

Death of the Diocese's Third Bishop

It was 74 years ago today on July 27, 1941, that the Diocese of Alexandria's third Bishop, +Felix Couturier, died after many months of poor health.

Bishop Felix Couturier, O.P., was born in La Forie, France on March 29, 1876 of French and English parents. Educated in London, England at St. Charles College and at Dominican College, Hawkesyard Priory, Felix joined the Order of Friars Preachers (i.e. the Dominicans) in France and was ordained on September 20, 1901. At the outbreak of WWI, Fr. Couturier joined the British forces as a chaplain. During the war he served in both Egypt and Palestine. His military file include four citations where his services were "Mentioned in Despatches" (an official report written by a superior officer and sent to the high command.) In 1916, Fr. Couturier was awarded the Military Cross for gallant and distinguished services in action. In 1918, the British government named him an Officer of the Order of the British Empire.

Following Bishop William Macdonell's death in 1920, Bishop Couturier was appointed the third Bishop of the Diocese of Alexandria. Several years into his role as Bishop of Alexandria, he observed that the local liturgy was in need of improvement. In 1928, a study, focusing on the arrangement of plainsong and various types of Eucharistic service commenced. Throughout the thirties, Bishop Couturier took an active role with the Sisters of St. Joseph at the Religious Hospital of St. Joseph.

The folklore surrounding Bishop Couturier's appointment to our Diocese was that Rome had actually assigned him to Alexandria, Egypt, but that he had travelled instead to Alexandria, Ontario, Canada. According to Bishop Rosairio Brodeur's notes, the European born bishop, during the early years of his episcopate, did have great difficulty understanding the somewhat relaxed atmosphere in some of his churches.