

The war diary (1914-1919) of Father Ladislas Segers: Patriotism, Flemish nationalism and Catholicism

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1. Introduction

In the summer of 2017, I received, in my capacity as president of the *Canadian Association for the Advancement of Netherlandic Studies* and board member of the *Gazette van Detroit*, a copy of the war diary of Jozef Segers, a Capuchin friar, whose religious name was Ladislas van Zondereigen or Father Ladislas.¹ Although it remains unpublished until today, the diary forms the basis of Father Ladislas' prose poem, *Bardenlied op het Belgisch Leger, 1914-1918* ('A Bard's Song about the Belgian Army, 1914-1918'), which was published under the pseudonym *Vossenberg*² in the *Gazette van Detroit* between November 1953 and October 1954.

Father Ladislas was a romantic and idealistic seminarist when he joined the Belgian Army on August 1, 1914, barely three days before Germany's declaration of war. As many other young Flemish theologians and priests did, he would serve in the Belgian army as a stretcher bearer. In the early days of the war, Father Ladislas witnessed, in this capacity, the fall of the cities of Namur and Antwerp. He then retreated with the Belgian Army beyond the river Yser, where he took part in the Battle of the Yser (October 16-31, 1914) which would effectively halt the German advance.

After the Battle of the Yser, the German Army virtually held all of Belgium, except for a small portion situated behind the Yser Front between Ypres and the French border. The Belgian Government went into exile in Le Havre, in Normandy.

¹This is the text of a presentation delivered to the annual meeting of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Netherlandic Studies / Association canadienne pour l'avancement des études néerlandaises (CAANS-ACAEN) held at the University of Regina in Regina, Saskatchewan, on May 26-27, 2018.

² *Vossenberg* refers to a *motte*, or 'man-made hill', in the village of Zondereigen, on which a *motteburcht*, or 'wooden castle', once stood (Janssen 2005). In 1955/1956, Father Ladislas finished composing his *Gelmellied* ('Song of Gelmel'), a prose poem about the castle and its first lord, the Norseman Gelmel.

King Albert chose to remain in unoccupied Belgium (“*Vrij België*”) and established his headquarters in Veurne. As for Father Ladislas, he would spend the next few years in the trenches of the Yser Front, where he remained stationed until Armistice Day, November 11, 1918.



Figure 1. Stretcher bearers in WWI, Lier, Belgium, 1914. Father Ladislas Segers second from right. Photo courtesy Heemkundekring Amalia van Solms. Reproduced with permission.

During this protracted military stalemate, Father Ladislas would share in all of the trials and tribulations of trench life with his fellow comrades: stretcher bearers and chaplains, students and intellectuals, but mostly simple soldiers or *piotten*. He would see many of his young comrades seriously maimed or fatally injured. Among them his best friend, fellow Capuchin friar and stretcher bearer, Tarcis Kyndt, and also Frits Beert, a romantic student, with whom he shared a love for Flanders’ medieval past and for Conscience’s and Rodenbach’s *blauwvoet* (‘bluefoot bird’), symbol of the pro-Flemish student movement.

[...] I had lost my romantic friend Frits because of an unfortunate accident that cost him his right hand. While I was putting him in the Red Cross truck, he yelled “fly Bluefoot, fly” and then he sighed and whispered “it’s a pity, hé Ladis, that this is not a war for Flanders.”³

(Father Ladislas, unpublished War Diary, n.p.)

³ “[...] ik had mijn romantieken vriend Frits verloren door een spijtige onvoorzichtigheid die hem de rechtse vuist afsloeg. Toen ik hem in den Rood-Kruis-wagen stak, riep hij van “vliegt de Blauwvoet” en zuchtte zachter “t is toch spijtig, hé Ladis, dat het geen oorlog is voor Vlaanderen.”

When on leave, he would often travel to De Panne, a coastal city in *Vrij België*, where he would discuss military and political dynamics with like-minded Flemish stretcher bearers, priests and intellectuals, such as Ildefons Peeters and *Mejuffrouw* ('Miss') Belpaire, founders of the Flemish-minded Catholic newspaper, *De Belgische Standaard* ('The Belgian Standard'), which was widely read at the front.

It is under these circumstances that Father Ladislas wrote his diary; a diary that, like numerous other letters and diaries of Flemish soldiers, would record not only the horrors of war, but also the stories of Flemish persecution and disappointment. It is assumed that Father Ladislas started writing his war diary some time during the war, in all likelihood upon the request of Franciscus Laroy, prefect at the Capuchin seminary (Tytgat n.d., 2). He revised and finalised the text, however, after the war.

Father Ladislas' war diary is not written as a traditional diary. It is not divided up in sections headed by a specific date and place, and does not give day-to-day summaries of events. Instead, the diary is composed of continuous text, devoid of any type of headings or references to when and where the text was written.

The war diary bears witness to Father Ladislas' moral dilemmas at the Yser Front: (1) his love for King and Country and his growing dissatisfaction with the treatment of ordinary Flemish soldiers by their mostly French-speaking superiors in the Belgian Army; (2) his growing sympathy for the Flemish Movement and his involvement with *De Belgische Standaard*; (3) his bewilderment at the hedonistic one-day-at-a-time approach to life which became more and more widespread at the front as the war lingered and continued to claim staggering numbers of lives.

In the remainder of this article, I will focus on the three identified themes of patriotism, Flemish nationalism and Catholicism, and briefly analyse selected passages from Father Ladislas' war diary. I will also, when relevant, use excerpts from the articles he published in *De Belgische Standaard*.

2. For King and Country? Patriotism in Father Ladislas' war diary

Father Ladislas was born in 1890 in Zondereigen, a small village in the Flemish countryside, a stone's throw away from the Dutch-Belgian border. A gifted student, he left Zondereigen in 1903 to continue his studies at the Apostolic Seraphic School in Bruges. Six years later, in 1909, he joined the Order of Capuchin Friars Minor, a branch of the Franciscan order, with the intent to dedicate his life to the priesthood. His studies, however, were brutally interrupted by the outbreak of World War I, during which he and numerous other young seminarists served in the Belgian Army, often voluntarily and without carrying arms (Shelby 2014, 77), as stretcher bearers. He survived the war; in fact, he completed his WWI service

as a sergeant with numerous citations and decorations. He was ordained priest in 1920, and left Belgium for Canada, in 1927, to work with Flemish and Dutch immigrants in southwestern Ontario. There he became a regular contributor to the *Gazette van Detroit*, and composed at least three books of verse: the aforementioned *Bardenlied*, the *Gelmellied*, a legend about the Norse or Viking origins of Zondereigen and its surrounding villages, and *The Song of Hulda's Rock. The Indian Legend of Pelee Island*. Father Ladislas spent the last five years of his life in relative isolation on Pelee Island, Canada's southernmost island in Lake Erie. He died in 1961, and was buried in Blenheim, where he had been parish priest from his arrival in Canada in 1927 until his departure for Toutes-Aides, Manitoba, in 1950.

Like most of his Flemish contemporaries, be they fellow theologians or intellectuals, Father Ladislas was well versed in the heroic medieval history of Flanders, and was well aware of its symbolic value for the Flanders of his day which, in the early 20th century, occupied a rather subordinate position within the Belgian state. Like his contemporaries, he was also well acquainted with the pro-Flemish writings of Hendrik Conscience, Albrecht Rodenbach, Guido Gezelle, etc., and he fully understood the symbolism of their nationalist-focused works, which abounded with references to the 1302 *Battle of the Golden Spurs*,⁴ a foundation myth for the Flemings, and to the mythical *blauwvoet* ('bluefoot bird'). The *blauwvoet* came to represent Flemish-mindedness in the late 19th century, when Albrecht Rodenbach (1865-1880), a poet and student leader, included Hendrik Conscience's verse, "*Vliegt de Blauwvoet! Storm op zee!*" ('The Bluefoot flies! Storm at sea!'), from his 1871 novel, *De kerels van Vlaanderen* ('The Boys of Flanders'), in the student song, *De Blauwvoet* or *Het lied der Vlaamsche zonen* ('The Bluefoot' or 'The song of the sons of Flanders'). During the Great War, the verse became the rallying cry of Flemish-minded soldiers at the Yser Front, and the *blauwvoet*, symbol of Flemish resistance, became associated, by extension, with the *Frontbeweging* ('Front Movement').

A hellish scene. The Germans screamed [...] "Hoch! Hoch! [...]." Our battle cry was "Vive le roi! Vive le roi!" ('Long live the King!'), but we Flemish students wanted to die in Flemish and chanted "Vliegt de Blauwvoet! Storm op zee! [...]." ⁵ (Father Ladislas, unpublished War Diary, n.p.)

⁴ The Battle of the Golden Spurs ("*Guldensporenslag*"), fought at Kortrijk on July 11, 1302, took place within the context of a Flemish revolt against French rule. Flemish rebels and militiamen defeated the French army. Their military victory subsequently became an important component of the nationalist rhetoric of the Flemish Movement.

⁵ *Duivels tafereel. De Duitsers huilden [...] "Hoch! Hoch! [...]." Onze stormkreet was "Vive le roi! Vive le roi!", maar wij Vlaamse studenten wilden in het Vlaams sterven en huilden "Vliegt de Blauwvoet! Storm op zee! [...]"*.

Fellow seminarist and stretcher bearer, Matthias Vermang, characterised Ladislas, in his own war diary (quoted in Tytgat n.d., 1), as “*een romantieker op en top [...] Hij dweept [...] met de Vikings, Breidel, en De Coninck*⁶ [...]” (‘A true romantic [...]. He worshiped the Vikings, Breidel, and De Coninck [...]). With this particular mindset, it is safe to assume that Father Ladislas would have felt deeply stirred by King Albert’s strategic referral, on August 5, 1914, to the *Battle of the Golden Spurs* in his appeal to the Flemings to resist the German invasion: “*Gedenkt, Vlamingen, den slag der Gulden Sporen!*” (‘Flemings, remember the Battle of the Golden Spurs!’) (Fenoulhet, Gilbert & Tiedau 2016, 70). In fact, many Flemings interpreted the King’s plea to remember the *Battle of the Golden Spurs* as an implicit promise that their demands for equal language rights and greater autonomy would be granted after the war. Fervently Flemish-minded but *passivist* (‘passivist’),⁷ Father Ladislas would remain loyal to Belgium all throughout the war, despite King Albert’s lack of follow through in moving forward toward fulfilling his promise. Father Ladislas was, indeed, as Matthias Vermang (quoted in Tytgat n.d., 1) wrote: “*onverbidelijk trouw aan God en Vaderland*” (‘staunchly loyal to God and Country’). But, Flanders was first and foremost the object of his patriotic feelings.

In the trenches of the Yser Front, however, his loyalty to King and Country would be severely tested, as the tension between his sense of duty and his love for Flanders gradually reached critical heights. Father Ladislas intensely felt the anger, frustration and malaise of the *piotten* who were laying down their lives for Belgium while being met with what they perceived to be disrespect and distrust by their French-speaking comrades and superiors. He felt, furthermore, increasingly dissatisfied over the language issue that was a consequence of the unbalanced representation of Flemish speakers in the Belgian army, which, like all other Belgian administrative and public institutions, had French as its *de facto* language (Shelby 2016, 183). According to the WWI Belgian Ministry for War, at least 80% of the soldiers in the field were Flemish, while 65% of those with a rank were Walloons or French-speaking (Boudens 1995, 249). In recent years, there has been a great deal of discussion among historians, such as De Vos and Coenen (1988) and De Schaepdrijver (2013), over these numbers. De Vos and Coenen (1988), for instance, estimate, based on the number of infantry deaths, that the Flemish numbered 61% in 1914, increasing to 70% in 1918. The Flemish, however,

⁶ Jan Breydel and Pieter de Coninck are Flemish patriotic heroes who, in 1302, led a violent but successful uprising against Philip the Fair, King of France.

⁷ Within the Flemish Movement, *passivisten* (‘passivists’) represent the majority of the *flamingants* who chose to remain loyal to Belgium during the war and refused any form of collaboration with the German occupier to further the Flemish cause. *Activisten* (‘activists’), on the other hand, participated actively in the German occupier’s *Flamenpolitik*.

were seriously underrepresented among the officers, junior officers and even corporals, since a reasonable knowledge of French was required for these and other administrative positions. The *piotten*, and Flemish-minded chaplains, stretcher bearers, students and leaders of the *Frontbeweging*, all protested the inequity in the Belgian Army. In fact, they actively lobbied for the official recognition of their language by the military, and for the creation of separate Flemish and French-speaking units within the army. In 1917, a slogan painted on what came to be known as the *steen van Merkem* ('the stone of Merkem') immortalized the spirit of their request: "*Hier is ons bloed. Wanneer ons recht?*" ('Here is our blood. When are our rights?') (Shelby 2016, 181). In the same year, on July 11, day of the commemoration of the *Battle of the Golden Spurs*, the *Frontbeweging* circulated its first *Open Brief* ('Open Letter') addressed to King Albert to protest against the abuses at the Front. Adiel Debeuckelaere, its author, reminded the King of his speech of August 5, 1914 to demand equal language rights for the Flemish:

Majesty,

Putting all our trust in you who, upon our entering the world war, reminded the Flemish of the anniversary of the Battle of the Golden Spurs, we come to you, we the Flemish soldiers, the Flemish army, the army of the Yser, to tell you how much we are suffering [...]. [...] We Flemish soldiers, we suffer because we are Flemish. We are commanded by officers who do not understand our language, who do not want to understand it, who despise it even.

(Hermans 1992, 227-229)

When the King seemingly ignored the *Open Brief* as well as other Flemish pleas for justice, and when, in the meanwhile, the crackdown on Flemish-minded students, chaplains and stretcher bearers at the Yser Front intensified, Father Ladislas' frustration gave way to anger:

Flemish intellectuals especially were kept under surveillance [...]. There were house searches and arrests. Army chaplains were humiliated and banished. Stretcher bearers were forcibly removed. Corporals and sergeants lost their ranks. [...] Msgr. Marinis issued a statement defending all clergymen from taking part in Flemish politics. [...] These [...] persecutions were then the King's response to the proud and respectful letters addressed to him by the *Blauwvoeten* ('members of the Flemish Movement'). I do not dispute that it is the King's duty to fight the anarchy

in the army. But the Flemings were propping up the throne and that support was weakened as a result.⁸ (Father Ladislas, unpublished War Diary, n.p.)

In his anger, he added, even more defiantly: “*Leve dan de bestuurlijke scheiding [...]! Nu of nooit zal Vlaanderen leven [...]*” (‘Well then, hurrah for the administrative split [of Belgium] [...]! Now or never Flanders will live [...]').

Several years later, in 1946, he admitted in a letter to his cousin and fellow priest, Fons Van Beek, that he had, at times, been tempted by the more radical approach of the *activisten* (‘activists’) and their objective of Flemish independence outside of the Belgian State:

And I remember how I fantasized, during the first war, about a revolutionary Flemish army and for sure had joined its ranks, if the revolution had taken place. Slowly something had died inside of me.⁹

(Father Ladislas, unpublished War Diary, n.p.)

In fact, he had been particularly subject to this temptation:

[...] when I had to silently witness the injustice done to the Flemings. When we had to lay down our lives for Flanders while being denied the right to speak freely about the Flanders that they wanted to crush.¹⁰

(Father Ladislas, unpublished War Diary, n.p.)

3. Flemish-mindedness in Father Ladislas’ war diary

Shortly after Father Ladislas lost his romantic friend, Frits Beert, he started contributing to *De Belgische Standaard*, launched in January 1915 by Ildefons Peeters, a fellow Capuchin, and Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, a Flemish writer, who was well known in *flamingant* circles. The newspaper was Flemish-minded, but hardly anti-Belgian; in fact, it defined itself as “*Vaderlandslievend, Vlaamsch en Katholiek*” (‘Patriotic, Flemish and Catholic’) (*De Belgische Standaard*, 10 January

⁸ “*Vooral de Vlaamsche geletterden wierden bespied [...]. Huiszoekingen en gevangenzetting grepen plaats, aalmoezeniers wierden gebroken en verbannen, brankardiers uit hun midden weggerukt, korporalen en sergeanten hun graad afgetrokken. [...] Voor de geestelijken kwam vanwege Mgr. Marinis het verbod om nog aan Vlaamsche politiek mee te doen. [...] Die [...] vervolgingen zijn dan ’s konings antwoord op de fiere, eerbiedige brieven door de Blauwvoeten tot hem gericht. Ik wil nu ’s konings plicht niet betwisten die anarchie in ’t leger tegen te gaan. Maar Vlaanderen stutte den troon en die steun heeft daardoor zijn stevigheid verloren.*”

⁹ “*En ik herdenk hoe ik ermee dweeptte en voorzeker had weergekomen in de rangen van het revolutionair Vlaamsche leger met den eersten oorlog, indien de revolutie had doorgedaan. Stuk voor stuk zijn veel dingen doodgedaan in mij.*”

¹⁰ “[...] *ten tijde dat ik zwijgend het Vlaamsch onrecht moest aanschouwen. Dat wij sterven moesten voor Vlaanderen zonder ons gedacht te mogen zeggen overdat Vlaanderen dat men worgen wilde.*”

1915, 1) and it reflected “passivist-like pro-Flemish sentiment” (Shelby 2014, 81). It was, despite its rather moderate rhetoric, often censored by the Belgian Army and not supported by the Belgian authorities (Boudens 1995, 250), for whom the paper was both too Catholic and too Flemish. Among its many collaborators, it counted illustrious *flamingants*, such as August Van Cauwelaert, Cyriel Verschaeve, and Dirk Vansina.



Figure 2. *De Belgische Standaard*, De Panne, Belgium, early 1915. Father Ladislas Segers back row right. Ildefons Peeters front row left. Photo courtesy Heemkundekring Amalia van Solms. Reproduced with permission.

At the Yser Front, Father Ladislas became a frequent visitor to the villa *Ma Coquille* in De Panne where the newspaper was housed. He contributed several articles; for instance, in the very first issue, an article on life at the Yser Front, “*Aan den IJzer*”:

Yes, heroes of the Yser, the fatherland is proud of YOU! Your actions fill the most beautiful page of our centuries-old history. Future generations will forever contemplate that page full of admiration. And you, fallen heroes, who died a martyr for your God-given duty, rest in peace in the cherished cemeteries of the free land of Flanders!¹¹

(Father Ladislas in *De Belgische Standaard*, January 10, 1915, 2)

Father Ladislas shared Father Ildefons’ pro-Flemish ideology deeply rooted in Catholicism. Like many other chaplains and priests, he viewed Catholicism as a vital element in the survival of the Flemish people and of their culture and language within French-dominant Belgium. Deeply concerned over the amoral temptations (beer, prostitutes, etc.) that were ubiquitous at and behind the Front, he became involved with other stretcher bearers, such as Tarcis Kyndt, in study groups, organized by priests and student leaders, with the aim to distract the *piotten* from the pervasive immorality and to instill in them, at the same time, a stronger Flemish consciousness. The study groups, such as Ladislas’ *Eglantierke*, represent the birth of the *Frontbeweging*, a *flamingant* political movement but which was, in actuality, initially a literary and cultural movement. Indeed, when, on February 11, 1917, the study groups were forbidden by the Belgian Army (though they had initially been supported by King Albert with monetary gifts towards the purchase of books), most groups merged in the clandestine *Blauwvoeterijbond*, which, on February 28, 1917, re-emerged as the politicised *Frontbeweging*. This tragic turn of events also greatly affected Father Ladislas’ Flemish-mindedness, which reoriented itself from a romanticised view of Flanders steeped in a glorious medieval past to a more politicised and radical desire for political autonomy. The expressions, “Well then, hurrah for the administrative split [of Belgium] [...]!” and “the free land of Flanders”, in the quotes above, translate that political leaning. The following excerpt is also indicative of that more polarized line of thinking:

¹¹ “Ja, helden van den IJzer, het vaderland is fier op U! De schoonste bladzijde onzer eeuwenoude geschiedenis is het verhaal Uwer daden. Ons nageslacht zal immer voor die bladzijde stilstaan vol bewondering. En Gij, roemvolle dooden, martelaars der plicht door God U opgelegd, slaapt veilig op dat dierbaar eereveld in ‘t vrije Vlaanderland!”

The military authorities brutally suppressed our “Eglantierke”. All the study groups were abolished because they dealt with Flemish culture. [...] As a result of that brutal repression by a political caste my democratic conviction has only grown stronger.¹² (Father Ladislas, unpublished War Diary, n.p.)

Father Ladislas and numerous other soldiers, stretcher bearers and priests active in the *Frontbeweging* favored a *passivist* approach toward greater Flemish autonomy. However, when, on April 30, 1918, several Front soldiers defected to the German side, the *Frontbeweging* seemingly took on an *activist* approach, and lost the support of moderate *flamingant* leaders, such as, for instance, the Catholic Frans Van Cauwelaert. The Catholic leadership of *De Belgische Standaard* would, in the midst of this political storm, continue to practise, in spite of frequent journalistic and political accusations to the contrary, a *passivist*, pro-Belgian, *flamingantism* (Hildebrand 1957, 129). As for Father Ladislas, he did very much the same, though the army kept the chaplains, stretcher bearers and intellectuals, who they held responsible for the anarchy in the Belgian Army, under close surveillance (Boudens 1995, 253).

4. Catholicism in Father Ladislas’ war diary

For Father Ladislas, Catholicism was a pillar of Flemish culture, and an integral part of his Flemish-mindedness. As a Catholic *flamingant* and man of God, he first felt bewildered and then discouraged by the soldiers’ gradual loss of religious commitment and faith. In his war diary, he recorded the anguished soldiers’ angry rejection of God: “And then [they] blaspheme and allege that there is no God since He allowed the war to happen” (Unpublished War Diary, n.p.)¹³ And he described, in some detail, the moral transgressions that would go together with the gradual abandonment of the teachings of the Church. In fact, Msgr. Marinis, senior chaplain to the Belgian Army, mentioned in his report, submitted to Cardinal Mercier shortly after the armistice of November 11, 1918, that “as far as the troops’ moral standards were concerned, nothing whatever was done [by the military authorities] to prevent or restrain bad behavior” (Boudens 1995, 257). As the war dragged on, Father Ladislas observed that “*de soldaten [...] te veel oermensch, te wild geworden [waren] om [nog] christen te zijn*” (“the soldiers had returned to a primitive and wild state and could no longer behave as Christians”) since any day could be their last (“*t Kon alle dagen de laatste zijn*”). The *piotten*,

¹² “Met brutale hand ontwortelde [...] de militaire overheid ons “Eglantierke”. Alle studiekringen werden afgeschaft omdat daar Vlaamsche Kultuur in zat. [...] Die brutale vervolging door een caste uitgeoefend, heeft mijn democratische gedachten nog versterkt.”

¹³ “Dan [...] vloeken [ze] dat er geen God is vermits Hij den oorlog zou toelaten.”

he wrote, became as heartless and as reckless as ephemeral mayflies (“*Wij werden hertelooze, onbezonnen kerels. Éendagsvliegen [...]*”).



Figure 3. Father Ladislav Segers throughout his life. Photos courtesy Heemkundekring Amalia van Solms. Reproduced with permission.

To fight the loss of faith and the rise of immorality, chaplains and stretcher bearers helped “set up libraries for the soldiers, [...] organise[d] French courses for the Flemish troops [...], taught the illiterate to read and write and established study groups” (Boudens 1995, 256). These Flemish-minded Catholic initiatives represent, as mentioned before, the birth of the *Frontbeweging*. The military authorities therefore blamed the chaplains and the stretcher bearer instructors for the emergence of the Flemish Movement in the Army, disregarding, according to Msgr. Marinis, the soldiers’ actual grievances: the injustice done to their language; the poor living conditions at the Front; the arrogance of the officers, etc. (Boudens 1995, 256-257). The military clergy had however, argued Msgr. Marinis, been “the only ones who had concerned themselves with the lot of the [mostly Flemish] soldiers” (Boudens 1995, 258).

5. Concluding remarks

In 1919, Father Ladislav was dismissed from the army, and returned to monastic life. In 1927, he became the spiritual leader of the Flemish diaspora in the Great

Lakes region, where he continued to have an impact on Flemish nationalist thinking, as can be concluded from the numerous articles he published in the pro-Flemish but *passivist Gazette van Detroit*.

His surviving family members speculate that he suffered from untreated post-traumatic stress disorder, which in all likelihood contributed to his desire to distance himself (physically and otherwise) from loved ones in Belgium. Indeed, he returned to Belgium only a few times, always leaving without saying his proper good-byes.

Towards the end of his life, it appears that the need for exile evolved into a need for solitude and reflection. In 1950, he left the Great Lakes region to serve as a priest in a rather remote area of Manitoba, populated largely by native and métis communities. It is in the relative isolation of the parish of Toutes-Aides that Father Ladislas turned his war diary into the *Bardenlied op het Belgisch leger, 1914-1918* ('A bard's song about the Belgian army, 1914-1918'), published by the *Gazette van Detroit* in 1953-1954. He died nearly seven years later in 1961, after suffering a heart attack on Pelee Island (Lake Erie), where he continued to serve a small Catholic parish.

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