monastery, which would be dependent on the Mother monastery for the time being. On the 8th of May 1928, the temporary chapel was blessed by Msgr. Schraven and received the name: Our Lady of Joy (Liesse). The next day, the railway bridges were exploded as a sign that the revolution now also had reached the vicariate.

The deplorable political situation.

In those years, a complete war between competing army troops raged in China. In 1926, the town of Yungping was plundered and with that also all the mission buildings. From 1927, the vicariate of Zhending was also in the fighting zone. Over and over again, men, women and children fled to the mission residences, to seek protection at the sisters of St. Joseph, the Daughters of Love and the priests. The Northern troops respected the mission posts. In 1929, Zhending was taken by the Southern troops; for two months the mission terrain was occupied and caused much suffering for all its inmates.

Splitting of the Vicariate.

At the end of 1928, the vicariate Zhending counts 87.168 Catholics, 57 Chinese priests and 18 European missionaries. In 1929, the most beautiful part of the vicariate, the old Christian mission of Zhaoxian, was separated and trusted to the Chinese priests. The first apostolic prefect of this new prefecture was Msgr. Jean Tchang, who was 24 April 1932 consecrated bishop by Msgr. Schraven. The new vicariate had 30.198 Catholics at its foundation, and 20 priests, all of them coming from this vicariate.

At the South of this new church dominion, the poor area of Shuntefu was situated, which after 1929 still had remained a part of the vicariate Zhending. The first Polish Lazarists did arrive that year in China, to take over the area of Shuntefu. At the foundation of the prefecture in 1933, there lived 15.420 Catholics, 4 Chinese priests and 12 Polish missionaries.

Contacts with the Dutch Province.

On high level, there was thought of the possibility to trust the Vicariate Zhending to the Dutch Lazarists, like the Vicariate Yungpingfu. One could still wait with that, but young Dutch confreres were welcome already. Monsignor succeeded in 1934 to persuade brother Joseph Geerts to return to China. And in 1935 two young priests, Hubert Schlooz and Gerrit Wouters, were appointed for Zhending. They were the forwards of, as was hoped, many young Dutch missionaries.

To travel in the Vicariate.

Between all the administration business, Monsignor travelled every year, in spring and autumn, through the Vicariate, to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation and for visitation.

Such a journey took often weeks and was travelled by cart, from village to village, where small groups of Catholics lived, to spend the night in the larger Christian communities.

The end of his life.

In July 1937, the Japanese-Chinese war broke out. On the 9th of October, Frans Schraven , with his eight companions, were awfully murdered by the Japanese army.(see the story about the drama)



So was fulfilled in a very special way what the young student Frans Schraven sang in Paris: “Accorde leur de marcher sur tes traces et sill faut, de mourir pour leur foi”. (O Holy Martyr, give them the strength to follow in your footsteps, and if needed, to die for their faith.)

At the photograph: Frans with his brothers, August (18) and Henri (16), in Paris at the occasion of his priest ordination in 1899.

Wiel Bellemakers c.m. and Vincent Hermans.
