

Dialogue and Action for Peace:
Dominique Pire (1910–1969)

SERVAIS PINCKAERS

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Georges Pire was born in Dinant on the Meuse, in Belgium, on 10 February 1910. His father was a primary school teacher in Leffe, a suburb of Dinant, and seems to have had a rather authoritarian character. Fortunately, Pire's mother enjoyed life and knew how to transmit to her son the image of a good and kind God. Georges studied classics at a nearby school in Bellevue. He was a somewhat timid boy, but headstrong, and blessed with an unwavering and spontaneous Christian faith.

Longing for a more intense religious life, he entered the seminary in Leffe with hopes of becoming a priest, and then decided to enter the Order of St Dominic. He later confessed that at the gates of the priory he was intimidated, terrified by the idea of having to meet strangers. However, instead of the monastic severity that he had imagined, he found smiling and tolerant fathers. He entered the novitiate at the priory of La Sarte, near Huy, on 14 September 1928. Upon receiving his habit, he took the religious name of Henri-Dominique. He pursued his studies steadfastly and regularly in a province that still brought together Walloon and Flemish brothers. He devoted three years to studying philosophy at La Sarte, and four years to theology at the convent of Louvain.

He was ordained priest on 14 July 1934, and, since his intellectual abilities had been noticed, he was sent to the Angelicum in Rome, where he obtained his doctorate in theology in 1936 with a thesis entitled '*l'Apatheia ou insensibilité irréalisable et destructrice*' [*Apatheia* or unrealisable and destructive insensitivity]. He completed his studies with a licence in social and political science at Louvain in 1936–1937. During this period he came into contact with real human suffering while working with the Missionary Sisters of Childhood and the poor children whom they helped.

Returning to La Sarte in 1937, Fr Pire was given the job of teaching moral philosophy, to which he adopted a classical legal approach. He was not particularly interested in teaching but nonetheless proved himself to