

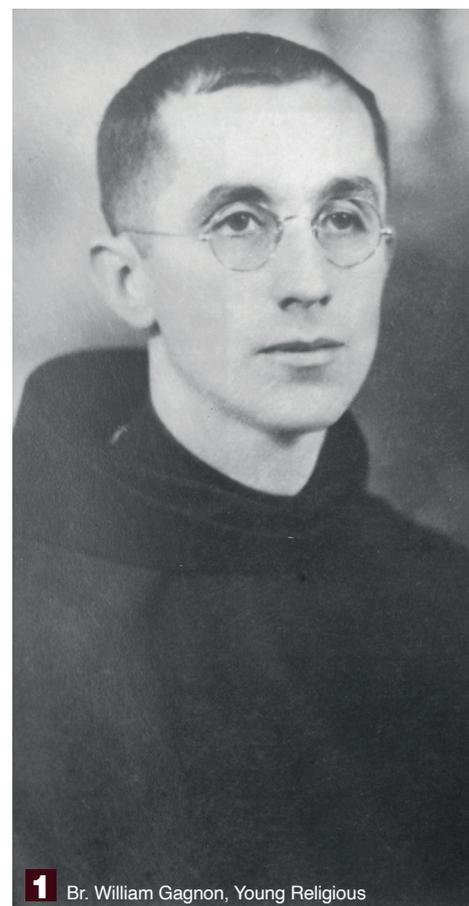
# 50th Anniversary of the Death of the Venerable Servant of God

28 FEBRUARY 2022

**BROTHER WILLIAM GAGNON**  
**16 MAY 1905 - 28 FEBRUARY 1972**

William Gagnon was born on 16 May 1905 in Dover, New Hampshire in the United States, of Canadian parents, the son of Delphin Gagnon and Maria Luisa Roy. On the day of his birth, he was baptised in the Parish of St Charles Borromeo, which was run by the Missionaries of St Charles (Scalabrinians). Around Christmas 1913 at the age of 8, little William made his First Communion and in 1917 he received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Bishop Louis O'Leary in the parish Church of Lac Baker in New Brunswick. As the second child, young William learned to work at an early age to help his parents financially. He applied himself most diligently, to set an example for his younger siblings. On 17 April 1931, aged 26, he began his formation as a postulant, regularly going through the stages of his journey as a Brother; on 16 July the same year he was clothed in the habit of the Order, taking the name Brother William; on 20 November 1932, he made his temporary vows and on 21 November 1935, aged 30, his solemn vows. As early as 1937, Brother William was appointed director of aspir-

ants, a commitment that involved him completely, so much so that the Brothers said: "This little man was a reassuring father and elder brother to those children and teenagers who knocked at the door of the college". On 30 March 1941, he was appointed Delegate General of Canada and Prior of the St John of God Convent-Hospital in Montreal. On 10 November 1946, he was elected Provincial Superior at the first Chapter of the Canadian Province, presided at by the Prior General Brother Ephrem Blandeau. Despite his administrative and managerial duties, Brother William spent much of his time with the sick, caring for them and comforting them in their suffering. He frequently urged his Brothers to do more, to cultivate the spirituality of the Hospitaller Order, saying: "We have been given a wonderful vocation: to care for Christ in their suffering bodies and to bring them to Jesus through our life of dedication and charity. But to be able to do this, we need to have a great faith that makes us, at all times, see in all our brothers and sisters, whoever they may be, Our Lord Himself. This ardent faith will



**1** Br. William Gagnon, Young Religious

be acquired through prayer". On 18 January 1952, he left for Indo-China as a missionary, arriving in Bui-Chu (North Viet Nam). A new adventure of Hospitality began for Brother William in Viet Nam, where he worked at the service of the poor, the sick and the refugees who flocked to the hospital in their thousands driven by the war.

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2 Leaving for Vietnam with Br. Norbert and Br. Richard, 1952

Consumed by charity, he died a holy death in the arms of a Brother on 28 February 1972 in Saigon Hospital following heart complications. In 1999, the cause for his canonisation was launched. On 14 December 2015, the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Francis, recognised his heroic virtues and proclaimed him Venerable.



3 Br. William assisting a war wounded at BUI-CHU, 1953

## From the writings of Brother William Gagnon

*“Remember that everything is easy to him who loves, while everything weighs down and wearies him who does not love. He even has a distaste for what might bring him happiness”.*

*“Honours are but smoke and straw fires. Only what little good we have done remains; let us be grateful to God at every moment for giving us these joys”.*

*“It is becoming increasingly evident that it is not weapons that will bring peace, but prayer and charity”.*

*“The wounds of the Sacred Heart of Jesus are my only consolation and it is only in Him that I can find happiness, if any exists on this earth”.*

*“I don’t care about titles. The essential thing is to surrender to God’s will”.*

*“We are, first and foremost, men of prayer. Without prayer, we cannot obtain any grace, and without grace, we cannot do anything”.*



4 Br. William with Br. Maurice, 25 February 1972

## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

O merciful Jesus, the Good Samaritan, you have enabled us to discover, in the simplicity and charity of the Venerable Servant of God William Gagnon, a path of Gospel holiness, to follow you in faith and serve you among the sick and those in need. We ask you to help us to imitate his example in loving our neighbour; we have therefore chosen him as our model and intercessor.

In your goodness, Lord, we ask you to manifest his holiness to us, granting us your blessings and the grace we now ask for through his intercession (...), so that the testimony of life and holiness of your faithful servant, William Gagnon, may be recognised by the Church for your greater glory.

Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be.