

Bl. Edward Joannes Maria Poppe

(Belgium) 1890-1924

Served as a battlefield nurse during World War I.¹



Blessed Edward Joannes Maria Poppe, priest of the Diocese of Gent, was born on December 18, 1890, in Temse, Namur, Belgium, to Desire and Josefa Poppe. His father was a baker. Edward was one of eleven children, five of whom became nuns and a brother also became a priest. In 1902, at age 12, he received his First Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Confirmation.

At age 14, his father introduced him to the family bakery business. However, Edward expressed a vocation to the priesthood.

Edward's father died in January 1907, when he was 16 years old, and Edward thought he should take over the family business. He entered the seminary at his mother's insistence. A few months prior to his twentieth birthday, in September 1910, Edward was drafted into military service. On March 13, 1912, he entered the seminary in Leuven, Belgium, and studied in Ghent, Belgium, in September

1913. During World War I (1914-1918) he served as a battlefield nurse. His prayers to St. Joseph during that time led to the miraculous freeing of several prisoners of war.

He was finally ordained to the priesthood on May 1, 1916, and assigned as Associate pastor, focusing his ministry on the poor, children and the dying. He taught catechism and founded Eucharistic associations. He worked against the secularization of life in the city. When his health suffered, he was transferred to rural Moerzeke, Belgium where he served from 1918 to 1922 as rector of a religious community.

He was transferred to rural Belgium for recuperation after suffering a heart attack on May 11, 1919. This time he spent studying, praying and writing hundreds of articles and thousands of letters against Marxism, secularism and materialism. He developed a devotion of Saint Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897) who had died when he was seven and was declared venerable three years prior to his death on August 14, 1921, and beatified the year prior to his death. He adopted her spirituality: the "little way;" to do all things with love.

Edward organized teachers in an evangelization camp, and his home became the center of organization, prayer and spiritual rebirth. He served as the spiritual director for seminarians in military service in October 1922. After suffering another heart attack on January 1, 1924, his health deteriorated rapidly. He worked tirelessly until his death, at the young age of 33, encouraging both the laity and seminarians.²

Blessed Edward Joannes Maria Poppe died on June 10, 1924, at Moerzeke, Hamme, Belgium, suffering a stroke only six months after his second heart attack. He was declared venerable with the promulgation of the decree on heroic virtues on June 30, 1986, and beatified on October 3, 1999,³ both by Pope St. John Paul II. (Memorial - June 10).

Note: This biography is particularly for nursing students and nurses desiring to grow in holiness and follow His Holiness Pope Pius XI words to first and foremost bring the Christian supernatural, Christ to our patients. I hope the biographies and references will help you with your Nursing History courses. Source: Diana L. Ruzicka (2022). *The Book of Nurse Saints*. Available at www.lulu.com/spotlight/Ruzicka

References:

- 1) "Blessed Edward Joannes Maria Poppe". CatholicSaints.Info. 10 November 2019. Web. 8 December 2021. <<https://catholicsaints.info/blessed-edward-joannes-maria-poppe/>>
- 2) Catholic News Agency (10April2022). *Blessed Edward Poppe*. Accessed 10 April 2022. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/saint/blessed-edward-poppe-503>
- 3) Hagiography Circle: An Online Resource on Contemporary Hagiography. 1924. 11) 10 June in Moerzeke, Hamme (Belgium). 1924. Edward Poppe. Accessed 8 April 2022. <http://newsaints.faithweb.com/year/1924.htm>

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