

# Short Sketches



Philip J. Pascucci, S.D.B.



# SHORT SKETCHES

of the Lives of Confreres  
Who Died in the  
Province of Saint Philip the Apostle  
Especially during the Years  
1999 to 2009

Collected from Obituary Letters  
and Revised by  
Father Philip Pascucci, S.D.B.

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This is a companion volume to *Short Sketches of the Lives of Confreres Who Worked in the Province of St. Philip the Apostle during the 100 Years from 1898 to 1998*, by Father Philip Pascucci, S.D.B. (1998).

**Cover photo:** Meeting of Fr. Luigi Ricceri, general councilor for the Salesian Family and communications media, with the directors and pastors of some of the local communities at the provincial house in New Rochelle, June 9, 1961. **Seated in front row:** Fr. Joseph Caselli (*director East Boston*), Fr. Emil Fardellone (*director Salesian HS*), Fr. Joseph Perozzi (*catechist provincial house*), Fr. Francis Knific (*director provincial house*), Fr. Ricceri, Fr. Joseph Stella (*prefect provincial house, province treasurer*), Fr. John Celoria (*pastor Holy Rosary Port Chester*), Fr. Edward Cappelletti (*director Salesian Missions*), Fr. John Divizia (*pastor St. Anthony Paterson*). **Standing in 2nd row:** Bro. John Casula (*teacher Huttonsville*), Fr. Aloysius Bianchi (*director Newton*), Fr. Clement Cardillo (*director Ipswich*), Fr. Bernard Justen (*director Haverstraw*), Fr. Aloysius Ronchi (*delegate Cooperators, catechist Salesian HS*), Fr. Ernest Faggioni (*director coadjutors Paterson*), Fr. Dominic DiGuardo (*assistant pastor Paterson*), Fr. Vincent Duffy (*director DBT Boston*), Fr. Frank Nugent (*vocations director*), Bro. Michael Frazette (*director Savio Club*). **Standing in back row:** Fr. Joseph Tyminski (*director DBT Paterson*), Fr. Francis Nee (*student*), Fr. James Rossewey (*student*), Fr. Diego Borgatello (*prefect Newton*), Bro. Russell Peterson (*architect's assistant*), Fr. William Kelley (*provincial secretary*), Bro. William Hughes (*staff DBT Boston*), Fr. Henry Sarnowski (*director Goshen*), Bro. Alfred Rinaldi (*staff Salesian Missions*), Bro. Fiore DaRoit (*provincial architect*).



## Introduction

The first collection of *Short Sketches of the Lives of Deceased Salesians* of the Province of St. Philip the Apostle was published in 1998. Now is a good time to publish the second collection.

My heartfelt thanks go to Father Robert Savage and to Father Michael Mendl for providing photographs of the deceased.

I extend sincere thanks to Jo Ann Donahue for her careful and generous work of retyping these obituaries. Also my cordial gratitude goes to Susan Grasso for her professional work of computerizing all the obituaries and this Introduction. Finally, I sincerely thank Brother Emile Dubé and Father Mark Hyde, the Salesian Missions directors, for encouraging Mrs. Grasso to work on these obituaries.

My purpose in compiling this collection is two-fold: First, that later Salesians will be able to read something of those who have gone before, rather than just the mention of a name and how long he lived. Second, that we and subsequent readers may be edified by their example and be spurred on to persevere in our vocation.

Father Philip J. Pascucci, S.D.B.  
April 24, 2011  
Easter Sunday





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## Historical Notes Regarding the Salesian Property and Cemetery in Goshen, New York

Sometime during 1864, David H. Haight completed the process of buying various parcels of land owned by different families in what is now Goshen, New York. His estate totaled 183 acres.

In 1887, the Haight mausoleum was erected due to the death of Mr. Haight in 1895. Mary Ellen Haight died and was entombed with her husband, David, in the mausoleum which had been built on their property. The Haight mausoleum is still owned by the descendants of the Haight family. That mausoleum is situated on Main Street at the far corner of the Salesian property.

The Haight estate was sold to John and Marie McCullagh, and later sold to Grant Hugh Browne, who renamed the estate Brownleigh Park. He developed the estate, repairing the iron fence along Main Street and adding the bronze letter "B" to the main gate. Eventually Mr. Browne met with tax problems. The estate was placed in the hands of attorneys. Henry S. Horkeimer purchased the property at a mortgage foreclosure in 1924 against Grant Hugh Browne. Mr. Horkeimer kept the land for two months and then sold it to James Furey and James Doran, two New York City attorneys. The Salesians bought the land for approximately \$61,000 in 1925 from James A. Furey and Anna A. Furey (husband and wife) and James J. Doran and Mary A. Doran (husband and wife).

The Salesians used the property for a boys boarding school for grades 5 through 8. In 1961 the grammar school was discontinued and an

aspirantate was founded. This high school program remained until 1986. The property was then used as a youth ministry center until 1991. From then on the property remained idle, with two Salesian priests as caretakers. The priests exercised a ministry to a community of Sisters and to a parish of mostly Polish immigrants.

Finally, in 1997, the property, with the exception of 13 acres for the cemetery, was relinquished to Orange County.

From a map of the property we learn that there was a small cemetery on it when the Salesians bought the property in 1925. There was also a right of way to the cemetery from the north side of the property.

According to a list of the Salesians who had died in the New Rochelle Province, there were eight by the end of 1926. Of the eight, one had died in Mahopac, New York; one in Reading, Penn.; one in New Rochelle, New York; one in the Bronx, New York; and four died in Manhattan, New York. The record mentions that one of the eight was buried in Calvary cemetery, Queens, New York.

On Nov. 30, 1926, the blessing and inauguration of the Salesian burial place in that small cemetery on the property took place. A procession to the burial site was held, and the body of Father Michael Wajdziak was entombed in a vault. The blessing was given by the provincial, Father Emmanuel Manassero, who also offered a Solemn Mass on the occasion.

On July 1, 1937, permission was granted by the board of trustees of the village of Goshen to establish the present cemetery of the Salesian Society.

On May 11, 1938, the bodies of the twelve Salesians entombed in the vaults in that small cemetery were transferred to the new cemetery. The twelve Salesians were buried in the new cemetery in the following order:

1. Father Filomeno Ferrara
2. Father Peter Cattori
3. Father Michael Wajdziak
4. Brother Joseph Rodda
5. Father John Ferrazza
6. Father John Piovano
7. Father George Moss
8. Brother Xavier Asta
9. Father Cornelius Monaghan
10. Father Francis Binelli
11. Father Leonard Ruvolo
12. Father John Baron

The provincial, Father Ambrose Rossi, presided at the reinterment of these Salesians. There were representatives from all the Salesian houses in New York and New Jersey as well as the seminarians from Newton and the boys of the Salesian School in Goshen.

During 1977 and 1978, the cemetery was enlarged and beautified by Father Peter Granzotto, who was at that time stationed at Salesian Junior Seminary there in Goshen. He took up old shrubbery and planted new ones, renewed the grass and set the grave markers straight.

Brother Andrew LaCombe drew architectural plans for a monument with a marble statue of St. John Bosco, the Salesian coat of arms, and a plaque on which were inscribed the names of Salesians who had worked in the province of St. Philip the Apostle but are buried elsewhere. The statue of Don Bosco is of Carrara marble, sculptured and imported from Italy, and paid for by Father Peter Rinaldi, who was at the time pastor of Corpus Christi Church in Port Chester, New York. This work was completed in 1978. The provincial, Father Salvatore Isgro, celebrated Mass and blessed the statue and monument.

The following is a list of deceased Salesians who worked in the New Rochelle province but are not buried in the Salesian cemetery in Goshen:

Brother Joseph Averini  
 Father Eusebius Battezzati  
 Father Rinaldo Bergamo  
 Father Frans Bergmans  
 Father José Berruete  
 Father Aloysius Bianchi  
 Father Michael Borghino  
 Father Donald Brown  
 Brother Charles Bryson  
 Father Ettore Carnevale  
 Father Stanley Ceglar  
 Father James Chiosso  
 Father Luis Condé  
 Bishop Ernest Coppo  
 Father Leo Coppo  
 Father Umberto Dalmasso  
 Father David DeBurgh  
 Father Peter Decarie  
 Father Eugene DeMartini  
 Father Lucien Demolder  
 Father Napoleon Denault  
 Father John Drozda  
 Father Vincent Endriunas  
 Father John Faita  
 Father Alvin Fedrigotti  
 Father Bortolo Fedrigotti  
 Father Michael Foglino  
 Father Angelo Franco  
 Father Attilio Giovannini  
 Father Ernest Giovannini  
 Father William Grant  
 Father John Guglielmetto  
 Father Bernard Justen  
 Father Francis Klauder  
 Father Joseph Maffei  
 Father Michael Maiocco  
 Father Simon Majcher  
 Father Emmanuel Manassero  
 Father Alvin Manni

Father Carmine Manzella  
Father Hugh McGlinchey  
Father Michael Murray  
Father Frank Nugent  
Father Thomas Patalong  
Father Felix Penna  
Father John Pietrzak  
Archbishop Richard Pittini  
Father Louis Rinaldi  
Father Peter Rinaldi  
Father Ambrose Rossi  
Father Adam Saluppo  
Father Marcellino Scagliola  
Brother James Sikora  
Father Ralph Simeone  
Brother Faustino Squassoni  
Father Joseph Stella  
Father Albert Thys  
Father Adolph Tornquist  
Father Eneas Tozzi  
Father Brice Tutel  
Father Modesto Valenti  
Father John Verona

Father Alfonso Volonte  
Father Robert Wieczorek  
Father Paul Zolin

The information for these notes was gathered by Father Philip Pascucci, S.D.B., the archivist for the province of St. Philip the Apostle, from the following sources:

1. *A Historical Study of the Salesian Junior Seminary Property*, by Father Dennis Donovan, S.D.B., ca. 1971.
2. Maps of the Salesian property.
3. Deeds given to the Salesians at the time of purchase of the property.
4. *The House Chronicle* of the house of Goshen from 1925 to 1940.
5. *The Chronicle of the Province*, 1938, by Father James O'Loughlen, S.D.B.
6. Recollections of Father Peter Granzotto, S.D.B.
7. Plans and drawings of the present cemetery by the architect of the province, Brother Andrew Lacombe, S.D.B.

## Short Sketches



**Brother John Andres, S.D.B.**

On December 4, 2002, Brother John Andres was suddenly called to his eternal reward. He was sixty-five years of age. Death came to knock on his door at Blue Gate, the Salesian retirement home on the grounds of the Marian Shrine, Stony Point, New York. Brother John had spent nine happy months in the company of our ailing confreres.

A native of the Bronx, New York City, John was born September 3, 1936. A short time after, he was baptized and given the name John. It was September 20. John loved to say that he was baptized in the historic church of St. Philip Neri. His elementary school education was completed in 1952 in Our Lady of Refuge School in the Bronx. John's brother Peter made this reflection about the school: "The good nuns of the school were pretty intent on penmanship, and you remember that my brother had a good writing style as well." For the next four years (1952-1956) he traveled each day by subway to Harlem in Manhattan, where he attended Rice High School conducted by the Brothers of the Christian Schools (known as the Irish Christian Brothers). John was very proud of the education that he received and often spoke of the care and dedication of these brothers.

In 1956 John was attracted to the Salesian vocation of a coadjutor brother. He then attended Don Bosco Tech for his initial Salesian foundation, to be followed by his novitiate in Newton, New Jersey. It was here that he professed his first vows on September 8, 1957. John was delighted to recall the camaraderie of those early days as he continued to grow in the qualities of a Salesian brother. John loved to recall this happy period when he was of service to Father Joseph Stella whom he loved to quote and from whom he learned coadjutor brother. It was here in Newton that John began his first experiences in approaching the local merchants and making friends for the College. His ability in forming friendships was to serve him in the same capacity, like the year he spent in Ramsey (1958-1959) and the two years he spent in Goshen (1959-1961).

The first extended period of his mission as a brother took place in New Rochelle (1961-1966). Here he expended his energies in helping with the extensive mailing and endless errands in the Salesian Mission Office. In this vast enterprise, he was of great assistance in developing the Salesian Purgatorial Society by visiting the local funeral parlors and inviting the funeral directors to be of service by offering cards to the families of the bereaved.

John's talents began to blossom in Newton, New Jersey, where he spent six years, becoming the first director of the flourishing Boys' Club (1968-1973). He then carried his expertise to Columbus, Ohio,

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where he became actively involved in the youth clubs from 1973-1978. John relished speaking of this period of his life as he also became interested in the “thrift shop,” which was a great help to the poor and needy in Columbus. In his dealings here and elsewhere, John had an uncanny way with people. Maybe his brother Peter put it best when he said “John was a wheeler-dealer!”

After one year at St. Anthony's Parish in Paterson, New Jersey, John returned to Goshen, New York, for a period of eleven years. Being of service to the community, he also found time to get involved in civic matters of the town, celebrating its bicentennial, in which he played a significant part. The local citizens still remember John's cheery and jovial presence. The area farmers were likewise generous to John, who went out of his way to seek fruits and vegetables for his own community and other Salesian centers.

In 1990 he was transferred to the Salesian community of Don Bosco Tech in Paterson, where he had first become acquainted with the Salesian charism and begun his first efforts to develop Salesian spirit. He remained here for eleven years, being of great service to the community. He was generous in taking confreres and visitors to Newark airport. In addition to the school needs, Brother John was a regular helper each year as he contributed his services in the organization of the yearly local city carnival. On the occasion of his fortieth anniversary of his religious profession (1977), the city council passed a resolution honoring Brother John for all his efforts on behalf of the city. Brother John was always available to all who needed his service as notary public for signing official documents.

During the years that John was in Paterson, he struck up a friendship with one of the teachers who gives us the following testimony: “I met Brother John in 1997, and we would spend our lunch hour together; he and I would reminisce about the Bronx we both knew well as kids. No talk of New York City during the nineteen forties and fifties would take place without revolving around baseball. We would argue and laugh about the Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds that our memories would dredge up from our youth.

“With the Giants gone, Brother John became a Mets fan – the most pessimistic Mets fan in all of baseball. If Brother John found out that the Mets lost, he would become angry, saying, ‘Well, what do you expect? They stink!’ If the Mets won, he would say, ‘Ah, they were lucky. Tomorrow, they'll lose because they stink.’ Brother John sometimes had a grumpy facade that could never succeed in hiding his wonderful humor and concern for the well-being of everyone around him. I, for one, sorely miss Brother John. My life is diminished without him.”

Brother John never really enjoyed good health. He had problems with his leg that were caused by diabetes. On November 11, 2000, John was taken to the Passaic General Hospital where he remained until January 3, 2001. He was transferred to the Lincoln Park Nursing Center, New Jersey. When his rehabilitation was completed on February 3, he was taken to Blue Gate, Stony Point, New York. John was happy here and was well taken care of by the Salesians and the lay staff. While here, Brother John continued his contact with many friends through telephone and e-mail. During the last months of his life Brother John taught catechism to the public school students who were parishioners of St. Paul's Church in New City, New York. He was deeply appreciated and loved.

On the morning of December 4, 2002, John complained of a slight pain in his chest. Thinking it was some sort of indigestion, he excused himself and went to his room to rest. A short time later Nora, the house nurse and cook, went up to see how he was doing. She found John lying on his bed. He was dead!

On December 7 the Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated by the Provincial, the Very Rev. Patrick Angelucci, S.D.B. Many concelebrants joined in the Eucharist. Many Salesian brothers manifested solidarity. The eulogist was Father Paul Bedard, who cared for John during the last two years of his life. Burial took place on the following morning in the Salesian Cemetery in Goshen, New York.

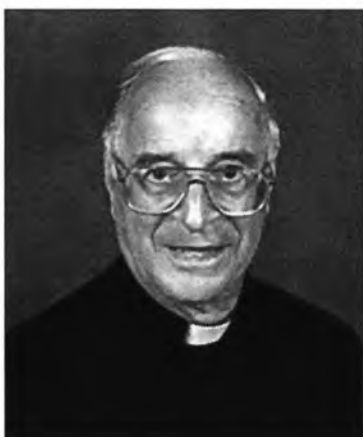
John's brother, Peter, was deeply moved by the loving care of the Salesians and friends as they gathered for the funeral. He wrote as follows: “I was very impressed with the service on December 7. I particularly enjoyed meeting many of John's friends at the reception afterwards. A woman from Washington Heights, upper Manhattan, was at the service. She told me she had never met John, but was impressed by an encouraging phone conversation and felt that she had to travel to Stony Point for the funeral. There also was a young lady who came up to me to introduce herself, to tell me that John, when in Goshen, had helped her family and kept in touch ever since. My greatest surprise was when I returned home to Florida. I received a phone call from the U.K. It

was from a person that John had helped when she was in the States. They had continued corresponding through the internet.” All this and more are a reminder that the good we do in life stays long after we have departed.

Brother John always kept before him the words of our Constitutions: *The Salesian Brother brings to every field of education and pastoral activity the specific qualities of his lay status, which make him in a particular way a witness to God's kingdom in the world, close as he is to the young and to the realities of working life. (C.40)*

We pray that the Lord of the harvest will send many coadjutor brothers into our Salesian Family.

Sincerely in Don Bosco,  
Rev. Paul P. Avallone, S.D.B.



**Father Paul Aronica, S.D.B.**

**F**ather Paul was born November 1, 1918, in Buffalo, New York. All of his three siblings preceded him in death. His parents, Louis and Susan Acquisto Aronica, had immigrated from Sicily, Italy. They settled in the Buffalo area and made the newly built Holy Cross Church their place of worship. The family was very involved in the newly established Italian parish under the leadership of Father Joseph Gambino. There is something special to be said of the youthful pastor who had been recruited personally for the Buffalo diocese by Bishop Charles H. Cotton. Father Gambino had his roots in a Salesian context by being born in the Turin area in 1879. Joseph Gambino received his early educational training in the Salesian Parish of St. John the Evangelist in Turin, Italy. He also had the great privilege of seeing the world-renowned Father John Bosco.

One now knows how the young Paul Aronica learned about Don Bosco and his Salesians in the early decades of the 20th century and how he followed with the world the progression of the simple Don Bosco into the ranks of sanctity and apostle of the young. Father Paul Aronica had this depth of living out the history unfolding before him by being connected to someone who had met St. John Bosco and who most likely inspired the young Paul Aronica to go forth in the Salesian way of life. It is certainly no coincidence that Paul Aronica was in the right place at the right time with the right people. It is by no chance that he was involved and present at the beatification and canonization of Don Bosco, Dominic Savio and Mary Mazzarello. He not only lived during these times but was also by his great gift of

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writing, able to communicate in a simple and popular style many of the Salesian holy events. Father Paul was able to put into exciting, youthful details many of the miracles, heroic sanctity and the workings of God and the Blessed Mother in the worldwide Salesian ministry.

Father Paul was not a detached and theoretical writer but one who delved into the life, personality, spirituality and holiness of those persons about whom he wrote. He was enthusiastic in knowing that he was cooperating in the mission by his writing to promote and express the charismatic gifts that God had given to his Church through the life of St. John Bosco. All of his pamphlets, short stories, books and writings are timeless, relevant and popular because he wrote in a manner that is ageless. One could sum up Father Paul's life by saying that he was a promoter, a cheerleader, and a believer, that he loved the written word, was cheerful, youthful, and interested in life and people.

I invite all who would like to read about Father Paul to log on to the internet and type in the name "Paul Aronica" or another entry "A Man Sent by God," and you'll be pleasantly surprised to see how he, like St. John Bosco, also made a great impact upon the world of youth in his writings and as a person sent by God.

Please enjoy the rest of what is written in these pages, by Father Michael Mendl of the communications office. Father Paul left hardly any material things behind, rather he touched many lives in his various assignments and he always seemed to produce and share his gift of the word in his speech and writings.

From all at Archbishop Shaw High School  
May 6, 2005  
Feast of St. Dominic Savio

### ***Father Paul Aronica (1918-2004)***

Father Paul Aronica, S.D.B., died on Nov. 16, 2004, in New Orleans. He was 86 years and had been a Salesian for 67 years, a priest for 57 years.

Paul was born in Buffalo, New York, and entered the high school seminary at Newton in the fall of 1932, followed by novitiate, and first profession in 1937. After college he did his practical training with the high school seminarians and his theological studies, all in Newton. He was ordained in 1947.

While teaching at Salesian High School in New Rochelle, New York, Father Paul earned a master's degree in English at Fordham University (1950). He used his skills for the rest of his life, writing and translating on Salesian topics, most notably lives of Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio. From 1960 to 1999 he played a major part in the translation of the *Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*.

From 1947 to 1979 Father Paul's apostolate was chiefly in schools. He taught and filled administrative positions, mainly at Salesian High in New Rochelle and Don Bosco Tech in Paterson, but also at Don Bosco Tech in Boston, St. Dominic Savio High School in East Boston, Don Bosco College in Newton, and the Marian Shrine in Stony Point. He served as province superintendent of schools for four years.

For about ten years in the 1950's and 60's, Father Paul assisted Brother Michael Frazette in the activities of the St. Dominic Savio Classroom Club and Camp Savio; these activities tried to foster priestly and religious vocations.

The province called upon Father Paul's wisdom while he served on the Provincial Council for several years, including three years as vice provincial (1979-1982).

Father Paul took up a second career as a parish priest, serving in Birmingham, Alabama, and Paterson from 1985 to 1993, when a stroke required him to cut back his activity. For six years he managed the Salesian property and did chaplaincy work in Goshen. He retired at Archbishop Shaw High School in Marrero, Louisiana, in 1999 but continued his priestly ministry at the school and nearby parishes as much as his health allowed until the last weeks of his life.

Salesians and diocesan clergy highly regarded Father Paul as a priest, teacher, counselor, and friend. His dedication, tact, humility, knowledge of Salesian history, and embodiment of the Salesian spirit were invaluable assets, an example to his confreres, and a positive influence on young and old. Father James Heuser, the Salesian provincial, described Father Paul as a giant of love.

Father Michael Mendl, S.D.B.





**Brother Mario Audero, S.D.B.**

**A**t 5:05 p.m. on December 30, 2001, Almighty God called to Himself our faithful and dear confrere, COADJUTOR BROTHER MARIO AUDERO, at the age of 76.

It was March 16, 1925, when Giovanni Audero and Giacinta (Tessitore) Audero first laid eyes on their newborn son. They gave him the name Mario when the waters of Baptism were poured on his infant head on April 12, 1925, in Our Lady of Grace Church in their hometown of Montalenghe, a suburb of Turin, Italy.

Mario had his elementary education in Montalenghe and his secondary education at the Salesian Institute Conte Rebaudengo in Turin and as an aspirant in Moglia. It was in Moglia that he pronounced his first vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, on August 16, 1943. For the next three years Brother Mario was engaged in technical studies at Rebaudengo. There he learned the trade of making customized shoes. On August 16, 1946, Brother Mario professed his perpetual vows at Villa Moglia. He was 21 years old.

In the fall of 1946, Brother Mario arrived in the United States with a group of eight young coadjutors to staff Don Bosco Technical High School in Paterson, New Jersey.

However, he first spent two years at Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey, learning English and becoming acquainted with American customs. During 1950-51, he studied harmony and piano at the Keller Studio on East 26th Street in Paterson. Brother also pursued a degree from the Pius X School of Liturgical Music at Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart in Purchase, New York.

When Brother Mario completed that program, the school's director, Mother Josephine D. Morgan, put in writing her enthusiastic appreciations for his achievement:

*Congratulations. You have your degree. You are a Bachelor of Music from the Pius X School, Manhattanville. We are all very happy about this, and we want you to know that we congratulate you wholeheartedly. You have been such a wonderful student and have added so much to the spirit of our school that I cannot resist writing you immediately. I wish that we could offer an M.A. next September in order to keep you here for a few more years. Your work has been excellent in every way, and we are proud of your achievement.*

From September 1948 to September 1959, Brother taught photoengraving and music at Don Bosco Technical High School in Paterson. With the arrival of offset printing, photoengraving became obsolete. In 1959-60 Brother taught music and other subjects at Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa, Florida. In 1960-61, he was back at Don Bosco Technical School in Paterson, engaged in teaching the same subjects to coadjutor aspirants. Then, from September 1961 until September 1965, Brother Mario was teaching

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music and other subjects in West Haverstraw, New York. From September 1965 to September 1972 he taught music and directed the band at Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey.

Music was his love, and his trade of making shoes was all but forgotten. He directed the band and the choir with evident enjoyment at the College. The number and quality of books, records and scores which he cherished and kept with him attests to both the depth of his feeling for music and the breadth of his knowledge. In his latter years, for whatever reasons, he no longer taught the subject but always maintained a vibrant appreciation of it.

Finally in September 1972, Brother Mario became the assistant to the financial administrator at the Marian Shrine in Stony Point, New York. In that capacity he took care of the outgoing mail, did the shopping for various needs of the kitchen and for the confreres, and took anyone to the doctor who couldn't for one reason or another go on his own. As the years went by, he also provided a valuable service in preparing the calendar of retreat and shrine events, thus helping the staff to prepare for hosting the many groups.

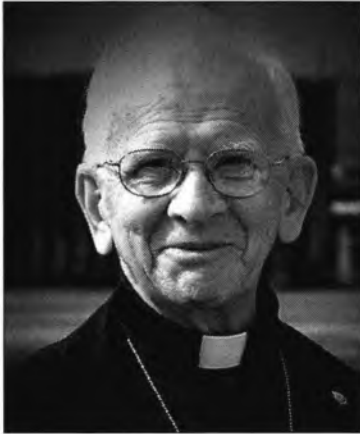
Sickness overtook Brother Mario, and during 1997 he moved to the Blue Gate Residence in Stony Point. However, in April 2001, he entered Northern Riverview Nursing Home, and then on September 3, 2001, he was admitted to the Frances Schervier Nursing Care Center in the Bronx, New York. While there, during December he became ill and on December 30, 2001, having lapsed into a coma, Brother Mario expired and entered the presence of our Father in heaven.

A Salesian coadjutor who knew Brother Mario well wrote of him: "Brother Mario never lost time. He always had a book handy, and many times he would go to the chapel before the regular spiritual reading time and read about the new technology or Salesian things such as letters of our major superiors and lives of the early Salesians. He liked to converse with the secretaries and workers in the house. They were very impressed by him. He was always happy to see Salesians, and any time he came across some Salesian publication which he had not seen before, he was happy to have it and read it."

A Salesian who was friendly with Brother Mario expressed the sentiments of many when he wrote, "I can say he will be missed by many people and friends."

Such was our good Brother Mario Audero. Let us pray that Almighty God will soon welcome him, if He hasn't done so already, into the glory of the Blessed.

The Community of the Marian Shrine  
Stony Point, New York, June 24, 2002



**Father Mario Balbi, S.D.B.**

On February 23, 2009, our brother Father Mario Balbi, S.D.B., was called home to God while going about his priestly work. He collapsed in the morning outside his beloved Stella Maris Chapel at the Port of Newark, New Jersey. His body was not discovered until later in the evening. Father Mario's sudden death came as a great surprise to all of us who knew him. He was just a month shy of his 89th birthday.

An autopsy concluded that Father Mario died from natural causes, the result of an acute subdural hematoma, or a collection of blood on the surface of the brain. As Father Mario was aged and on blood thinners, he was at high risk for such a condition should he suffer any kind of head trauma.

Father Balbi had belonged to the Salesian community at Our Lady of the Valley Church and the Don Bosco Residence on Orange, New Jersey, since 1999. From 1991 to 1999 he resided with the Salesians at St. Anthony Church in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Although he was working in affiliation with the St. Philip the Apostle Province from 1974, he became a member of the province only in 1991.

Father Mario was born in Manaus, in the state of Amazonas, Brazil, on March 25, 1920. He was born on the feast of the Annunciation and, like our Lady, lived his life with a great openness to the will of God. He was the tenth and last child of Camillo and Maria Balbi.

At ten years of age young Mario first encountered the Salesians of Don Bosco. By twelve he was determined to become one. He asked his father for advice in regard to his vocation, and his father said: "If that is what you want to do, then do it. Give yourself to this all the way. Make the most of your desires!" Thus with his father's blessing he entered the Salesian formation program.

After leaving his hometown as a boy of twelve, Father Mario did not return for fifteen years! He made profession as a Salesian on January 31, 1938 at Pernambuco, Brazil. He did his practical training in Recife, then studied theology at the Instituto Teologico Pio XI in São Paulo. He was ordained a priest on December 8, 1947. He earned his bachelor's degree in philosophy at the Instituto Pedagogico Salesiano in Jabaotão, Brazil, in 1940, and a master's degree at the University of Cearu in physical sciences and Anglo-Germanic languages. He spoke Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian, German, Latin, and English; these language skills allowed him to excel in his role as chaplain at the ports of Savannah and Newark.

He traveled the world as a teacher. He taught languages in a variety of Salesian schools in Brazil before moving to Savannah, Georgia, as a teacher. He spent seventeen years in Georgia as a teacher at the Benedictine Military School and as chaplain at the Port of Savannah.

Bishop J. Kevin Boland of Savannah, who is also the Bishop Promoter of the Apostleship of the Sea, praised Father Balbi's work with seafaring men and women. He writes that Father Balbi "not only took care of their spiritual needs, but was greatly influential in making sure that these men had good social outlets

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in regard to sports and other activities during their short stays. He was well known at the International Seamen's House and was instrumental in the annual Blessing of the Fleet on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. He developed a deep and loving commitment for the seafarers and the maritime community. Father Mario was small in stature but full of energy and enthusiasm in bringing the love of the Gospel to a people who by nature of their work were far from home and whose life on the ocean waves was demanding and lonesome. He was deeply missed when he left Savannah to take up a similar ministry in New Jersey."

In his later years, as he became more dependent on others due to his poor eyesight, so many young people looked out for Father Mario. He was so grateful to God for the many angels with whom God surrounded him. He said the guardian angel prayer devoutly every time he got into a car and every time he got onto a ship! He knew that God's providence was all around him, and he was an example of one who knew that life was a gift.

Father Mario was especially grateful to the many angels at the Port of Newark. He had a special bond with the Lobue family and all of the people who worked at FAPS (Foreign Auto Preparation Service) and the Port Authority. Father Mario loved and cared for each of them and was grateful to God for them.

Father Mario loved the Church and he loved the Holy Father! He loved to get to the Vatican whenever he had the chance. One can see the evidence in the many pictures of Father Mario with both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict! We can't forget the bishops! Father Mario had them all lined up and ready to minister at the port every Lent and Advent. Those working at the cathedral must have been jealous at the number of bishops, and even a few provincials, who came to Stella Maris Chapel, the little Vatican at the Port of Newark!

So many angels watched over Father Mario in our Salesian community as well. I am so grateful myself to the Sons of Mary who looked out for Father Mario every evening at dinner. Also, for all the Salesians who have shown particular concern for Father Mario over the years. He had a great fondness for his former directors, Father Tom Ruekert and Father Steve Ryan, and was grateful to both of them for their particular concern. Father John Nazzaro was not Father Mario's director, but he did have Father Mario in the palm of his hand!

Father Mario took wonderful care of his health. He would brag that for 87 years he had never taken an aspirin! He had little patience for doctors, hospitals, and medicine. He preferred a more basic approach to good health. He took very good care of himself. He did a hundred pushups a day... even at 88 years of age! That's a lot of pushups! He also ate a very healthy diet. Father Mario loved his oranges! He ate five, six, or seven a day! That's a lot of vitamin C!

Father Mario loved his life and he loved the priesthood! He lived his life with great zeal and focus. Father Mario knew who he was. He knew who God called him to be and he responded with enthusiasm.

Father James Heuser, S.D.B., the Salesian provincial superior, wrote: "We have known Father Mario as a man who, even though elderly, briskly climbed the gangplanks of ships in order that young sailors far from home would know God traveled with them, and that in His love they could always find safe haven. 'Never have I found one ship that I have greeted and not found an open heart,' Father Mario was once known to say. I suspect it was a response to the open heart the seamen found in him."

Father Mario was featured in a news story by Susan Vicarisi in *The Catholic Advocate* of the archdiocese of Newark on July 14, 2004. He is quoted there as being "committed to 'caring for the bodies and souls of seafarers and their families,' regardless of religious affiliation, many of whom commit to contracts which keep them at sea without family contact for more than nine months of the year." Like a good shepherd Father Mario gave himself completely to the spiritual and practical needs of these souls.

Every year in the early part of the summer Father Mario would lead an ecumenical blessing of the fleet at Port Newark. Father Mario began this practice as chaplain in Savannah, where the maritime community called him "Savannah Harbor's Lighthouse" on account of the guidance and spiritual support he provided for so many. He brought this tradition to Newark when he arrived in 1991. Father Mario wanted to bless all those men and women and all those businesses that functioned as part of the port community.

One of his great joys was the dedication of a permanent chapel for the Newark port. The Stella Maris

Chapel had worked out of a trailer for many years, and Father Mario wanted to give his beloved flock a more fitting place in which to pray. This dream of Stella Maris Chapel became a reality on September 24, 2002, through the hard work of many at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and at FAPS, along with the Archdiocese of Newark.

Father Mario was a son of Don Bosco! He loved Don Bosco and the Salesian charism with his whole heart. "Have you read my book?" Every Salesian in the province has been asked that question! Not only that, but every summer as the foreign missionaries on the preaching mission came to spend the summer with us, each was asked as well: "Have you read my book?" And out came a book, a pen, and an autograph of *The Unpublished Don Bosco*! These were a collection of stories that, as the title suggests, had not been published but had been passed on in the oral tradition of the Salesian Family and collected by the Italian Salesian Father Michele Molineris. Father Mario put them into English. Indeed, he was not so much interested in whether we had read his book; he was really more interested in whether we had shared his love, his passion for the Patron of Youth, St. John Bosco.

He had a great passion and deep love for the charism of Don Bosco that gave great meaning and direction to his life. This passion never wavered in Father Mario's life. He wanted others to come to know and understand the great gift that we hold in the Salesian charism and Don Bosco. Father Mario loved Don Bosco and he loved his Salesian vocation!

Elizabeth Soares at FAPS held there a suitcase full of material that Father Mario was studying on the life and sanctity of Don Bosco's mother, Mama Margaret. He was fired up to push her cause of canonization forward and one day to see her beatified.

Many of us were grateful, and are grateful, that Father Mario was able to do what he loved to do, to do it every day, to do it free of illness and free of hospitals for nearly 89 years of blessed life. For 87 of those years he was pill free, medicine free, and even aspirin free!

But we also prayed that as he went to the port every day and as he worked with the people at FAPS every day and as he said his daily Masses and heard so many confessions, that the Lord would take him home peacefully doing his job, the work, the ministry that God had called him to do. We may have prayed that he would meet God peacefully as he completed Mass. Or we may have prayed death would come as he fell asleep at his desk. Father Mario always prayed he would die with his boots on, doing what he loved to do.

Mostly that hope came to pass. Yet we may be upset that this good man may have had to endure hardship and the elements. He was found lying in overturned soil and the debris of a construction site. He even passed several hours going unnoticed by the busy traffic of the trucks on Corbin Street.

Yet it is important for us to be reminded of the death of another good and holy man: our Lord! Our Lord died in the sight of many. He died near a trash heap himself on Golgotha. The world may have seen him, yet they did not know him. Our Lord and Savior came to make all things new...and he did this through the pain and suffering of the cross.

Father Mario may have endured some suffering on the morning of his death. We will never know for sure. But we do know that, like our Lord on Golgotha, Father Mario would have accepted that suffering and that cross. Born on the 25th of March, the feast of the Annunciation, he knew how to make his Fiat. He was able to say easily, "Be it done unto me according to your will."

Father Mario was surely open to the will of God in his life and poured himself out for those to whom he was sent. He loved his vocation and he loved to work. Constitution 18 tells us, "The Salesian knows that by his work he is participating in the creative action of God and cooperating with Christ in building the Kingdom." Father Mario understood this well and went every day to his beloved port chapel with this in mind.

Father Jim Heuser said about Father Mario: "In my very first conversation with Father Mario after I became provincial six years ago, he asked me one thing: 'As far as possible, let me keep working. I want to die as a Salesian working.' And that he did. Thus we can take heart in the words of Don Bosco found in his Spiritual Testament: 'When it happens that a Salesian yields up his life while working for souls, you can say that our Congregation has registered a great triumph and that on it will descend in abundance the blessing of heaven.'"

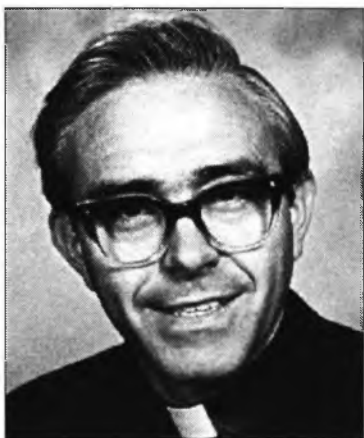
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Father Jim went on to add: “Mario, as a young boy, entered the Salesian school in Manaus, Brazil, and saw words over the entrance that would in some way direct him for his earthly life. *Labor Omnia Vincit.* ‘Work Conquers All.’ It is a witness of indefatigable, zealous, and creative work that Father Mario leaves us a legacy.”

Let us pray that we all might continue this legacy of hard work and service that was embodied in the Salesian life of Father Mario!

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace! Amen.

Father Steven Leake, S.D.B., Director  
Don Bosco Residence, Orange, New Jersey



**Father José (Zósimo) Berruete, S.D.B.**

**R**eassured with the spiritual comforts of the Catholic Church and assisted by the presence of both his close relatives and the Salesian confreres of Our Lady of Mercy Province of Barcelona, Spain, Father Zósimo (José) Berruete, S.D.B. died in the peace of the Lord in the early hours of Tuesday, March 6, 2007.

Although a member of the Salesians of the St. Philip the Apostle Province of the Eastern United States, Father José had been a patient at the Marti Codolar residence for ill Salesians in Barcelona since 2002. He was afflicted for several years by a rapidly advancing case of Alzheimer’s disease, but his medical condition became grave at the beginning of March 2007, due to double pneumonia. He was brought to San Raphael del Valle Hebrón hospital, where he rendered his soul to God. He was 72 years old and had been a Salesian for 55 years, a priest for 45 years.

### *Family Origins*

Born April 4, 1934, José (as he was called), was baptized a week later at the parish church of Mués in the Province of Navarre, Spain, and named Zósimo Celestino Berruete Beraza. He was the fourth son of

José Berruete and Marina Beraza. Two stillborn sons and Santiago preceded José; three more siblings, Maria, Marina, and Silvino, followed. Although born in his paternal grandparents' town of Mués, José was raised in Ganuza, his mother's home village of about 125 inhabitants.

Navarre was traditionally a profoundly Catholic province in Spain. St. Francis Xavier came from here, and Pamplona, the capital of the province, is the city where St. Ignatius as an army captain was wounded and began his conversion. The province provided a devout and deeply religious background to the Berruetes, a well-to-do farming family.

Undeniably devout, José's parents José and Marina provided more by example than by word the basis for a strong Catholic formation for their children. I quote from one of Father José's communications to his brothers and sisters: "Our parents did not live for themselves. Their long life together resolved itself in the giving of themselves to others." The Berruetes created a strongly religious environment. The father attended Mass daily, while the family recited the Rosary each evening, attended Sunday Vespers and occasional novenas, and received frequent visits from the parish priest. José and his siblings learned the habits of hard work, as well as dedication to any assigned tasks.

This is borne out by the fact that, in addition to Father José, two other Berruete children entered consecrated life. Father José's sister Marina is a nun in the congregation of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart. She is a registered nurse specializing in maternity care, working at present in a hospital of her order in London, having served previously in Ghana and Dublin. Father José's youngest brother Silvino is a Salesian of the Province of Our Lady of Mercy of Barcelona. He is presently assigned to the house of Monzón, Minorca (Balearic Islands). In Father José's own words: "Our family is overjoyed in having members who are useful to the Father in heaven and to society; who are capable of living with and serving others, in either the married state, education or medicine; in secular life or in consecrated or priestly life."

### ***Education***

While all the members of the Berruete family participated in the farm tasks, intellectual formation was prioritized for the young ones. At a very young age, José began to attend school at Ganuza. He was so young that occasionally his father had to carry him on his shoulders, especially when the snow piled up on the roads in that cold corner of Spain. But José's superior intellectual capacity revealed itself already at this early age, and he was soon transferred to the public school of Mués. There he completed the first years of elementary school, after which he was enrolled as a boarder in the Scolopian School in Estella, one of the largest cities in the province of Navarre. He hardly lasted there one year, however, as homesickness and his dislike for the ambiance of the school combined to cause his return to Ganuza.

The following summer of 1947, a teacher of Ganuza, Román Irurre, organized a two-month summer camp/oratory experience for youngsters at the Salesian house in Pamplona. Thus at the age of 13, José had his first contact with Don Bosco, and he was captivated by the experience, particularly by the kindness, joy, family spirit, and closeness of the Salesian brothers and priests. With the consent of his parents, that fall he entered the Salesian aspirantate at Huesca, where he completed junior high school and subsequently transferred to the aspirantate of San Viçens dels Horts, Barcelona, for senior high school.

I have lingered on the description of this first phase of Father José's life intentionally. While we confreres of the Salesian Eastern United States Province witnessed his character as a hardworking and indeed inspiring Salesian, we knew very little of his rich Christian background, as he was rather private in this regard. But the earnestness and zeal with which he undertook every subsequent task, either in the field of education or of pastoral work, is no doubt a consequence of that uncompromising early Catholic upbringing, planted within him by his family and nurtured by his educators. There seems to be a reminiscence here of the life of our founder, St. John Bosco.

Father José's genuine Catholic upbringing serves as a light which guided his steps in later life and also immunized him against the allures of a materialistic consumerism in a world increasingly turned away from traditional spiritual values. A particular outcome of his family background and early Salesian education was his distinctive dedication and closeness to the people he served as a Salesian religious and priest. He could



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feel at home with senior physics students as well as eighth-grade mathematics students; with new Puerto Rican immigrants as well as old time second-generation Italians.

In 1979, he replaced me as associate pastor at Mary Help of Christians Parish in Manhattan. I was trying to explain to him some of the difficulties arising from the diversity of national groups within the Spanish speaking community of the parish, when he told me: “Yo sé lidiar ese toro” – “I know how to fight that bull.” Experience bore this out. A Mexican resident who lived in the building facing the rectory was accustomed to playing his Mexican music at full blast, to the annoyance of nearly the entire neighborhood. Father José went up to the man’s apartment, in no time at all befriended him, and managed to alter the situation.

Father José also had a sense of humor, and his ready – I would almost say radiant – smile was a reflection of his inner peace, a peace which he was able to communicate to others. Many of his former parishioners will recall the marvelous effects of a shot of Felipe II, a Spanish brandy he generously shared with them when he returned to the States from his family visits in Spain. These and many other incidents were sure signs of a basic warm humanness, which only enhanced the impression he left on others as a man of God totally dedicated to his vocation as a religious and a priest.

### ***Initial Salesian Formation***

José began his novitiate on August 15, 1951, and one year later made his first profession in Arbós del Penades, Barcelona, on August 16, 1952. The novice master was Father José Pintado, who years later became provincial in Ecuador and subsequently was ordained bishop, replacing the legendary Bishop Comin of the Jivaro tribes in the mountains of Ecuador. In a scene reminiscent of an episode in the life of Dominic Savio, when the master of novices announced that, as in previous years, some of the novices would be sent to the missions, José let the master of novices know he was ready to go. And that is how he came to the United States barely a month after his first profession, arriving at New York’s Idlewild Airport on September 15, 1952.

Brother José went first to Don Bosco College-Seminary in Newton, New Jersey, for three years of philosophical studies. He graduated with a liberal arts degree (BA) on June 12, 1955. His first assignment as a teacher and assistant was Hope Haven Orphanage in Marrero, Louisiana. He worked zealously for three years among the orphaned boys.

In the fall of 1958, shortly after his perpetual profession as a Salesian on August 8, Brother José began his theological studies at Salesian College in Aptos, California, where he remained for two years. In 1960 this house was closed, and he completed his preparation for Salesian priesthood in his native Spain, at the Seminario Teológico Salesiano at Marti Codolar in Barcelona. It was there that he was ordained a priest on April 29, 1962.

### ***Ministry as a Salesian Priest***

Upon returning to the United States in the fall, Father José was assigned to Don Bosco Technical High School in Boston as a science teacher. Although fully involved in the school, he offered to celebrate Sunday Mass in Spanish at Holy Cross Cathedral, when Cardinal Richard Cushing was just initiating services to the Spanish community. Father José became a salaried member of the pastoral team in the Cardinal Cushing Spanish Center. He was of such service to the Spanish-speaking community in the archdiocese of Boston that several years later, when the provincial wanted to assign him as catechist to the high school seminary in Goshen, New York, Cardinal Cushing was heard to say: “Tell Father Provincial that Father Berruete is a good man and is doing a good job. Father Provincial should leave him where he is.” He remained in Boston for 17 years, from 1962 to 1979.

In the fall of 1979, Father José was assigned to the church of Mary Help of Christians in New York City where, after serving one year as parochial vicar, he was appointed pastor of the parish and director of the Salesian community. He served faithfully in both these capacities for nine years (1980-1989). The following year he took a sabbatical, during which he attended a program of Salesian studies offered at the Institute of Salesian Studies in Berkeley, California, in the Western U.S. Province.



Father José returned east to serve for one year (1990-1991) as director of the Salesian community of South Orange, New Jersey, which had just been established as a house of initial formation for prenovices and postnovices. There was greater need for him in the parish of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Port Chester, New York, and in 1991 he once again assumed the twin responsibilities of pastor and director there.

### ***Illness as a Mission***

It was while serving at Holy Rosary in Port Chester that the first signs of Father José's illness began to appear. He was being forgetful in appointments, names, and at times even where he was. It was all rather unexpected and startling. Doctors diagnosed it as the onset of Alzheimer's disease, and because he was only middle-aged, they said that it would advance rather rapidly. He was unable to finish his second three-year term as director and stepped down in 1996. The doctors indicated "It appears certain that he can not attend to the complex decision-making of running a parish.... He would be capable of serving as an assistant. Fortunately, he is an engaging gentleman with good social skills so as to be able to cover his defects in most social interactions."

From 1996 to 1999 Father José was assigned once again to the Church of Mary Help of Christians in New York City as a parochial vicar. He offered his gentle pastoral service, while the Alzheimer's disease continued its steady progress. In 1999 he was moved to St. Philip Benizi Parish in Belle Glade, Florida. It was a quieter, less urban area, and deemed in some ways a simpler parish to be of assistance. But after three years, his condition had advanced to such a stage that it became imperative for him to enter a full-time center.

In 2002, at the request of his family, the provincial arranged for Father José to return to Spain, where he was received into the residence for ill Salesians at Martí Codolar, Barcelona. His mission now was to bear his human illness totally, as the Alzheimer's disease advanced rapidly. The Salesians of the province of Barcelona offered him exquisite care and saw to his every need. In February of this year Father Joan Codina, provincial of Barcelona, sent an updated report on Father José's condition to Father James Heuser, provincial of New Rochelle: "According the doctor's diagnosis, he has reached what is known as the seventh stage in the Reisberg scale, considered to be the last degree of Alzheimer's illness." One month later, double pneumonia set in and claimed his life.

According to his brother, Father Silvino Berruete, S.D.B., Father José was aware of his sickness in its earliest stages and accepted the foreseen sufferings with his well-tested spirit of faith. He always displayed a readiness to accept God's will. God asked of him the sacrifice of these final years of sufferings of the crucified Jesus. This is the final testimony of faith and Christian living that he leaves to us.

### ***Conclusion***

It is difficult to remember Father José without capturing the picture of a good and faithful servant of the Lord. For him, the entertainments of a priest were the sacred services – as St. Joseph Cafasso told the youth St. John Bosco. Father José was a man of prayer, and the liturgy was performed with a special reverence. He had a deep yearning for God, on whom his heart was consistently set, as a true compass needle points due north.

At the same time, his heart was set on others in imitation of the example of his parents. He chose his ordination motto the challenging words of Jesus from the Gospel of St. John: "The mark by which all men will know you for my disciples will be the love you bear for one another." (13:35). He was dedicated to service of the young, especially the poorer ones and their families. And among them were a good number of undocumented immigrants, whom he welcomed and served with a particular passion. It is noteworthy that the reports of several dozen doctors who tended to Father José during his struggle with Alzheimer's disease describe him as "a well developed gentleman" with "a kind personality" and an "uncompromised ability to empathize" with others. While illness was claiming his mind, the essential qualities of his mind, the essential qualities of his heart, remained steadfast.

As we remember with affection this exemplary Salesian, our prayer is that Father José may already be

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participating in the mystery of the Lord's resurrection, just as he participated in the sufferings of the cross. May he be united with Jesus Christ in His glory! And may the longstanding desire of his heart, to be one with God, be fulfilled. This is our fervent hope and the source of our consolation.

At the same time, we pray that the Sacred Heart may indeed send our Salesian Congregation, particularly the provinces of New Rochelle and Barcelona, more good and worthy vocations like Father José Berruete.

Father Javier Aracil, S.D.B.  
New Rochelle, NY  
June 15, 2007  
Solemnity of the Sacred Heart



**Brother Secondo “Peter” Bersezio, S.D.B.**

**B**rother Secondo Bersezio, S.D.B., died on March 12, 2009, at St. Anthony's Hospital in St. Petersburg, Fla., at the age of 91. He had been suffering from lung congestion.

He was almost always called Brother Peter. On Sept. 8, 2008, Brother Peter celebrated the 70th anniversary of his religious profession. He made his first profession as a Salesian lay brother on Sept. 8, 1938, in Pinerolo, Italy, where he had done his year of novitiate.

Brother Peter was born on July 27, 1917, at Peveragno in the province of Cuneo in northern Italy. His parents were Pietro and Maria Maddalena Maccario Bersezio. Devout Catholics, they had him baptized five days later.

Peter attended boarding school at the Salesian motherhouse in Turin, the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales. He had a bit part as one of the youths jailed in the Generala prison in the first movie made about Don Bosco, shortly after his canonization (Don Bosco: Founder of the Salesian Congregation, directed by Goffredo Alessandrini, 1936).

There was no acting career in his future, however. Instead, at the Oratory he discovered his calling to become a brother. Following his profession of vows he received specialized training as a printer at San Benigno Canavese (1938-1940), earning a *licenza tecnica* and then a *magistero professionale*. From 1940 to 1946 he taught the art of printing at large Salesian schools in Turin and Colle Don Bosco, where St. John Bosco had been born in 1815. In 1946 Brother Peter was sent to the New Rochelle Province, where

there was a demand for brothers to staff trade schools. After a short assignment at Don Bosco College in Newton, N.J., to do printing and learn English, he became a founding member of the staff at Don Bosco Tech in Paterson in 1948, where he taught printing for eight years (1948-1955, 1967-1968). For 34 years he was a mainstay of the print shop at Don Bosco Tech in Boston (1955-1967, 1970-1992).

In addition Brother Peter served on the staff of the trade school at the Oratory in Turin (1968-1969), Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa (1969-1970), the Salesian retreat house in Ipswich, Mass. (1992-1999), and St. Kieran's Parish in Miami (1999-2005).

In 2005 he moved to the Salesian retirement center, St. Philip the Apostle Residence in Tampa. For the last year of his life he resided at Bon Secours-Maria Manor in St. Petersburg, where he was regarded as "a prayerful sentinel" among the nursing home residents.

Brother Peter was happy to tell his confreres that Don Bosco's promise of "bread and work" for his Salesians had been amply fulfilled in his life, and he looked forward to the third part of the promise, the reward of paradise.

Father James Heuser, the Salesian provincial, exhorted the members of the province to imitate Brother Peter's "beautiful, holy life."

The entry for March 12, 2009, in the daily journal kept by one remarkable Salesian brother could probably read like this: "What a banner day! Today I saw the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us!'" This remarkable Salesian is Secondo "Peter" Bersezio who died on that day at the age of 91. He kept copious notes of the daily happenings in his community in a collection of journals, one book for each year. Even when a fire in Boston destroyed the bulk of his journals, Brother Peter started again, recording every exciting event in his life.

One could easily say that Brother Peter was the personification of the Salesian way of holiness.

I will be cheerful. Peter always had a smile that revealed a jovial sense of humor which was sincere, not silly or superficial. He loved to relate incidents from the past with humorous details of how he was able to overcome obstacles in the print shops where he worked for so many years. Occasionally he would complain about the directors of communities where he had lived in the past, some of whom treated him badly. With his big knurly hands he would explain that they were "good people, but they were not trained to be good directors!"

I will do my duties well. With so many years of experience in the printing business, Brother Peter became a true professional about the printed word and the printing industry. He loved to read substantial works of history and biographies. He loved to write and compiled memoirs of his 91 years of life.

I will stay close to Jesus in the Eucharist. Brother Peter was certainly faithful to his practices of piety. It's been said that the depth of a confrere's spiritual life can be measured by his faithfulness to praying with his community. Peter never missed the community chapel practices of piety. One doesn't need to prepare to meet the Lord if one is already close to him in the Eucharist. "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival" (Luke 12:37).

I will honor and love Mary as my Mother and Helper. It was not unusual to find Brother Peter in the chapel, or anywhere for that matter, with rosary in hand. He would tell his confreres about the Marian devotions he learned at the Oratory of Valdocco. He claimed many blessings through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians.

I choose to be kind. For some people, being kind comes easy. But for Brother Peter, kindness was truly a conscious decision in the face of some difficulties he endured through the arrogant treatment he received from some of his ordained confreres who looked down upon those called to be brothers.

During his last year, Brother Peter required the use of oxygen because of an exacerbation of breathing difficulties which he endured for most of his life. This required his taking up residence in a nursing facility in St. Petersburg. Once while showing visitors around, he pointed out that most of the other residents were not as mobile as he was. "All these people are dying around here, or they're already dead and don't know it! Ay, I try to cheer them up, heh!" Peter did not let his asthma become the defining point of his life. He worked hard to the end, in spite of it.

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I want to serve rather than be served. He was always ready to take up the task whenever his provincial or director asked him to do something. Even in little things, like helping out in the kitchen, he went right to work without waiting for someone to ask for his help.

Brother Peter was born on July 27, 1917, at Peveragno in the province of Cuneo in northern Italy. He was the second of twins, his brother having been born a few minutes before him. Their parents, Pietro and Maria Maddalena Maccario Bersezio, named the first boy Primo and the next one Secondo. Devout Catholics, they had them baptized five days later.

Secondo, popularly known as Peter, attended the boarding school at the Salesian motherhouse in Turin, the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales. As a student he had a bit part as one of the youths jailed in the Generala Prison in the movie *Don Bosco: Founder of the Salesian Congregation* (directed by Goffredo Alessandrini, 1936), made shortly after our Founder's canonization.

There was no acting career in Peter's future, however. Instead, at the Oratory he discovered his calling to become a Salesian brother. Following his profession of vows, he received specialized training as a printer at San Benigno Canavese (1938-1940), earning a *licenza tecnica* and then a *magistero professionale*. From 1940 to 1946 he taught the art of printing at large Salesian schools in Turin and Colle Don Bosco, where St. John Bosco had been born in 1815.

In 1946 Brother Peter was sent to the New Rochelle Province, where there was a demand for brothers to staff trade schools. After a short assignment at Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey, to do printing and learn English, he became a founding member of the staff at Don Bosco Tech in Paterson in 1948, where he taught printing for eight years (1948-1955, 1967-1968). For thirty-four years he was a mainstay of the print shop at Don Bosco Tech in Boston (1955-1967, 1970-1992).

In addition Brother Peter served on the staff of the trade school at the Oratory in Turin (1968-1969), Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa (1969-1970), the Salesian retreat house in Ipswich, Massachusetts (1992-1999), and St. Kieran's Parish in Miami (1999-2005).

In 2005 he moved to the Salesian retirement center, St. Philip the Apostle Residence in Tampa. For the last year of his life he resided at Bon Secours-Maria Manor in St. Petersburg, where he was regarded as "a prayerful sentinel" among the nursing home residents.

Brother Peter died peacefully on March 12, 2009, at St. Anthony's Hospital in St. Petersburg at the age of 91. He had been suffering congestion of the lungs for a long time, the result of asthma, which he had all his life.

Brother Peter was happy to tell his confreres that Don Bosco's promise of "bread and work" for his Salesians had been amply fulfilled in his life, and he looked forward to the third part of the promise, the reward of paradise.

Funeral Masses were held on March 14, 2009, at Mary Help of Christians Church in Tampa and at Corpus Christi Church in Port Chester, New York, on March 15, 2009. He was laid to rest the next morning in the Salesian Cemetery in Goshen, New York. Brother Peter is survived by one sister, Binuccia Bersezio, in Italy.

Father James Heuser, provincial of the New Rochelle Province at the time, wrote a beautiful tribute to Brother Peter for *E-Service*, the province newsletter:

In the old black and white film about Don Bosco, ... there is a sequence that portrays the occasion when Don Bosco convinced the authorities of the Generala Prison to allow him to provide for the incarcerated youths there a day of freedom, to take them on a hike. Portraying one of the young boys is Secondo (Peter) Bersezio, then in his late teens. I am told that he is the only one wearing a hat, looking a bit like Harpo Marx! Whatever the case, there he is, running across the screen: joyful, positive, and free.

One and a half years ago, I visited Brother Peter at Bon Secours-Maria Manor. He was no longer in his late teens, but 90 years of age by then. I was conducting the visitation, and I found him ready for his *rendiconto*, with a small piece of paper in his hand on which he had jotted a few notes. He wanted to tell me three things.

“Father Provincial, point one: I am happy!” he said, smiling. “I am so happy with my life as a brother! I cannot believe what a wonderful life I have had, really.”

He continued, “Point two: I do not need anything. The community is very good to me and provides for everything, and the nurses and staff here take good care of me. What could I possibly need?”

He went on: “And point three: If you have any correction to give me that will help me, I am open to hearing it. Just realize that half an hour after you leave, I will probably have forgotten it!” And his smile erupted into his typical laugh.

At the age of 90, he was still joyful, positive, and free.

I have asked myself often: What was the secret to Brother Peter’s attitude? It was certainly not that he had an easy life. It was not the absence of suffering, or hard times, or hurtful situations.

Peter was the seventh of ten children born to Pietro and Maria Bersezio in Peveragno, Italy. Yet by the time he entered the novitiate in 1937, four of his siblings had already died. And not many years later, his twin brother Primo, the first-born, would be killed in war in Russia. He knew the suffering of family tragedy and loss.

He also knew the detachment and self-emptying required of a missionary. He was one of those seven Salesian brothers whom Father Ernest Giovannini “obtained” – by the trade of some cows, as the legend goes – and brought to the United States by cargo ship in order to open up trade schools here. Brother John Cauda is the last surviving member of that group, and he attests that they were all quite stunned when the director stood up in the dining room at Colle Don Bosco at the end of the meal one day and announced the obediences. They hastened home to say goodbye to their families, and within a short time were on the open seas, headed to a new land with an unknown language and an unfamiliar culture.

After two years of studying English in Newton, Peter was one of the founding brothers of Don Bosco Tech of Paterson. The group transformed an old silk mill into a school for poor boys, Peter himself setting up the print shop. It was a heroic effort, by all accounts, with long days of hard work and much poverty. Seven years later he repeated the same, relocating the Don Bosco Trade School of East Boston to downtown, thus establishing Don Bosco Tech of Boston. Once again, it required of him self-sacrificing labor and generosity.

After a cumulative thirty-four years of teaching the young there in Boston, and more than fifty years of accomplished work in the field of graphic arts, Brother Peter was asked in 1992 at the age of 75 to lay his life’s work of printing aside and to move to Ipswich, in order to provide hospitality at Sacred Heart Retreat Center and perform community services. It was a painful letting go, but he did so with his characteristic cheerfulness and abandonment to God’s will, virtues he likewise showed in moving to St. Kieran’s Parish in Miami in 1999 and to St. Philip’s Residence in Tampa in 2005.

No, as I indicated above, the secret of Peter’s so joyful, positive, and free attitude was certainly not the absence of suffering or hard times or hurtful situations. He knew all these. What was his secret, then? I suggest it can be found in the frontispiece of a little book he used for meditation throughout the years, *The Imitation of Christ*. There we find written in his own hand the following: “Grant to my mind to live from You and to always find in You sweet delight ... Christmas 1951 ... Bersezio.”

Brother Peter cultivated daily a union with God, a deep religiosity. It was not overly pious, but real, true, and authentic. He sought simply to live in God’s presence, to receive all as from Him and to live always by Him. With this approach, then, the suffering and hard times and hurtful situations were accepted and borne with no trace of self-pity, but rather with a remarkable graciousness. And this left him freer to live for God and for others.

When something did not go his way or was unpleasant, Peter could readily say: “Twenty-five or fifty years from now, we will not be thinking of this!” When the constant clatter of the printing presses impaired his hearing, or the breathing in of the chemicals used in the shop affected his lungs, he could accept it with tranquility. When the difficult obedience of laying aside printing was requested, he could write to the provincial in all sincerity, “I will obey as I was wont to do since my novitiate days back in 1937.” And when his failing health required his move from the Salesian community to a nursing facility,

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he could bear it with prayerful resignation.

“Joy,” declared the French philosopher Leon Bloy, “is the infallible sign of God’s presence.” I am convinced that the secret to the radical joyfulness of Brother Peter, which many attest spanned all the days of his long life of 91-plus years, is to be found in his living from God, and his finding in God sweet delight.

On the occasion of the beatification of Brother Artimedes Zatti, then-Rector Major Father Juan Vecchi wrote to the Congregation that the Salesian brother shared in the *Da Mihi Animas* of Don Bosco “in the warmth of his pastoral and educative charity, in the continual seeking after holiness.” Therefore, at heart the brother vocation is “an experience of God, lived in the community and in the service of the young” (AGC no. 376). This is an apt description of Brother Peter, indeed.

It was most fitting that his northern funeral was presided over ... by our general councilor for the missions, Father Vaclav Klement, and celebrated on the liturgical memorial of Brother Zatti. It highlighted both Peter’s missionary vocation and his genuine holiness as a brother. Now I imagine him eternally joyful, positive, and free, in the Paradise promised by Don Bosco. For this let us continue to pray.

Humble though he was, Brother Peter certainly had a following of confreres from around the world who inquired about his health in recent years. Relatives and friends from his native Italy would call, write or visit him frequently. But the finest tribute might be that offered by Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez, S.D.B., the archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, who wrote these words upon hearing of the death of Brother Peter: “My condolences to the community, but as well, my congratulations! Don Bosco used to say that when a brother died faithful to the vocation, the whole Congregation achieved a great success. I am sure of that in the person of Brother Peter.”

Father Dennis Donovan, S.D.B.

Director

Mary Help of Christians Center, Tampa

September 8, 2009



**Brother Andrew Bertello, S.D.B.**

**A**ndrew Bertello was born on May 24, 1921, in the town of Canale d'Alba, Cuneo, Northern Italy. He was baptized the next day in the local parish church. His father, Joseph, and his mother, Agnes, were blessed with three sons and two daughters. Andrew grew up in a family of faith, as we see from his diary where he records his first Holy Communion on Easter Sunday in 1927, and his Confirmation in 1930.

On September 27, 1935, at the age of 14, Andrew entered Rebaudengo, a house of formation for coadjutor brothers and aspirants. His novitiate was made in Villa Moglia, and religious profession followed on August 16, 1940. Like so many other people, Andrew endured the troubles and privations of the World War II years of 1939-1945. During this difficult time he exercised his apostolate as a Salesian teacher in three different schools in Piedmont.

In 1946, Brother Andrew was asked to go to Portugal. There he taught for twelve years. Brother manifested great love for the Congregation and prayed for the gift of perseverance. He was ever faithful to community life, constant with his presence among the students, and always available to counsel and encourage students and confreres alike.

After twelve years in Portugal, Brother Andrew was recruited by Father Ernest Giovannini, the provincial of the New Rochelle Province. He was asked to study advanced electronics at the RCA Institute in New York. During his two years of study at RCA (1958-1960), Brother resided at Mary Help of Christians rectory on 12th Street. During his stay at the parish, he was always helpful, as one confrere who was there remembered: "He made himself very useful by offering his services when and wherever needed; e.g. serving at the altar when an altar boy did not show up, helping at bingo games, and graciously accepting whatever was expected of him. He was a true gentleman!"

Upon the completion of his courses at RCA, he was assigned to Don Bosco Technical School in Paterson, New Jersey, but soon afterwards he was asked to teach at Don Bosco Technical School in Boston, Massachusetts. This was to be his field of labor for the next thirty four years. A Salesian who knew Brother Andrew during those years has written: "During these years, he was outstanding for his spirit of sacrifice; when a shop teacher was absent, Andrew substituted. If a teacher was having discipline problems, Andrew visited the classroom or shop and helped restore order." This same Salesian made a pertinent remark about Andrew's exterior appearance: "Brother Andrew was outstanding for his sense of cleanliness and presentability. Never did I see him with dirty clothes or with an unpresentable appearance. He was always well dressed; he realized the value of the human person; he sincerely sensed that he was valuable before God."

For ten years Brother served on the provincial council. One of the members recalls: "I have very



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fond memories of Andrew. He was a Salesian through and through. I admired him as a true gentleman, a man of wisdom and deep love for Christ. When we served together on the provincial council, I could sense that he really cared about the province and about the whole Salesian world. He was a true missionary at heart. Don Bosco must be proud of him!"

One of Brother Andrew's directors wrote: "During the years I was with him in Boston, I grew to know and admire him for his vision, untiring dedication to his work, and his ability to overcome problems that continually cropped up in the developing work and expansion of the technologies; Andrew never lost his optimism when problems developed with the growth of the school."

Once, when talking to another confrere about his assignments during his career as a Salesian, Andrew summed it all up in just a few words: "Fifty-four years in schools!" One of the parents summarized this period beautifully: "He loved teaching. He was wonderful with young people, always kind and gentle and thoughtful. You could tell that he loved his religion and being a brother in the Salesian Order."

Among the letters Andrew received is one from March 23, 1998. The writer says: "The energy you have invested in the students at the school is a legacy that will continue to change the world as the seeds of wisdom you planted continue to grow. You must know how much love and respect your former students feel for you."

Brother Andrew had a special interest in the Salesian Cooperators. Here is a quote from a letter written by one of the Cooperators: "The years he was our spiritual leader we accomplished many things. A highlight each year was the Christmas dinner with entertainment and gifts for all. Hundreds of people were invited: the elderly, the handicapped, patients from nursing homes and VA hospitals, young families, and many others. It was a very special day for the many volunteers who helped with the dinner." Another parent writes: "Brother Andrew was a dear friend to our family; the smile on his face, his positive attitude, and his deep devotion to his faith were all an inspiration for us."

A final reflection from a friend: "The other day my daughter brought home some paper leaves from church, which is supposed to represent people (fallen leaves) who have passed from our lives. I asked my children whose names we should place on the leaves. They immediately said 'Brother Andrew.'" Both of them knew Brother Andrew, and in fact they saw him the week before he died in Nyack Hospital in New York. Although he could not see or hear well due to his serious decline in health, he still managed to listen to their stories, hold their hands and give them hugs. Even though it was an effort for him to speak, the last thing that he said to me was 'I love you.'"

On October 31, 1996, Brother Andrew was asked to transfer to the Don Bosco Technical School in Paterson, New Jersey – the school to which he was first assigned when he arrived in the United States. He cheerfully undertook the duties of community administrator and dean of technology. He brought to these assignments his characteristic zeal and dedication. Peace and serenity were the qualities observed by the faculty, the students, and the many friends of the school, and therefore his presence had a calming effect on the community and school.

Fidelity to a life filled with prayer, and involvement in the everyday activities of the Salesian community were priorities in his life. A sense of detachment and a love of poverty were other traits easily observed by those who went to his office, or had occasion to visit him in his room when he was not well. His life was ordered by great simplicity, and his work space and living space reflected this simplicity in their frugality, and in the neat and orderly way he kept them.

As time went on, Andrew's health began to decline. More frequent visits to the doctor, and hospitalizations began. The doctor then advised that Brother Andrew needed better supervision and more constant care for his personal safety. Therefore, toward the end of October 1999, Father Steve Schenck, the director, accompanied Brother to the rest home for sick Salesians, called "Blue Gate" in Stony Point, New York. There he was warmly received by the staff and confreres. Brother quickly and quietly adjusted to his new environment.

God called Brother Andrew on May 3, 2000. His death was quiet, surrounded by his praying



confreres. On May 7, the body of our confrere was received in the chapel of the Marian Shrine. Numerous confreres, Salesians Sisters, Cooperators and friends paid their respects. Father Patrick Angelucci, the provincial, officiated at the wake service. A nephew of Brother Andrew and a friend came from Italy. A Salesian who had been one of Brother's students at Don Bosco Technical School in Boston, paid a fine tribute to Brother Andrew for all that he WAS and DID for the Salesians and for the students he taught.

In the presence of a large gathering on May 9, the Mass of Christian Burial was offered in the Church of St. Gregory Barbarigo in Garnerville, New York. The principal celebrant and homilist was the Salesian vicar general, Father Luc Van Loy, who spoke about the vocation to the brotherhood, a vocation lived so authentically and beautifully by Brother Andrew. The interment was on May 10, in the Salesian Cemetery in Goshen, New York.

*(See obituary letter for Brother Andrew Bertello, S.D.B., by Father Paul Avallone, S.D.B., dated Christmas, 2000).*



**Father August P. Bosio, S.D.B.**

**F**ather August P. Bosio, S.D.B., died on October 24, 2000, in his beloved Italy. He was buried on October 27 in his native Santena, Italy.

Father Bosio entered the Salesian Missionary College in Ivrea as a teenager with hopes of going to Asia as a missionary. Instead, he was sent to the United States. He made his novitiate in Newton, New Jersey, in 1936, and after completing his seminary and pastoral training, was ordained there in 1946.

As a theology student and young priest, Father Bosio had been a member of the "Don Bosco Writers Guild" and worked with a team of young Salesians to produce pamphlets, magazine articles and newspaper copy on Salesian spiritual themes and educational topics.

In 1961, following the resignation of Father Felix Penna, S.D.B., Father Bosio became provincial of the Salesian province in the Eastern USA. He led the province for six years, during the period of Vatican II and the 19th General Chapter of the Salesian Congregation (which laid the groundwork for the re-dimensioning that would take place at the Special General Chapter of 1971). This was a period of significant growth for the Salesians in the Eastern USA, with the expansion of schools in New England, the Northeast, and the Midwest. It was Father Bosio who pushed for the recognition of Don Bosco

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Seminary in Newton, New Jersey, as a fully-accredited, four-year liberal arts college. It was also Father Bosio who established the Salesian presence in Ohio, bringing the American Salesian seminarians home from Europe to do their theological studies at the Pontifical College Josephinum.

After his term as provincial, Father Bosio went on to serve as pastor in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and then as administrator and director at the Marian Shrine in Stony Point, New York. In later years, he took up residence at Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa. There he returned to an early favorite apostolate of his: writing. With the help of interested laity, he produced an ongoing series of leaflets, prayer sheets, and reflection pages for distribution in parishes, schools and prisons. The topics he wrote about built on current events, family issues, or issues of faith. With no budget but a lot of enthusiastic support, Father Bosio was able to keep up his ministry of the Word and reach many individuals who were often otherwise out of the loop.

Father Bosio himself wrote:

*From quiet Tampa, Fla., the Lord has opened a new world to evangelize and given me the means to reach over four thousand people a day. Through an international network of fervent leaders, copies of my leaflets and faith tracts proclaim everywhere the good news of Jesus' love. I look at my map dotted with push pins and ask, 'Me retire? I've only just begun.' From my tombstone, I request to continue to proclaim to the world: 'JESUS, I LOVE YOU.'*

Father William Keane, S.D.B.

Director, Mary Help of Christians School, Tampa



**Brother Joseph Botto, S.D.B.**

**J**anuary 10, 2000, started off as an ordinary, quiet day at Blue Gate, Stony Point, New York. Our confreres had assisted at Mass and had eaten breakfast. Our nurses began the daily round of chores. Brother Joseph Botto returned to his room to pray, read, and rest. He came down to the dining room for lunch, but ate sparingly because of a coughing spell. Josette, the nurse on duty that day, accompanied him to his room and helped him get on his bed. She left him for about five minutes. On her return to give him some assistance, she discovered that he was dead. Quickly and quietly he had passed into everlasting life. Immediately our community was informed and began praying for his eternal rest.

Joseph Botto was born in Rochetta, Paladea, Alessandria, Italy, on March 14, 1914, the son of Francis

Botto and Enrica Cavagnino Botto. On April 13, 1914, he was baptized in the parish church of Saint Evasio, Martyr, where he was also confirmed on September 19, 1920. From 1924 to 1928 he did his grammar school studies at Cavaglià Biellese. In 1928 he attended our agricultural school at Cumiana as a coadjutor aspirant. At the end of 1931 he obtained a certificate in farming and applied for admission to the novitiate, which he entered on September 8, 1931, at Villa Moglia. Father Renato Ziggotti, at the time provincial of the Central Province and later Rector Major of our Society, received Brother Joseph into the Congregation on September 8, 1932.

In October 1933, the 19-year-old confrere was assigned to Hope Haven in Marrero, Louisiana, which had recently been entrusted to us Salesians. During his years at Hope Haven, he dedicated his youthful energies to the good of the youngsters as assistant and instructor in farming. The director of the school was Father Celestine Moskal; and among the teachers were Brothers James Orlando (Brother Jimmy), an outstanding artist and bookbinder, and Julius Bollati, an accomplished cabinetmaker.

On September 8, 1938, Brother Joe made his perpetual profession at the end of the customary ten-day retreat at Newton. He returned to Hope Haven, not as a farming instructor but as a printer. In a short time, he became a master printer. His competence became known in other provinces; and in 1940 the provincial of Cuba requested that Brother Joseph be assigned to one of the technical schools in that island nation. Several years later (1946), however, our master printer transferred to the Don Bosco Trade School in East Boston. Eventually he went to serve in the Graphics Art Department at Don Bosco Tech in downtown Boston. After spending 14 years in New England, Brother returned to the South: Hope Haven (1960-1962) and Tampa (1962-1963). Then he spent 2 years (1963-1965) at Don Bosco Technical High School in Paterson. In 1965 we find him again in East Boston, where he remained until 1990, serving St. Dominic Savio High School as instructor of typing and driving. He was also active as assistant at the school and as contact person with the people of the area. Always neatly and elegantly dressed, cordial and welcoming, he became a one-man public relations department. During the spring and summer months he tended the flowers and plants around the school and at our camp in East Barrington, New Hampshire.

In 1990 he suffered a debilitating stroke, from which he never recovered completely. Shortly after his stroke, plans were made to make him more comfortable in one of our houses in the South. On the evening of his departure from Boston for Miami, as the community gave him a farewell party, he suffered a heart attack. He had to postpone his journey to Miami until April 1992. In the meantime, he went to Blue Gate, where our confreres and lay staff saw to his well-being, while he gained strength for his trip to Miami. Once he had settled down at St. Kieran's in Miami, it became obvious that the warmer climate and the general setting agreed with him. His voice seemed to recover much strength, and he felt free to move around and take short walks on the property. However, his condition gradually worsened until he needed a considerable amount of attention and care. He returned to Blue Gate in June 1996. Here he edified the members of the community and occasional visitors with his prayerful spirit, cheerfulness, and dedication to his well-known talent to communicate with relatives, confreres, and friends. Among his belongings were found two notebooks – one contained an alphabetical listing of all addresses, the other a list of birthdays. Both showed signs of frequent use and revisions. In a separate file Brother Joe had stored away numerous stories, poems, jokes, and quotations, which, evidently, had impressed him. He used many of his “gems” to add a personal touch to his homemade greeting cards and letters. And he entertained his visitors with jokes and puzzles.

Brother Joseph was a hard worker, though he was by no means robust. Indeed in the evaluations for his admission to the vows we find hints concerning his delicate health. In his application for perpetual vows, he said with great candor: “I know that I will have to suffer, but I am ready to undergo many troubles...” He bore his afflictions patiently and quietly. Towards the end of his very active life, he suffered a great deal. His words and demeanor revealed the remarkable spiritual growth he had experienced since he suffered his stroke and heart attack. He considered suffering a gift that made him more like Jesus. He meditated on our Savior's sufferings and prayed for the gift of being more intimately united with Him. The inspirational thoughts he shared with relatives and friends gave him strength and courage. “It was not the nails that held Jesus to the cross, but His love for us.” “If you wonder how much God loves you, look at the crucifix.” “I asked Jesus,

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‘How much do you love me?’ ‘This much,’ He answered. Then he stretched out His arms and died.”

Father Xavier Aracil, who had lived with Brother Joseph in Boston and in Miami, gave the homily at the Mass of Christian Burial. He declared: “Some expressions from the book of Wisdom seem to sum up some aspects of Brother Joseph’s inner life, especially the hope that lives in the hearts of those who live in the Lord: ‘They live in peace... tried as gold... He found them worthy of himself...(and) He took them for himself.’”

Though he did not return to his native country often, he always remained close to his family with his many letters, especially Christmas greetings, birthday cards, and name day wishes. Silvia Botto, one of his nieces, wrote: “I believe that he remained in our hearts because of his great gifts of being cheerful and optimistic.” Brother Joseph was known for his witty sayings, his jokes, and his positive attitude, which many of his friends described as contagious. His good cheer encouraged the downcast, bringing a ray of sunshine into their lives and making them laugh.

Brother Joe was an outstanding community man. He cared for his confreres and would step forward, so to say, to make one feel at home. At the same time he seemed to be on the watch to evaluate our younger confreres’ performance and to offer them suggestions and comments. Father Aracil remarked: “He seemed to indicate that the experience of those who have been in the field enables them to evaluate performance of the newcomers, and one got the feeling that he was there to offer good advice.” At the same time he was a realist and would exclaim, with a mixture of humor, irony and resignation: “We see them come... we see them go... next!”

Our community received letters of condolences from numerous admirers and friends of our departed brother. “I will miss him terribly,” wrote one, “as he was my inspiration. He always had good advice when he was able to give it. I’ve known him since 1964 when I met him at Hope Haven in Marrero, Louisiana...” “He was a special person,” wrote another who had worked with Brother Joe at the Dominic Savio bingos under Father Stella. “He was a good brother and a dear friend.” His kindness was noted by a friend in Paterson: “I’ll always remember his kind visits with my husband who was very ill. And Brother Joe’s laughing, jokes, cards and prayers always gave me such a life over these past years. It is wonderful and a blessing when you meet a caring human being.” “As sick as Brother Joe was, he sent me a card saying he had Mass and Communion for my husband Pete, when he died,” added a friend from Ipswich. And Father Harry Rasmussen described Brother Joe as an authentic follower of Saint Francis de Sales, saying: “He was a true gentleman who spread much joy and peace in his path.”

Father John Puntino, our director, summed up the sentiments of the Marian Shrine community in a note to Brother Joe’s niece, Silvia: “We shall miss his presence, his friendship, and his prayerful spirit.”

May he rest in peace! And may our Blessed Mother, the Help of Christians, lead many generous young men to serve in our Salesian family.

The Community of the Marian Shrine



**Brother Dominic Casiraghi, S.D.B.**

**D**

ominic Casiraghi was born on June 18, 1915, in the town of Tregasio di Triuggio, near Milan, Italy. His parents, Cesare and Enrichetta Casiraghi, raised Dominic and his many brothers and sisters in a brick house that was more than five hundred years old.

Many years later Dominic fondly recalled: "It's Christmas again! It was in 1934 that I spent the last Christmas at home in the brick house that was more than 500 years old. Now it's gone. The Jesuits bought it, and in a matter of months clover and corn were growing on the same place of which I still have fond memories of mom and dad, brothers and sisters. Many though we were, we were one heart and soul. And that is what really makes a home and not just a house." In that home the Rosary was said each evening before retiring. With each Our Father, "Give us this day our daily bread" was said in sincerity.

During a retreat one year at the Salesian house in Ipswich, Massachusetts, Dominic wrote of his vocation in these words: "O God, you called me, and I followed you in spite of my unworthiness. Before God called me, my good mother seemed to be always at my side. She followed me day after day. I must have been twelve years old when she asked me if I wanted to be a Jesuit, but I personally put aside that invitation as a bad thought. The reason was that the Jesuits at Villa Sacro Cuore were too stiff, too rigid. They very seldom smiled at us kids whenever we met them on the dusty road to fetch water at the very deep well. Time went on and finally, when I was 18, God came to knock at my heart. Just two years of preparation found me ready to leave for Ivrea. As a young boy, it was very, very sad for me to leave my parents, brothers and sisters behind even for one day. Now it was much, much sadder. God gave me strength and courage to follow him."

In September 1939, Dominic began his novitiate at Castelnouvo Don Bosco, Italy, but since he had volunteered for the foreign missions, he finished it in Newton, New Jersey. Like his classmates from Italy who were studying for the priesthood, he had come wearing the clerical collar and cassock, having been invested while at Castelnouvo. However, during his novitiate, to his immense disappointment, Dominic was advised to discontinue studying for the priesthood. With the help of his superiors, he managed to come to terms with the decision and persevered in his vocation to death. Dominic made his first profession in the first days of September 1940. He was now known as Brother Dominic Casiraghi.

The provincial at the time was Father Eneas Tozzi, and he sent Brother Dominic to study printing in Brooklyn, New York. When his studies were finished, Brother opened a small graphic arts shop at Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey, and there he taught a few aspirants to the brotherhood the printing trade. In 1947, Brother Dominic was assigned to the Salesian school of Hope Haven, in Marrero, Louisiana. For the next 13 years Brother taught the printing trade and code to live by for the orphan boys at Hope

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Haven. Years later, when Brother was teaching in Tampa, Florida, some of the Hope Haven boys, now grown men, kept in touch with him.

In 1960, Father Felix Penna, the provincial, sent Brother Dominic to Don Bosco Technical High School in downtown Boston, Massachusetts. There Brother spent 20 years teaching the graphic arts to youths of the greater Boston area. After having learned to understand the boys of Hope Haven with their Southern drawl, he now adapted himself to the New England youths and their accent. Brother remained at Don Bosco Tech in Boston as head of the graphic arts department until 1980. The provincial at this time was Father Dominic DeBlase. He assigned Brother Dominic to Don Bosco Technical School in Rosemead, California. Brother spent a pleasant year there with the brothers and other confreres before returning to the East in the fall of 1981.

At this time, Brother Dominic was assigned to Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa, Florida. This turned out to be his last stop on the Salesian tour of duty. During the nearly 20 years that Brother spent at Mary Help of Christians School, he endeared himself to many of the boys and their parents, for they discovered that Brother was someone they could go to and feel comfortable with. At Mary Help, as at everywhere he worked, his smile was readily given to brighten up the day for many of the young boys, as he spent himself wholeheartedly for the missions. Through these later years there were many friends with whom Brother Dominic kept contact in Louisiana, Massachusetts, Florida, and in other places of the United States.

During the last year of his life, Brother Dominic became rather forgetful and a bit disoriented. He had to struggle to rise from a sitting position, and he was always thankful for the little help given him.

Early one Monday morning in October 1998, one of the Salesians heard Brother Dominic fall in his room and crying out. Investigation showed that he was disoriented and weak. The emergency medical squad was called, and they arrived in minutes. He was thought to be fairly normal and so was advised to sleep a little longer and come for the 8:15 A.M. Mass. When it was time for Mass, Brother was not present. He was too weak to come down. He was taken to the emergency room at the hospital and was admitted. By evening he was diagnosed with an irregular heartbeat and pneumonia and was resting comfortably in the CCU department.

When Father Director visited him that evening, he heard Brother's confession and administered the Anointing of the Sick. The next day Brother became disoriented and experienced difficulty in breathing. A respirator was attached. From that Tuesday afternoon until he died, Brother was unconscious. In the late evening of November 10, 1998, Brother Dominic Casiraghi returned to God to receive the reward of a good and faithful servant. His death resulted from complications associated with pneumonia.

Brother Dominic's funeral was held in the beautiful chapel of the Mary Help of Christians School. It was attended by some members of his family, many Salesians, friends, and boys of the school. The family had the body of Brother flown to Italy for a funeral Mass with all his relatives, and there Brother was also entombed.

Brother Dominic Casiraghi was 83 years old and 58 years a Salesian.

Brother left behind a number of notes that reflect his spirituality. A few of those notes follow. On December 31, 1944, summing up the year, Brother Dominic wrote: "Today is the last day of the year. How grateful I should be to God for all the benefits He has bestowed on me during the year. How much more good I could have done; how much evil I could have avoided, which I did not avoid. How many times did I go to receive our Lord without due preparation? Do I think the Lord was always pleased with the many words I spoke during the past year? How many more graces our Lord could have bestowed on me if I had shown myself worthy of them? O my Jesus, pardon me for having offended Thee so many times during the past year! Give me the grace to fully correspond to Thy graces and to draw profit from them. Amen!"

In another place Brother Dominic wrote: "Never be afraid to talk about Don Bosco. Let the boys and the people know that you are a son of Don Bosco. Strive to tell the boys some stories about Don Bosco. This year try hard to get at least one vocation."

In 1991, under the heading of missionary spirit, Brother wrote, "Even in the school I can be a missionary. Always have a word of encouragement for the boys. Be nice to all of them, even to those who

are not ready to listen to you, who are rude.”

During the last few summers of his life, Brother went home to Italy. Several times he made his spiritual retreat there. These trips always brought back pleasant memories for him. At Como, in 1992, he reflected how beautiful it was to have “... more than ten Salesian priests all over the chapel to hear the confessions of the confreres. It was quite edifying. Most of the priests are old, but they act as if they are very young when it’s a matter of approaching the confessional, at times making their confession to priests younger than they are.”

In 1996, also at Como, he wrote “It’s such a beautiful day that I detest staying indoors. I take a short walk now and then saying the Rosary for all my relatives, dead and alive, for the house in Tampa, and for more vocations to the Salesian Congregation.”

Undoubtedly Brother Dominic meant a lot to many people. A number of persons wrote touching notes expressing their feelings for Brother. One woman wrote: “He was my son’s mentor. Paul looked up to him when he attended St. John Bosco Camp in New Hampshire, and had never forgotten him. Paul is now a police officer in his 19th year on the Suffolk County Police force. Being in touch with Brother Dominic for all these years, 38 of them, he knew how Paul was doing and prayed for him in his line of work. Paul always remembered him in his prayers.”

A parent of an alumnus mentioned in a card that she thanked God for Brother Dominic because she felt God’s love because of his life.

A joint article by Matthew Groh and Patrick O’Connor in the school paper at Mary Help of Christians School said, “Serving for this special funeral Mass was a true privilege. From Father William Keane’s [the director] tender homily to Father Patrick Angelucci’s [the provincial] ‘Thank You’ to the family who came from Italy, all of us realized that we were all one big family – blood relations or Salesians or student body –brought together by the love for Brother Dominic. We all thank Brother Dominic for his kind loving heart and for everything he has done for Mary Help.”

Patrick O’Connor wrote in another place, “Brother Dominic was a very kind and sensitive man. Whenever I needed someone to talk to or just someone to hang around with, he would always be there with me. I know that he is still watching over Mary Help of Christians School and everyone in it with his loving heart. Now I understand that Brother Dominic played a big part in my life at Mary Help. I think I speak for everyone when I say, “We will miss you, Brother Dominic. We will miss the stories and the love you shared with us.”

Like everyone else, Brother Dominic had his moments of joy and sorrow, dancing and weeping, sowing and reaping. But his rather contagious smile, with which he greeted everyone and which attracted the boys at school will remain as a lasting remembrance for everyone who knew him.

(See obituary letter for Brother Dominic Casiraghi, by Father William Keane, S.D.B., Director, June 2000.)



**Father Stanislav (Stanley) Ceglar, S.D.B.**

**O**n Thursday, January 20, 1994, as he was brushing snow off his car, Father Stanley Ceglar suddenly collapsed. He died some time later of a heart attack.

Father Stanislav (Stanley) was born on November 28, 1915 in Krizevska vas (Metlika), Slovenia. His father, Anton, worked as a railway foreman. His mother's name was Marija Groznik. Father Stanley was baptized on December 5, in St. Nicholas Parish. Some eighty-five years earlier, Father Frederic Baraga, the legendary missionary among Ottawa and Chippewa Indians and first Bishop of Marquette (Michigan), had been a curate in that parish. Father Stanley lost his father at the age of three, on October 16, 1918. Marija Groznik thus became a widowed mother of five children and subsequently moved to Sticna. There Father Stanley passed the rest of his childhood.

In the second year of elementary school, June 1922, Father Stanley received in short succession, the three sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation. This took place in the parish church, now a minor basilica, which had also been the church of a Cistercian abbey founded in 1135. Here perhaps Father Stanley first acquired a taste for "things Cistercian"! At about this time, he also became an altar boy. Of this experience he himself writes: "At the beginning I had a very hard time reaching the missal stand to carry it over from the Epistle side to the Gospel side. On one occasion both of us ended up on the floor, where my brother Charles had to come to the rescue."

In September 1926, Father Stanley entered the first grade of the junior high school in the Salesian minor seminary in Verzej. That meant the beginning of the study of Latin, and two years later, of Greek. In September 1931, he began his novitiate in Radna, Slovenia. But, due to illness, he interrupted it in Holy Week of March 1932, to begin again in August 1932, making his first profession on August 15, 1933. Four years later, on August 15, 1937, Father Stanley celebrated his Perpetual Profession as a Salesian. Between 1933 and 1935, he studied philosophy in Radna. His period of practical training lasted four years, mostly teaching in the house of formation in Radna.

In September 1939, Father Stanley began the study of theology in the Salesian School of Theology in Rakovnik, Ljubljana. But on Palm Sunday 1941, the country was invaded by the Axis powers. Since in those circumstances it became almost impossible to continue theological studies, the confreres were sent to Piedmont, Italy, to do so. But because of the almost nightly Allied bombardments of the not too distant city of Turin in later 1942, the theologians were moved once more, this time to Bagnolo in the foothills of the Alps. On July 5, 1942, Father Stanley received the subdiaconate in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. On December 19 of the same year, he was ordained a deacon in Chieri, where Don Bosco had studied for ten years. Normally, ordination to the priesthood would have taken place at the beginning of



July 1943, but the Slovenian students were ordained early, on Holy Saturday, April 24. There were at that time plans to have six Slovenian newly ordained priests teach young boys in Assisi. But this was not to be. Father Stanley therefore returned to Slovenia, where he celebrated his first Mass in his home town of Sticna on July 18, 1943. The rest of the war years were also difficult for Father Stanley. He himself writes: "We shared with others double oppression and triple woes: the occupation forces on one side; the Communist guerrillas, intent on eliminating any possible opposition to their power after the war, and, as if that were not enough, the overflights of the Allied forces and occasional bombings."

After the war, Father Stanley left his native Slovenia with many other priests and people who did not want to remain there under the Communists, who had taken over the country. Passing through Austria, he came to Italy, where he served as a teacher and assistant in a Salesian house in Florence. Here he also began graduate studies in philosophy and letters at the University of Florence. In 1948, he moved to Habana-Jarabacoa in the Dominican Republic, where he taught in a school and helped in a parish. Father Stanley considered the years 1949 to 1952 "the three most delightful of my teaching years." The year 1953 saw him transferred to Hope Haven, Louisiana (near New Orleans), where he was briefly reunited with his brother Charles until 1955. He taught in this orphanage until 1959.

Sacred Heart Juniorate in Ipswich, Massachusetts (north of Boston), welcomed him in 1959. There he helped in the formation of the aspirants and taught Latin and Greek until 1967. Salesian Father George Harkins spent two of those Ipswich years with Father Stanley. He writes of him: "I admired especially his great thirst for learning and science. His example recalls to my mind those words of St. Francis de Sales that for a priest, study and learning should be the 'Eighth Sacrament.' Father Stanley loved the outdoors and nature: the birds, the trees, the flowers, the stars and the bees. Most of all he inspired me by his example of a man of fervent prayer, great faith and simple frugal living."

Father Bernard Gillice was Father Stanley's director for some of the Ipswich years. He writes: "I remember Father Stanley's dedication to the classical education of the aspirants. He could truly be called a Renaissance man, someone who valued and searched for knowledge. Father Stanley also had a love for books, and anyone who knew him knew how he treasured books and treated them with love and care. His quest for knowledge was especially motivated by his desire to be of service to young people who wanted to serve God in the priestly or religious life. He was also a much sought-after confessor and was the spiritual guide both to many aspiring young seminarians, as well as to many priests who came to Ipswich seeking spiritual direction and forgiveness. Father Stanley liked to point to two of his hard working students who entered the congregation, no doubt because of his inspiration and example: they are Father Steven Dumais and Father David Moreno. Father Stanley had a deep reverence for nature and set up many small bird houses around the property to invite all kinds of birds to inhabit the area. He also took care of six beehives and was stung many times when extracting honey. He would cheerfully comment: 'After all, they are protecting what they have worked so hard for.'"

In 1967, Father Stanley became himself once more a student. He enrolled at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Department of Greek and Latin. On June 9, 1968, he received his Master of Arts degree and on May 15, 1971, his Doctor of Philosophy degree. The full title of his doctoral dissertation is formulated as follows: "William of Saint Thierry: The Chronology of his Life, with a Study of his *Treatise on the Nature of Love*, his authorship of the *Brevis Commentatio*, and the *Reply to Cardinal Matthew*." His brother, Father Charles Ceglar, describes as follows Father Stanley's love of studies: "Father Stanley spent his life as a never-ending student and teacher, a scholar interested mostly in the medieval Cistercian studies. Until the end he was in touch with several institutes and universities, sending them his research contributions." After his studies in Washington, Father Charles invited his brother Stanley to Sherbrooke: "We will go and do some manual work at Camp Savio. I'll give him a hammer and nails; he's always in his books; it will do him some good."

The year 1971 brought this wonderfully gifted man to Canada for the first time. After his studies, he was ready to return to Slovenia to use his acquired expertise to teach young confreres. But Divine Providence intervened in the form of his brother Charles who proposed that he come to Hamilton, Ontario,

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to help in the development of the Slovenian ethnic parish of St. Gregory the Great. He was appointed assistant pastor there and kept this responsibility until 1977. In that year, his brother Charles was appointed pastor of St. Gregory. This meant that Father Charles would have to be replaced as chaplain of the Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Hamilton. Father Stanley describes this transition in his own words: "As Bishop Reading worried aloud where he could get someone else to take his [Father Charles'] place at the Motherhouse, Father Charles replied: 'No problem. My brother could take my place.' During the summer of 1977, I was gradually introduced to my new charge. By the 10th of November I was permanently residing here, never suspecting how long my residence would stretch." Father Stanley continued on this apostolate until April 24, 1993, the exact day of his golden jubilee of priesthood.

In his farewell address to the sisters of the Motherhouse on April 30, 1993, Father Stanley describes as follows his years of service in this responsibility: "For many years now I have had many spiritual sisters, and mothers and aunts. With them I shared many joys and sorrows for over the fifteen and a half years of my chaplaincy here. That is almost one fifth of my life, and my longest stay anywhere. To all of you I owe deep gratitude for your edifying example and many prayers for my bodily and spiritual welfare."

On account of his health, Father Stanley had little hope of celebrating his golden jubilee of priesthood in his native Slovenia. But after his retirement from the chaplaincy at the Sisters of St. Joseph, he regained courage and returned to his native land to celebrate this event in the Basilica of Sticna on July 18, exactly where he had celebrated his first Mass fifty years earlier. He then happily enjoyed three months of rest. On September 19, 1993, Father Stanley celebrated once more his golden jubilee, this time at St. Gregory the Great Parish itself. This is the same day that the new bells of the Parish were blessed by Bishop Anthony F. Tonnos of Hamilton. On that occasion Bishop Tonnos described Father Stanley as a "learned man and a holy priest."

This description was further amplified in what Father Frank Slobodnik, pastor of St. Gregory the Great, wrote of Father Stanley in the parish bulletin: "Before us was visible the rich personality of a priest who in his modesty never spoke of his doctorate, never exhibited his many diplomas, his vast knowledge of various fields from classical Greek and Latin, through the Fathers of the Church, especially St. Bernard, his knowledge of various languages, etymology, apiculture, ornithology, astronomy, and many details about the world and Slovenian cultural treasury. Those who knew him closely could witness to his personal modesty, economy, exactness, punctuality, deep respect for things priestly and religious, his care for the missions, for the Salesian Province of Slovenia and for the Church in general. Briefly, under a little hard shell, a universally rich, well-versed, many-sidedness was hidden."

Father Stanley's Eucharist of Christian Burial and burial took place on the 24th of January 1994, feast of St. Francis de Sales. The significance of this is brought out by Father George Harkins: "It must certainly be providential that Father Stanley has been called to the Salesian paradise during Don Bosco's month and that his funeral and burial took place during the novena to St. John Bosco, on the feast of St. Francis de Sales, as well as on the monthly celebration of Mary Help of Christians, held on the 24th of each month. What a great tribute and honor to a wonderful Salesian." And Father Richard Authier, Salesian provincial, in his homily at the funeral, highlighted two Scriptural passages from the Mass of St. Francis de Sales that aptly describe Father Stanley: "If there are any wise or learned men among you, let them show it by their good lives, with humility and wisdom in their actions" (Js. 3, 13) "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep" (Jn. 10, 11). Father Stanley certainly was learned and holy, as well as an exemplary Salesian priest and chaplain.

Father Joseph Occhio, director of the Salesians of Montreal, writes as follows: "I met Father Stanley many times in Ipswich and Newton, and I truly loved chatting with him. During all the retreats I made with him, I always had long chats with him because I enjoyed his company, his vast knowledge and his deep piety. I am grateful to the Lord for having known this wonderful confrere, and I praise the Lord for his many graces to him and for the marvelous good he has accomplished in his life."

Appropriately, the final thoughts of this tribute to Father Stanley should go to his brother, Charles, who misses him dearly: "He died suddenly, always ready for the Lord's call. His departure was more like a

victorious celebration than a funeral: both Bishop Anthony Tonnos and Auxiliary Bishop Matthew Ustrzycki of Hamilton, forty priests, many sisters, parishioners and friends, a beautiful spirit of recollection radiating faith and peace, the edifying singing of the choir, the prayers evoking gratitude and piety to God, the meaningful words of Bishop Tonnos, who presided over the concelebration, and of the homilist, Father Richard Authier, Salesian provincial, outlining the life and work of Father Stanley, and over eighty cars on the funeral procession. The blessing given at the grave by me and Father Frank Slobodnik, pastor, was concluded by the placing of carnation flowers on the coffin and by a Marian song. Dear friends, let us be grateful to the Lord for the good done by Father Stanley and for the work accomplished by him, as well as for his happy death. May he rest in peace.”

Let us ask Father Stanley, from his privileged place in heaven, to intercede with the Lord for numerous Salesian vocations for the provinces of Canada and Slovenia.

Father Richard Authier, S.D.B.  
Provincial



**Father Innocent Clementi, S.D.B.**

**I**nnocent Clementi was born on August 8, 1920. He was affectionately called “Cente” by his family and friends, and he was the third of four boys born to Eugenio Clementi and Bartolemea Delasa, in the town of Castelfranco di Rogno, in the province of Bergamo, Italy.

The Clementis were a well-knit family, but Cente was quite different from his three more serious brothers. His was a jovial, somewhat impulsive personality with a heart of gold. During his growing years at home Cente did his share of household chores and taking care of the few heads of cattle and sheep.

One Sunday afternoon, fired by a religious service that appealed to the boy, Cente told his family that he wanted to be a priest. Upon consultation with his pastor, that good man of God said, “Cente, if you apply to the Jesuits, I dare say that you will last possibly two days; at the diocesan seminary, maybe a whole week. I think your best bet would be to try the Salesians. You might make it even a whole month.”

And so it was that Cente found his way to the Istituto Missionario Cardinal Cagliero at Ivrea in the province of Turin. His pastor surely had the surprise of his life when Cente lasted not just one month, but four years of aspirantship, a year of novitiate in far away Newton, New Jersey, practically sixty years of

Salesian profession and fifty years of priesthood. Cente often said that though he had personally asked to be sent to China, it was obedience that brought him to the United States. The day has long since passed when his brother Santo took him to the train station by bicycle, and he continued on alone by train to Ivrea!

Add to the ups and downs of routine life in the seminary, the sometimes trying life of the novitiate and of the years of college and theological studies, separation from home and family, a new language and culture to be mastered, new friends to be made, rules and regulations to be buckled under and restless, vigorous spirit to be reined in, one can well imagine a formidable task. Yet, when the years of formation ended, one found in Father Clementi the characteristics of a devout, dedicated and devoted Salesian who became also a great admirer of the country of which he became a citizen.

College days at Don Bosco Seminary in Newton were followed by three years of teaching at Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa, Florida. Here Brother Clementi worked among Don Bosco's preferred flock – namely, disadvantaged youths struggling with the problems of poverty, loss of parents, or unsatisfactory conditions of home life. In Brother Clementi these youngsters at Mary Help of Christians School found an ardent youth worker and friend. They were indeed sorry to see him leave, when in 1945, he returned to Newton to begin theological studies. The fourth year of those studies was completed back in his native Italy. He had been away for ten years!

July 3, 1949, dawned bright and sunny as a truly festive air filled the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. Parents, relatives and friends from the little town of Castelfranco di Rogno helped fill the beautiful church. They saw their native son humbly prostrate himself while the choir sang the hymn to the Holy Spirit and the Litany of the Saints. The longed-for moment of Innocent Clementi's life had arrived when Cardinal Fossati put his hands on the candidate's head and pronounced the formula for ordination to the priesthood. It was a glorious day followed by celebrations at home in Castelfranco di Rogno!

Upon his return to the United States in September 1949, the ever restless and anxious Father Clementi soon earned a place in the annals of the province that singled him out as a compassionate, hardworking and dedicated apostle of youth. He had been assigned once more to Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa. There, Father Clementi spent the greater part of his priestly life, some thirty-five years, encouraging and building confidence in his boys' choir and band. He was always their friend and confidant. Many found in him the values they failed to encounter in a dysfunctional home, and at the same time they were drawn to the practice of a faith in Jesus and Mary, which was so evident in the life of this caring priest.

In his later years at Mary Help of Christians School, Father Clementi took on a weekend ministry in Orlando, Florida. Father Joseph Harte, the pastor of Holy Family Parish, had begun a weekend ministry for the numerous vacationers who came to Disney World.

Here is what Father Harte wrote regarding Father Clementi's work: "The tourist ministry, dedicated to our Lady, was in its infancy when Father Clementi came on the scene. He had been invited to help for a couple of weeks. The couple of weeks became several years, until his superior transferred him from Florida. In many, many ways Father Clementi was the ideal man for the task at hand. He had an ability to adjust to a situation with humor. He loved to sing, and that meant that hymns were sung at his Masses in the hotel ballrooms or beside outdoor swimming pools where initially the vacationers gathered to attend Mass.

Overall, Farther Clementi loved the Mother of God, and he was grateful to be involved in a ministry which bore her name. Loyalty was synonymous with his personality, and he strongly supported the tourist ministry and its ultimate goal – a magnificent shrine to Our Lady of the Universe! Father Clementi was a true priest, and I must also say a true Salesian. He had a great commitment to the Salesians and an intensive love for Don Bosco."

It was 1983 when obedience called Father Clementi from the warmth of Florida to the not always clement weather of the North. The parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in New Brunswick, New Jersey, was the new scene of Father Clementi's priesthood. Father Emil All  , now Bishop All  , was the pastor. Here is his stirring account of Father Clementi's apostolate there:

"Father Clementi brought to the parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in New Brunswick the great

contributions of his Salesian presence and spirituality. His genuine sense of joy and happiness, together with his characteristic smile, soon became known in the newly established diocese of Metuchen. His personal optimism is still remembered by many people. His homilies in Spanish and his availability as a priest made a lasting impression on everyone. Father Clementi gave of himself for six of the seven years during which the Salesians ministered in that parish.

“Through his musical talents he revived the parish choir and enhanced the liturgical celebrations with his personal expertise. His Salesian priesthood was always evident in his fatherly concern for the young, the altar servers, the immigrants, and for all in that Hispanic community of New Brunswick, New Jersey.

“Always ready to build up the spirit of our Salesian community of Elizabeth, New Jersey, and neighboring Salesians, Father Clementi often provided wonderful hospitality in his inimitable cheerful way. One of the deepest personal joys was when he was able to offer his human and Italian culinary delights to all his visiting friends from the province as well as to those from other areas. His open and vibrant laughter was always part of his uplifting presence.

“As pastor of this parish, I felt that in Father Clementi I had a good collaborator, a dedicated priest and a kind confrere.”

When the Salesians withdrew from the diocese of Metuchen, Father Clementi was assigned as resident chaplain to the Salesian Sisters at their provincial house and retirement home in North Haledon, New Jersey. Here too his unique qualities endeared him to the sick and to the well. A few indelible impressions of the Sisters are noteworthy:

“Father Clementi’s jovial, encouraging spirit ran through his conversations, sermons, and simple words of advice.”

“Father always spoke well of his confreres. Even his rooms in the little house on the hill had pictures and biographies of deceased confreres displayed as a reminder to pray for them and to be edified by their virtues.”

“Father’s advice during confession was given with Salesian frankness and openness as he recommended devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Blessed Mother.”

“Father was most solicitous as he ministered to our dying Sisters, comforting and encouraging them in their last hours.”

Four years on the hill had passed by when the decision was made by the sisters themselves to terminate the resident chaplaincy in North Haledon.

One might have perceived an acceleration in the life of Father Clementi as his thirty-five years of priestly life in Tampa, seven years in New Brunswick and four years in North Haledon were about to culminate in two years at St. Kieran’s Church in Miami, Florida. Declining health did not dampen his jovial spirit or diminish his priestly dedication to the souls entrusted to his care. Bravely he substituted for the pastor of a nearby parish over several months.

But age and illness relentlessly take their toll, and so in December 1998, Father Clementi reluctantly made his way to the little Salesian residence called “Blue Gate,” seeking rest and a cure from his recurrent maladies. However, a cure was not to be his lot. January 1999, found him hospitalized in Good Samaritan Hospital in Suffern, New York. Father Clementi was failing rapidly.

It was 4:00 A.M. on Friday, February 19, 1999, when Father Clementi rendered his soul to his Maker. The picture of Don Bosco still gazed upon him from the night table where he had it placed, and the crucifix of the rosary which he wore around his neck lay upon his chest. Father had joined his two months of suffering to the suffering of Jesus as he received dialysis three times each week and treatment for severely ulcerated legs. His Good Friday had ended, and God’s will had been accomplished! The night before, two confreres from neighboring Salesian communities had visited Father Clementi and prayed at his bedside.

To everyone who knew him, Father Clementi was a hard worker, a dedicated Salesian, an enthusiastic fellow religious, a strong devotee of Jesus and Mary, and a true son of Don Bosco.

A wake service and a funeral Mass in the Don Bosco Chapel in Stony Point, New York, drew confreres, Salesian Sisters and laity alike. Friends from Tampa, Orlando, and New Orleans gathered to pay their last

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respects to a beloved Salesian. One of Father's brothers, Martino, along with a nephew and a niece, had arrived from Italy just hours after Father had passed away. They too were present at the services. Simultaneously with the funeral Mass at Stony Point, Father Manni, a long time friend and confrere of Father Clementi, celebrated a memorial Mass in Castelfranco di Rogno for family, friends, relatives and parishioners of Father Clementi's home parish.

At the request of his family, Father Clementi's body was returned home to Castelfranco di Rogno, Italy. Mass was celebrated in his home parish, and his body was entombed by the side of his parents in the local cemetery. Thus Father Clementi completed the journey begun by bicycle with his older brother.

The Eastern Province of the United States had just celebrated its one hundredth anniversary of existence, and Father Clementi had lived sixty years of that Salesian history. We mourn his passing, and we praise the Lord of the harvest for the good accomplished by this faithful and devout priest in that harvest.

Father Clementi was 78 years old, 50 years a Salesian, and 49 years a priest.

(See the obituary letter for Father Innocent Clementi, S.D.B., by Father Vincent Duffy, S.D.B., May 24, 1999.)



**Father Dominic DiGuardo, S.D.B.**



December 4 in the year of our Lord 2000, our beloved confrere Dominic DiGuardo left his little room at the Frances Schervier Nursing Care Center in the Bronx, New York, to enter his room in the eternal dwelling place of the Blessed.

The boy born on September 16, 1909, was given the name of Dominic at his Baptism. His father was Angelo DiGuardo, and his mother's maiden name was Concetta Bonacorsi. The family lived in Catania, Sicily. Dominic went to school in his native town, and on September 26, 1926, at the age of 17, he entered the Salesian novitiate at San Gregorio. A year later, on the 27th of September, 1927, young Dominic pronounced his first vows in the Salesian Society at San Gregorio.

After his philosophical studies, the cleric Dominic DiGuardo taught in the Salesian school in Messina, Sicily, during 1930-1931, and then in Catania during 1931-1932. At that time Brother Dominic developed pulmonary tuberculosis, and therefore went to recover in the sanatorium in Palermo, at Modica Bassa, Sicily, from 1932-1935. While a patient in the sanatorium Brother DiGuardo professed his perpetual vows on January 31, 1933. He continued his convalescence into 1936 until he took up the job again as assistant

in the Salesian school in Catania for the 1936-1937 school year.

Brother Dominic DiGuardo probably did his theological studies while in the sanatorium and while he was an assistant in the school in Catania, for on May 22, 1937, Brother DiGuardo was ordained a priest in Messina.

During 1937 Father DiGuardo arrived in the United States, his family having emigrated here some years before. They lived in Massachusetts and communicated with Father DiGuardo about once a month.

The first assignment which Father DiGuardo received after his arrival in the United States in 1937 was as prefect of studies (principal) in the Salesian School in Goshen, New York. In 1941 he was appointed to be the prefect (financial administrator), and then in 1942 he was the Principal again in the same school. His appointment in September, 1943, as assistant pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Elizabeth, New Jersey, was an important change in his life. Eight years later, in September, 1951, he was appointed assistant pastor in St. Anthony Parish in Paterson, New Jersey, until 1965, and then in 1965 he was back in Elizabeth as assistant pastor until 1982. In 1953, during his period at the Paterson parish Father DiGuardo had a lobectomy on one of his lungs.

While in the Paterson parish he organized a group of girls in a kind of oratory. In their meetings they had a period of games, and before leaving for home they recited some prayers. At St. Anthony Parish in Elizabeth he supervised the Altar Boys Club and the Girls Junior C.Y.O. From this second group as many as 85 girls put on stage performances, often of plays and musicals written by Father Dominic himself.

Father DiGuardo was a very good musician. While at Goshen and in the parishes he composed and produced such operettas as *The Fortune Teller from Finland* and *The Little Shepherd Boy*. He also put music to hymns and to the common parts of the Mass. In 1967 he proudly became a member of the American Association of Composers and Playwrights (ASCAP), giving at that time a brilliant organ recital in his family's home town of Lawrence, Massachusetts.

In 1982 Father DiGuardo retired from active life and went to Don Bosco Technical School in Boston, Massachusetts. He remained there until 1993, and during that year he left Boston and took up residence at the Blue Gate Salesian Residence in Stony Point, New York. His physical and mental condition steadily deteriorated over the years, leaving him largely unable to care for even his basic needs. Still, his love for music never left him. Even in his illness he was able, on occasion, to play some melodies on an electric keyboard that the nurse would set up for him.

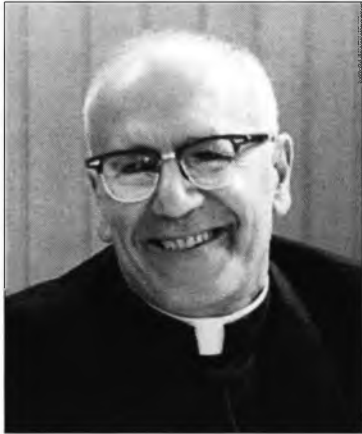
During the last year of his life, Father's health significantly deteriorated. He developed Alzheimer's disease and oftentimes he didn't quite know where he was or what he was saying. Thus at times he was abrasive in speech and even insulting. The nurse at Blue Gate became accustomed to it all and took good care of him.

In the last nine or ten months of his life, Father Dominic required constant nursing care, and therefore was admitted to the Frances Schervier Nursing Care Center in the Bronx, New York. He was there until he returned to our Father in heaven on December 4, 2000.

Please remember in your prayers our deceased confrere and the Marian Shrine Community of Stony Point, New York.

The Salesian Community of the Marian Shrine





**Father John Divizia, S.D.B.**

Our much admired and beloved confrere Father John Divizia went home to our beloved Father at approximately 8:20 in the evening of October 8, 2003. Two weeks more and Father John would have reached the age of 98, having been born on October 22, 1905. His father's name was Lawrence Divizia, and his mother's maiden name was Emily Pattarini. John was born and baptized in New York City.

John's father had gone to the Salesian school in Alassio, and there he once saw Don Bosco. Consequently, says Father John in his memoirs, when his dad was thinking of a school where his son could receive a good education, he heard about the Salesian school in Hawthorne, New York. Therefore he sent young John to Hawthorne from 1914 until the school burned down in the middle of December 1917. While a pupil at Hawthorne, John went down to Holy Rosary Church in Port Chester, New York, for the sacrament of Confirmation. It was administered by Bishop (later Cardinal) Patrick Hayes, auxiliary bishop of New York. John's sponsor at Confirmation was the famous millionaire Adolph Tornquist, who became a Salesian priest and traveled the world over, spending all his millions by donating to Salesian schools and churches in the various Salesian mission countries. The last years of Adolph's life were spent with the Salesians in Argentina.

When the Salesian school in Hawthorne burned down, John's father decided to send his son to the LaSalle Military Academy in Oakdale, Long Island, New York, for the remainder of his elementary education. After finishing at LaSalle, young John Divizia received his high school education at St. Peter's Prep in Jersey City, New Jersey. John went to St. Peter's Prep in 1920 with the idea of becoming a priest. After three years he graduated and then became a Jesuit novice, but after a year and a half he decided it was not his vocation.

John had kept in touch with Mr. Tornquist. By this time John was toying with the idea of becoming a Salesian, and apparently Mr. Tornquist recommended that he visit the Salesians at Transfiguration Church on Mott Street in New York City. There John met Brother Asta, who suggested that he visit Father Francis Binelli, the novice master, in New Rochelle, New York. John did that, and very soon he became an aspirant to the Salesian life.

On November 21, 1926, John donned the cassock. His master of novices was Father Binelli. The novitiate began at the provincial house in New Rochelle, but a couple of months later it moved to Goshen, New York. Father Richard Pittini, the new provincial, had recently arrived, and on November 13, 1927, John Divizia was the first one to make his profession of vows in the Salesian Society in the presence of Father Pittini.

After his profession, Brother John's first obedience was to remain in Goshen for one year studying philosophy. In 1928-29, he taught at Salesian High School in New Rochelle. During November 1930, he renewed his vows while in Goshen, and finally his perpetual profession took place in Newton, New Jersey on July 4, 1931.



Now it was off to Turin, Italy, for four years at the Salesian International Institute of Theology. Two companions who sailed with Brother John were Brother Peter Rinaldi and Brother John Lomagno. Every Wednesday, weather permitting, they took the twenty-minute walk to the Valdocco Oratory, visited the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and met with the superiors and boys. All three were ordained at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, on July 7, 1935, by Cardinal Fossati. Father John recalled that in the studentate in Turin there were some fellow theologians who became provincials, bishops, and cardinals; for instance, Cardinal Raul Silva of Chile and Cardinal Stephen Trochta of Czechoslovakia. He also remembered that all the theology students went to Rome for the canonization of Don Bosco. Lastly, Father John recalled that he visited Blessed Philip Rinaldi and received his blessing shortly before his death.

After his priestly ordination in July 1935, Father John was appointed secretary of the province for one year. Thereupon he was assigned to the Salesian School in Goshen as teacher and confessor until 1940, and then to St. Anthony Parish in Paterson, New Jersey, for 1940-41, as an assistant pastor; then back to Goshen for 1941-42, as confessor and teacher; to St. Anthony Parish in Elizabeth, New Jersey, for 1942-43, as an assistant pastor; then back to St. Anthony Parish in Paterson for 1943-44. During 1944-49 Father John was the pastor and director of Transfiguration Parish in New York City. Then from 1949 to 1951, Father was the vocation director. He liked to say that the one vocation he directed was Dominic DeBlase, who became the provincial and a missionary to Sierra Leone, Africa.

At this time Father John began a real odyssey. In 1951-52, he was the Director of the Salesian Oratory on Paris Street in East Boston. From 1952 to 1953 he was the assistant pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Elizabeth. From 1953-55 Father John was the director of St. Anthony Parish in Paterson. From 1955-1964 he was the director and the pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Paterson. A real change for Father John came when he was made pastor of St. Rosalie's Parish in Harvey, Louisiana. In 1966 he came back north, this time as the chaplain of Mary Help of Christians Academy in North Haledon, New Jersey. Then in 1968 another change came. This time he was appointed assistant pastor at Corpus Christi Parish in Port Chester, New York. Father John was not finished moving yet. Don Bosco Technical High School in Boston, Massachusetts, became his home in 1969-1970 as confessor; then another move in 1971 to Goshen, New York, as confessor.

Finally a more permanent home was given to Father John when in 1971 he moved to Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey, as confessor. Here he remained until 1988, when he was retired to Blue Gate in Stony Point, New York. There he remained until 1990, at which time he went to Holy Rosary Parish in Port Chester until 1992. Then he was moved to the Christian Brothers Rest Home in New Rochelle. Not very long afterwards Father John entered the Schervier Home in the Bronx, New York. His health deteriorated very much during the last few years, and on October 8, 2003, at the ripe old age of almost 98 years, his soul left his worn-out body and entered into the presence of God.

In conclusion and as a brief commentary, it was fairly obvious to those who lived and worked with Father John that he was a dynamic preacher in his younger years. He liked the work of preaching, and he was often called upon to preach for retreats and celebrations. Secondly, the confessional was his other favorite priestly work, not only for parishioners, but also for priests and religious men and women. One confrere who was at his side for many years put it this way: "He was always kind, understanding, and helpful."



**Father Ernest Faggioni, S.D.B.**

When Father Ernest Faggioni came to the newly-completed St. Philip Residence at Tampa in the winter of 2004, he was confused, disoriented and very angry. He didn't understand where he was or why he was there. He didn't know what year it was. He knew only that he was very unhappy and wanted to "go home" – even though he wasn't sure where that was.

Almost every day we would find him standing outside the residence with his suitcase, waiting for the train. He protested that he wanted to go "down South" where he had been happy for so many years. I told him several times that he was in Tampa and that this was about as far "down South" as he could go!

One day I found him halfway down the driveway, suitcase in hand. I stopped to ask him where he was going, and he replied, "To New Orleans." I took advantage of his confusion, pointed to the St. Philip Residence from which he had just come and said, "Just go over to that house there, ring the doorbell, and tell them where you want to go. They'll be glad to help you." He turned around, went back, and I quickly phoned the staff to alert them that the "prodigal son" was returning!

Several weeks later, when the vice provincial was visiting, Father Ernest told us both that he was sick of the place and wanted to go home to his mother who, although she was 95, was still in excellent condition and would welcome him with open arms. It did not occur to him that, if she was 95 and he was 87, she would have been 8 years old when she gave birth to him!

His long-term memory was amazingly intact. On several occasions I received e-mails from former students and mutual acquaintances, and he remembered them all. On several occasions he had a visit from one of his "boys" from the Salesian Oratory in East Boston who now lives in St. Petersburg. Father Ernest and Frank Megna shared the memories of the good old days on the streets of "Eastie," and it lifted the spirits of both! It was, ironically, Mr. Megna who had contributed towards several of the rooms in the new residence, not knowing that his beloved mentor, Father Ernest, would be the first Salesian from this province to be formally assigned there. Coincidence?

Gradually, with an accurate diagnosis of his condition and proper medical care and medication, Father Ernest began to improve. The anger subsided. The confusion abated, although he still had difficulty finding his room, right up to the end.

An incident occurred one Saturday evening that gave us some comfort that Father was indeed improving. I was holding the door open for some of the senior confreres who had come up to the main buildings at Mary Help of Christians School. As Father Ernest emerged from the minivan, one of the confreres asked him, "Father Ernest, who's that man up there holding the door? Is that the doorkeeper?" Without any hesitation, Father Ernest replied, "Why no, that's our wonderful director!" We all took that as

a sign that he was on the road to recovery.

Father Ernest was gradually able to insert himself more and more into the life of the community and the apostolates at Tampa. He enjoyed mingling with the parents of the students and the parishioners. He never missed a spaghetti dinner, pancake breakfast or picnic. Although his priesthood was very limited due to age and illness, he still had a ministry of his own. He had a quick wit and a ready answer for everyone. He loved to be in the orange groves. I always knew where he had been because I would find piles of oranges at the bases of the trees he had been visiting. We also found later that he had quite a stash of oranges in his room.

One Sunday afternoon in the spring of 2006, Father was found on the floor of the residence, quite weak and unresponsive. He was immediately transported to the hospital, where a diagnosis of pneumonia was made. Although Father came through the illness relatively quickly, it became apparent that he had suffered some setbacks and would need some nursing care. Arrangements were then made for his transfer to a nursing care facility in St. Petersburg.

On the morning of June 14, 2006, we received a phone call that Father Ernest had been found unconscious on the floor of his room at the nursing home and had been transported to the hospital. He was pronounced dead there of cardiac arrest. He was just two weeks shy of his 89th birthday.

A simple, family-style wake service was held in the chapel of St. Philip Residence. I invited those present to speak about their memories of Father Ernest, and they did so. Brother Charles Todel spoke of their time together in Marrero. Father Jon Parks spoke of Father Ernest's deep and sincere concern for him and his family when he was growing up.

The following day we gathered once again in the chapel of Mary Help of Christians for the second funeral of a Salesian in five months. And once again, Salesians, Salesian Sisters, Cooperators and friends of Father Ernest as well as parishioners of Good Shepherd Parish came to pray and thank God for the life of Ernest Faggioni, Salesian priest.

The services were repeated at the chapel of Salesian High School in New Rochelle. Father Emil Fardellone preached the homily at the funeral liturgy. The next day, June 20, Father Ernest joined his brothers in Goshen awaiting the resurrection of the dead.

### ***Biography***

Father Ernest Faggioni was born July 2, 1917, in São Paulo, Brazil, to Pilade and Angela (Mandelli) Faggioni, who had recently emigrated from Italy. The family returned to Italy shortly after and young Ernest grew up in a suburb of Milan, Busto Arsizio. He entered the Salesians of Don Bosco at Ivrea, Italy, in 1936. He volunteered for an overseas mission and was sent to the U.S. He made his novitiate at Don Bosco Seminary in Newton, New Jersey, and professed his first vows in 1937. He did his college and theology studies in Newton, also, and was ordained there June 29, 1947.

Father Ernest spent most of his Salesian life in the New Orleans area, serving at different times as a teacher, principal, or treasurer at the Hope Haven orphanage in Marrero (1940-43, 1950-59, 1963-66), as treasurer of Archbishop Shaw High School in Marrero (1966-74), and assistant pastor at St. John Bosco Church in Harvey (1988-2000). Many of the alumni of Hope Haven fondly remember Father Ernest as a father and confidant, as well as a teacher, someone who was very strict with them but really cared about them; they credit his tough-love approach with their later success in life. To a man they will tell you, "If it weren't for Father Ernest, I'd be in jail or dead today!" Some of his young fellow Salesians also found him very helpful in their efforts to teach and supervise the youngsters on a 24-7 basis.

During his 59 years as a priest, Father Ernest also was principal at Don Bosco Tech in Boston (1947-49) and Salesian High School in New Rochelle, New York (1949-50); director of Don Bosco Juniorate in Paterson, New Jersey, and Haverstraw, New York (1959-63); treasurer at Don Bosco Preparatory School in Cedar Lake, Indiana (1974-80), and Don Bosco Tech in Paterson, New Jersey (1980-82); assistant pastor of St. Agnes Church, Eight Mile Rock, Grand Bahama Island (1982-83); and pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Church, Hunter, Grand Bahama Island (1983-88), and of Holy Name Church, Bimini (1992). His

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parishioners both in Harvey, Louisiana, and on Grand Bahama Island recall him fondly.

Suffering from Alzheimer's disease in his final years, Father Ernest retired to Salesian High School, New Rochelle, in 2000 and subsequently lived at the Salesian nursing facility in Stony Point, New York, and finally in Tampa for the last two years.

If we were forced to say which assignment gave Father Ernest the greatest satisfaction, it would no doubt be the assignment to Hope Haven. I personally spoke with "Hope Haven Boys" who attested that Father Ernest was the bright spot in their very dark childhood. At Father Ernest's wake service at St. Philip Residence, Brother Charles Todel witnessed to the love that he had for "his boys"—and they for him. Father Ernest told me over and over about the young man who had come into disfavor with the staff and went to Father Ernest begging him, "Please, Father, give me a kick in the pants!" "Why should I give you a kick?" asked Father Ernest. "Because then I will be sure that you still love me!"

Besides his love for the young and his pastoral charity, Father Ernest was noteworthy for his concern for the observance of poverty. It was not enough to profess poverty; you had to live a poor and simple life. This was especially so in a community where the finances were shaky. Although it seemed harsh at the time, those of us who lived with Father Ernest recall his dislike for putting on the heat – until the temperature fell well into the 30's!

When it came time to prepare his remains for burial, I asked his caregivers for a pair of shoes. I was handed a pair of walking shoes. I asked, "Where are his dress shoes?" and was told, "These are his only shoes. You can check his room for yourself!"

Love for poverty meant love for hard work, and that was surely one of Father Ernest's hallmarks. His day was full of work, in the office, on the grounds, in the kitchen. He often cooked for the confreres, and a typical Sunday meal would consist of chicken and rice soup, chicken with boiled rice, rice patties, and of course, for dessert – what else? – rice pudding!

What was not always obvious to everyone was his spirit of obedience. I was privileged to witness this first-hand. During the summer of 1977, the director of the community was out of the country on vacation. As vice director, I was left in charge of the confreres, all of whom were much older than I, a mere 31 years of age! Nevertheless, whenever Father Ernest wanted to go somewhere, he would, without fail, ask me permission to go. The age difference did not matter; he respected the authority that I represented. He would not just tell me or notify me that he was going somewhere. He would ask me, 30 years his junior, if it was okay. I never forgot this example of obedience and humility.

What will we remember most about Father Ernest? His simplicity, poverty, his sense of humor? What will we miss most? His love for youth, his habit of referring to his breviary as "his wife" or his fondness for beer? While we cherish his memory and pray for his eternal happiness, let us also remember to pray for vocations. We need more men who have the courage and energy of Father Ernest, to follow in his footsteps, to show the young they have a Father who loves them. Father Ernest filled a void in the lives of many young people, and we pray that others be inspired to take his place.

### ***Data for the Necrology:***

Faggioni, Rev. Ernest. Born July 2, 1917. Professed September 18, 1937. Ordained June 29, 1947. Died at St. Petersburg, Fla., June 14, 2006, at age 88, in his 69th year of profession, the 59th of priesthood.

Father William Ferruzzi, S.D.B.

Director, Mary Help of Christians School, Tampa



**Father Filomeno Ferrara, S.D.B.**

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hen the large new Salesian Cemetery at Goshen was consecrated on May 11, 1938, the remains of 12 deceased confreres were transferred there from a small mausoleum on the property. The first spot at the northeast corner of the new graveyard was given to the body of Father Filomeno Ferrara, who had been the first Salesian to die in the Eastern Province. He drowned in Long Pond, near the village of Mahopac in the town of Carmel in Putnam County, New York, on July 14, 1910, at the age of just 35.

Father Ferrara's tombstone bears an anglicized first name, *Philomen*, perhaps reflecting an attempt on the Salesians' part in the 1930s to Americanize themselves and their reputation, and a misspelled last name, *Ferrari*. That, however, was not the only indignity bestowed upon the unfortunate priest's memory. For, in truth, the primary means of remembering him was overlooked: his name was not inserted in the Congregation's *Necrologio (Salesiani Defunti)* nor in the Eastern Province's own "Necrology" – an oversight discovered by happenstance in March 2007. Nor does the customary obituary letter seem to have been written for him.

There are, however, two brief documents in the archives of the Salesian Studies section, one typewritten in English on one page, the other handwritten in Italian on both sides of letterhead from the Salesian Sisters' "St. Michael's Orphanage," North Haledon. The Italian document is the basis of the English one, which follows it closely. From these, as well as from various chronicles, a personnel ledger, and letters in the province archives, passing references in the *Bollettino Salesiano*, short obituaries published in *The New York Times* (July 16, 1910) and *The Catholic News* (July 23), and the Carmel town records we can learn something of the short life and death of this pioneer of the Province of Saint Philip the Apostle.

Filomeno was born at San Biase in the diocese of Vallo della Lucania in the province of Salerno, Italy, on November 5, 1874. His parents were Giovanni and Giovanna Dura Ferrara. Having completed fourth year *ginnasio* (=12th grade), he entered the Salesian novitiate at Foglizzo on August 15, 1892, and professed triennial vows on September 1, 1893. He left the Society, probably in 1896, for reasons related to his family and entered the diocesan seminary of Vallo. He was ordained at Naples on December 23, 1899, and for at least a time exercised his ministry in his home parish.

At a date unknown he voyaged to America to exercise his priestly ministry, carrying with him a recommendation from Father Michael Rua, dated June 25, 1902. The Ellis Island immigration records are silent about him.

He had not forgotten the happiness he had experienced as a young Salesian, however, and even

felt a certain regret about his departure. Apparently he wrote to Father Julius Barberis, his former master of novices, about the possibility of returning to “Don Bosco’s banner.” On January 22, 1903, Father Barberis recommended him to Father Ernest Coppo, the superior in New York, characterizing Father Ferrara as “young, full of life, and full of zeal, just a bit impetuous and imprudent in his zeal; so he needs guidance.” According to the letter, he was at that time in South Bethlehem in the archdiocese of Philadelphia. Father Coppo should take him in, and when Father Paul Albera passed through New York in late February or March – he was winding up an extraordinary visitation of all the communities in the two Americas – he and Father Coppo would decide what specific course of action to take regarding the returning cleric.

Father Coppo admitted Father Ferrara as a candidate in April 1903 and assigned him to parochial ministry at Transfiguration Church on Mott Street in Manhattan, at that time still very much a part of Little Italy; the Salesians had assumed its administration on May 1 of the previous year and moved into the rectory there. Parish records show that Father Ferrara performed his first baptism at Transfiguration on May 2. He received faculties to hear confessions that same month. He preached at the Salesians’ Italian mission at St. Brigid’s Church on the feast of St. Aloysius, Sunday, June 21.

He made a second novitiate at St. Joseph’s House of Studies in Troy, where the first U.S. novitiate was canonically erected on June 19, 1905. Of the 12 novices who started the year of novitiate on September 25, 1905, with Father John Foccaci as master of novices, only Father Ferrara completed the year. In a rather unusual arrangement – no doubt reflecting the shortage of personnel and perhaps also Father Ferrara’s demonstrated abilities, he served as the novices’ confessor. He made his second temporary profession on October 7, 1905. Another of the 12, Louis Galli, had to start his novitiate again and eventually persevered to perpetual profession, ordination, and a long priestly ministry († San Francisco, 1962).

Father Ferrara returned to Transfiguration on Mott Street as assistant pastor for the next 15 months. On Jan. 16, 1907, he arrived at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in San Francisco, accompanying the provincial, Father Michael Borghino, who was beginning a visitation; the whole country was but one province at the time. Father Ferrara was to serve as associate pastor there. His ministry lasted until July 15, 1909, and it seems that he left a deep and positive impression upon his fellow immigrants.

Father Ferrara returned to New York, assigned again to Transfiguration. The *Bollettino Salesiano* reports that at the end of September 1909 he was helping to organize a fund-raising program in Paterson for the benefit of the Italian chapel on Beech Street – soon to become the parish of St. Anthony of Padua – where the Salesians had just undertaken ministry, and St. Michael’s School, which the newly-arrived Salesian Sisters had just opened. For some six months he traveled every weekend from the Salesian house in Hawthorne, New York, to minister to the Beech Street Italians.

In 1910 the Salesians had bought a summer cottage on Long Pond as a place for short vacations. In July Father Ferrara went there for a few days to rest and to serve as confessor. On the evening of Thursday, July 14, after a day of oppressive heat, he went for a refreshing bath in the pond – alone. His confreres advised him not to go far out in the water, and he promised not to, according to the report in the Catholic newspaper. The *Times* piece adds that he could not swim. But something happened – *The Catholic News* suggests cramps – and if he cried for help, no one heard, the cottage being some distance from the water. Only three days later was his body recovered, not far from where he had left his clothes on the shore.

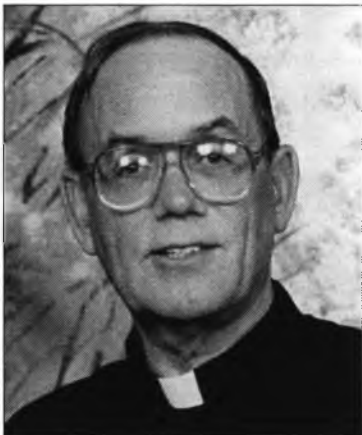
His funeral was celebrated solemnly at Transfiguration Church by Father Anthony Demo, C.S.C.B., assisted by Father Frederick Barni, the pastor of Mary Help of Christians Chapel on 12th Street, and Father John Foccaci of the new Salesian house in Hawthorne, New York, as deacon and subdeacon. Father Ferrara was buried in Calvary Cemetery until his remains were transferred, first to a cemetery in Port Chester in 1921, then to the mausoleum in Goshen in 1926.

Under the heading of San Francisco, the province chronicle records: “On August 3 [1910] a

solemn Requiem Mass was sung for Fr. Ferrara, who ... drowned in the lake of Mahopac, N.Y., on July 14, 1910. Fr. [Alfred] Pauc sang the Mass, and Fr. [Paul] Zolin delivered the eulogy. All the Salesians and many of the people were present.” The chronicle does not indicate whether this occurred at Sts. Peter and Paul or at Corpus Christi.

The little English biography concludes: “Father Ferrara was noted for his priestly zeal in the confessional. He possessed exceptional ability as a preacher, and seemed to exercise [sic] a profound influence over the youth he came in contact with. Nature having endowed him with an irascible temper, he made continuous efforts to remedy this defect and sought to gain friends by a pleasant, affable bearing. His master [of novices, i.e., Father Foccaci] testifies that as a novice, [Father] Ferrara’s conduct was exemplary in every way.” The Italian text adds: “Parish activities spurred him to do good, and he gave himself with all his heart for the salvation of souls,” which the English version in a different spot renders “labored untiringly for souls.”

Father Michael Mendl, S.D.B.  
July 18, 2009



**Father Edward Frizzell, S.D.B.**

**I**n June 2002, Father Ed went to live with his sister Rosemary Reed and her husband Earl in Saugus, Massachusetts. Cancer, diagnosed a year earlier, had progressed so much that we could no longer provide him with the proper care at Corpus Christi Church. He was losing weight steadily and was in pain most of the time. Daily he was getting weaker. He insisted on publicly celebrating Mass. But it became obvious that this too was coming to an end, when, one day in April 2002, Father Peter Granzotto had to finish a Mass that Father Ed had started but could not complete.

Ed would spend the next 13 months with his sister. He could have received no better care, concern and love than what was provided by Rosemary, Earl and his mom, Rose, now 87 years old. He was also surrounded by his confreres through the many visits by me, our Father Provincials: Father Pat and Father Jim, Father Dominic DeBlase and many of his brother Salesians from his alma mater, Savio High School.

As many of us know, Father Ed was a very private person. I suppose I can narrate some moments when



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his true sensitive self shown through. Just before surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital, as we waited together in the preparation room, I saw a tear rolling down his face. When he sensed that I noticed it, he wiped it away, and said, "Everything will be OK," as if he were trying to console me.

Another time, we said the Rosary together. It was the last time I saw Father Ed. It was on July 26 at New England Rehabilitation Hospital. I was there with Father Ed, a past student of his, and a nurse. With his illness and pain, Father Ed's attention drifted back and forth. At the end of the Rosary, his student took Father Ed's hand and prayed out loud for peace during his journey and strength of spirit. When the student left, Father Ed looked at me and said, "That boy prays well; I like that."

Just prior to leaving the hospital, I asked Ed if there was anything he needed. "Do you need to tell me anything? Would you like me to tell something to anyone? Do you want anything? To see another priest? Or maybe a certain confrere?" "No, No," Father Ed said. "I'm all ready." And that was the only time I heard him speak about his journey home to God. But it was, for Father Ed, a sensitive sharing of his private self.

### *His Journey toward Don Bosco*

Edward Joseph Frizzell, Jr., was born to Edward and Rose Garceau Frizzell on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul in 1944 in Boston. His elementary education took place in Boston and later in Swampscott. But it would be high school education that would have a profound bearing on his life. Ed was a member of the first graduation class of St. Dominic Savio High School in East Boston. And the Salesian influence upon Ed was evident. He embraced that influence and its spirit, and entered the Salesian seminary at Newton, New Jersey, in September 1962.

On August 16, 1964, Ed made his first profession in Newton. He would later spend his practical training years at Salesian High School in New Rochelle, New York, and then go to study theology at the Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio.

Father Ed's ordination class would be distinguished among others. During the Holy Year 1975, many theologians who would be ordained to the priesthood were called to Rome, where the ordination took place by the Holy Father in the Basilica of St. Peter. He was ordained on his birthday, June 29. Father Ed was privileged to have his family present for this joyful event.

Father Ed's first assignment as a Salesian priest was Cedar Lake, Indiana, where he served as the principal of the high school preparatory seminary. Later, in 1978, he returned to Salesian High School in New Rochelle and then, in 1980, to Don Bosco Technical High School in Boston as financial administrator.

### *His Journey toward the Missions*

When Father Ed came to Don Bosco Tech in Paterson in 1982, his desire to go to the missions became quite vocal. Father Ed – again a very private person – only dropped hints about his dreams to serve God's poorest in foreign lands. I was stationed with Father Ed in Paterson for five years before he departed for Africa and for two years upon his return. It was quite a surprise to many of us when we learned about his request to go to the missions. But Father Ed did always show a real love and concern for God's most neglected and forgotten. Father Ed left for Sierra Leone in September 1988.

During Father Ed's three years in the mission land of Sierra Leone, he acted as principal of St. Augustine School. It could be said that during those three years of devoted service, with all the tropical diseases he contracted, Father Ed literally gave his life for these, God's most needy.

When Father Ed returned to Paterson in 1991, he weighed 200 lbs. I remember that he had left us when he was topping 270 lbs. Two things would be noticed in Father Ed in the years to follow. First, he was in a constant battle to preserve his health. And, second, his desire to return to Africa would never die.

Amid Father Ed's battles and desires, he continued to serve the province in various capacities. Upon returning from a year of Salesian studies at Berkeley, he worked as financial administrator at the Marian Shrine (1995-1997) and as associate pastor at Mary Help of Christians Parish in New York City (1997-1999).

But Father Ed continued his work for the missions. He served the province as the delegate for mission



awareness during these years. And, it was during this time that he would come to us at Corpus Christi in Port Chester.

### ***His Journey Home to God***

Upon Father Ed's arrival at Corpus Christi, he showed no signs of having an illness that would be terminal. He performed his duties without pause. He worked with the marriage preparation program and the altar servers. He was always available when needed for some unforeseen pastoral duty. His homilies were powerful. His voice was strong. He boasted of never needing a microphone in church.

He often spoke about the missions in his homilies. There was a stress on how we need to count our blessings and how we are called to be more sensitive to those in the poorer lands of the world. He fascinated the sodalities and organizations with his talks of Africa. He accompanied his slides and pictures with powerful commentaries, commentaries that demonstrated his love and longing for a place and people far away. Yes, Father Ed was in New York, but his heart was still in Sierra Leone.

Time slowly passed at Corpus Christi Church. Father Ed's illness slowly progressed. He soon became unable to carry out his public priestly responsibilities. He needed to go weekly to Lenox Hill Hospital in New York, and the parishioners and priests took turns bringing him back and forth. After a while, just the car ride made him ill. Some surgical procedures made his physical condition weaker. And whenever asked, "How are you doing, Ed?" His response was always the same: "As well as can be expected."

Then the time arrived when a decision had to be made regarding Father Ed's long-term care. At Father Ed's wish, he went to live in Saugus with his family. For thirteen months, he was surrounded by care and love, as his natural family and the Salesian family supported him with their prayers, visits and love.

His condition worsened. Soon he became hospitalized. On Saturday, August 2, he managed to concelebrate Mass with Father Jim Heuser, our provincial, Father Dominic DeBlase and Father Jack Janko. Three days later, on August 5, 2003, Father Ed went home to God.

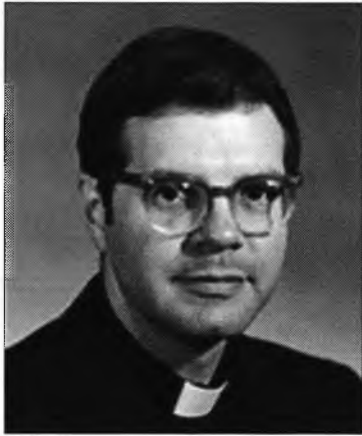
A wake service was held in the chapel of St. Dominic Savio High School on Thursday, August 7. Many relatives and alumni came to pay their respects. Father Ed's remains were then taken to Corpus Christi Church in Port Chester, where another wake service was held on August 8. The funeral Mass was concelebrated on Saturday, August 9 at 10:00AM. His remains now rest with his Salesian brothers in Salesian Cemetery in Goshen, awaiting the day of resurrection.

### ***"Come; share your Master's joy"***

Our province owes Father Ed a deep sense of respect and gratitude. Here we have a Salesian brother whose heart burned deep with love for God's neediest. His desire to serve the poorest in lands far away, in conditions far from adequate, in a way far from normal, is a shining example of Don Bosco's call to be missionaries for the Lord. Even when his health forbade him from returning to Sierra Leone, Father Ed was Father a "light of awareness" for us. Father Ed had spent himself to his last ounce of strength. Father Ed gave his life for these – God's poorest and most needy. We are thankful for having such a brother! We are proud that he was a Salesian!

May the good Lord Jesus, who calls all people to know Him, now call Father Ed near and dear to Himself. May He bless Father Ed's family for their love and nurturing of his vocation and for their care during his last days. And may He smile upon our Salesian Family, as He now calls out to a brother of ours, "Well done, my good and faithful servant... come, share your Master's joy" (Mt. 25:21).

Father James Marra, pastor  
and the confreres of Corpus Christi Church, Port Chester



**Father David Gonder, S.D.B.**

D

avid Gonder was born in Westernport, Maryland, on April 24, 1942. He was baptized on May 24, 1942.

Dave was a "Son of Mary," a late vocation, for he was already in his thirties when he decided to try the Salesian life. Earlier Dave had joined the Peace Corps and worked as a teacher in it, for he loved to teach.

As a Son of Mary, Dave taught the Salesian aspirants at Goshen, New York. He seemed to be a born teacher. The slower the student, the more patience was needed, and Dave showed that. He really believed that the classroom was the way into the lives and hearts of the young. Thus the students loved him. In 1994, one of them wrote, "He is a small-framed man with the largest heart. His eyes are always white with peace, and he has an understanding on my level. He is a true friend who is part of my family and a part of my heart." And so Dave made himself loved.

After Dave died, his mother recalled visiting him at various times in Goshen. On one such visit Dave walked with her to the Salesian cemetery on the school's grounds. "Here," he said, "is where I will some day be with the other Salesians." She recalled how much he wanted her to know that he wanted to be part of his Salesian community in life and in death. As Dave's body was laid to rest in Goshen, his mother recalled that day, sad that his death came so soon, but grateful that his wish was fulfilled.

After his novitiate and first profession in 1975, Brother Dave was assigned to the Salesian school in Cedar Lake, Indiana, for practical training. There his friendship with Father Steve Schenck was forged through the challenges of teaching and assisting in boarding school life. Together they enjoyed laughter, creativity and a love of Broadway musicals.

On January 31, 1981, Dave wrote in his application for the priesthood, "I fully realize my human weaknesses and limitations, but I take this step with the conviction that God will give me the graces I need to be faithful to my commitment, and I look to a future of hard work in the charity and joy of God's service."

Dave was ordained a priest in 1981. The superiors recognized Dave's leadership qualities and immediately put him into positions of responsibility. He was principal of Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa, Florida (1981-1984). In 1984-1985, he participated in the courses at the Institute of Salesian Studies in Berkeley, California. He was appointed vice-director and principal at Don Bosco Preparatory High School in New Jersey, for the academic year 1985-1986. He was the administrator working closely with Father Steve Schenck in a new venture in Goshen during 1986-1988. In 1988, Father Dave was appointed director of Archbishop Shaw High School in Marrero, Louisiana, for the six year period of 1988-1994, and during the last year he served as principal of the school as well. Lastly, in 1994, he was appointed the province economer, a position he held until his untimely death.

Father Dave had plenty of responsibility and he worked hard at it. He carried out his duties in a spirit

of charity, never putting on airs, and with a joy which was contagious. He lived with the conviction that God was giving him the grace to be faithful. This showed that Dave was deeply a man of God, and those of us who were close to him during the last months of his life realized that faith was forging in him the conviction that God's will was being accomplished, and that he was ready to accept it, even if it meant the cross of a painful struggle with cancer.

Father Dave was deeply human, with an understanding heart that overflowed with kindness. He unabashedly enjoyed good food, Mickey Mouse, Barbara Streisand, and Broadway musicals. At one visit to the hospital, when Dave was receiving high dosage of chemotherapy, we found him in the washroom. When the washroom door opened, out came Dave wheeling next to him his chemo apparatus, soft stepping and singing, "Me and my shadow...." He said it was the closest he could get to letting us experience a little of Broadway.

In October 1995, Father Dave was part of the adult team of the Senior Leadership Retreat held each year in the province at the Marian Shrine in Stony Point, New York. In his journal, in answer to the question as to how he would describe himself, Father Dave wrote, "Tries to be a good Salesian. He cares about kids and wants to bring Christ to them and them to Christ." In answer to what he hoped to take from the retreat, Dave wrote, "Greater openness to Jesus; letting Him work in my life; becoming Him for others." Finally, when asked what he thought he could do to help others face areas in their lives that may need growth, Dave wrote: "By taking time to know them better and coming to understand their difficulties, I might be able to reflect with them on their difficulties. I might be able to reflect with them on their weaknesses and encourage them to grow."

It seems that this became Father Dave's plan of life for the next three years as provincial economist. There was no director, no financial administrator in the province, no confrere, who did not experience Dave's desire to come to know him better and to understand the difficulties he was facing. He always encouraged others and reflected the Good Shepherd.

During the same retreat, with regard to his relationship with Jesus, Father Dave wrote: "I need to spend more time in prayer and reflection. I need to trust Him more rather than seeking my own solution to difficulties." His years as provincial economist were years of deep financial crisis. Yet he always seemed so cheerful, so un-preoccupied. When I asked him on one particularly trying day how he remained so serene, his answer was simple, "I just let God know if He wants this to work, He has to do it." Yet interiorly Dave would suffer deeply, for it is not easy to let God be in charge.

During June 1997, Father Dave's first term as provincial economist was drawing to a close, and a new provincial would assume the office on July 1. Dave, anxious to get out of the economist's office and back to boys in a school, let the provincial know of his desire. However, the results of the consultation for a new council were coming in, and the province almost unanimously called for Dave to take the economist's office again.

When I spoke with him about the office, his response was one of availability, "You know what I want," he said, "but I am ready to do whatever you ask, if you think I can help." He then gave me the one condition which I am sure he also gave my predecessor: "You have to allow me to spend as much time as I can with the kids at Salesian High and to be with kids whenever possible." He was a Salesian through and through.

Father Dave obtained his energy to do the things he did not relish in the mission from being with the boys. His custom was to spend his lunch hour with the Salesian High students in the cafeteria. He was always available to hear confessions, to celebrate Mass for them, or to be with them on special retreat days.

It was evident that perhaps the greatest pain he suffered in the last months of his life did not come from the cancer, the loss of weight, the sleepless nights, the constant back pain, the sore mouth, the continuous chills, the inability to focus, the perpetual tiredness, the unexpected trips to the hospital, the blood transfusions, the boredom and loss of energy. No, the greatest suffering came from the doctor's orders that he should not be with the boys. The reasons were that his resistance was low, the chemotherapy had greatly weakened him, and he was too susceptible to germs. Not to be able to join with the students, to clown around with them, to counsel them, to minister to them as a Salesian priest, was the greatest detachment the Lord asked Father Dave. But he didn't complain; he accepted it, saying, "This is what the Lord wants from me now."

As the new provincial administration began in July 1997, the first months were financially particularly difficult and delicate. The seriousness of the crisis had reached a new peak. In those first weeks, Dave went to the doctor to find out what was causing his recent lack of appetite and pain in his stomach. He suspected the tension of the daily financial situation he was facing.

When he came home from the doctor he came to see me. "I have cancer," he said. "There is a two-and-half-foot tumor wrapped around my vital organs. I'll do what the doctors think best, but as soon as we realize it might not be working, I'm telling you now, I don't want any kind of extraordinary things done to keep me alive. Honestly, Pat, I really have faith. This whole life is about going to heaven; that's why I chose it; I'm not afraid. I'm ready to accept God's will." Then, as if he had just spoken about the weather, he said, "I want you to know I really have tried my best, and did all I could. I'm sorry the finances are in such a mess. I don't want this to stop me from working. I promise to keep giving it my best for as long as I can." Dave did just that, and I realized that God was working in Dave in ways much greater than I ever could imagine.

The next sentence told the love story between mother and son that began to unfold more and more throughout the coming months. "For as long as possible I want to keep this from my mom. She worries about me too much. I don't want to cause her any suffering, and if I can beat this before Christmas without letting her know, that's what I want." Dave was not able to be with his mother and sister, Kathy, for Christmas, and he was forced to tell her. It was another detachment called for by the Lord, and Dave did it willingly.

The next months saw Dave's visits to the hospital become more frequent and more prolonged. Although none of us wanted to admit it, it was becoming obvious that he was losing the battle. "I'm not getting any better," he would say. "Remember, I feel at peace, and I'm ready." His spirit of acceptance amazed everyone who visited him. In those months, Dave found a new ministry in bringing Jesus to others. The nurses came to know and love him; he counseled them and their sons who weren't as good as they should be. He led other cancer patients to the sacraments and back to the Church through the ministry of confession, and journeyed with others on their deathbeds. He was a priest who was suffering as they were. He offered hope. At Dave's funeral, near his casket was a flower from a teenager who had been diagnosed with cancer and was angry, confused and not wanting to live. While in the hospital, the nurses introduced him to Father Dave, the priest who understands youths. David gave the young man a sense of purpose, a desire to live. It moved all of us to see that flower near Dave's casket with a card that said, "Thanks," and to watch that young man, with tears in his eyes, pray near the body of his friend.

There was at the hospital a man older than Dave, dying from cancer. Dave had given him the sacraments, and during those months they often found themselves in the hospital at the same time. They became friends. Dave supported the family as death grew near to that gentleman. In one of their last conversations the man was concerned that he would die and not be in attendance at his grandson's First Communion. He asked Dave to be there to represent him. Dave let him know that he would be proud to do that and would do everything possible to be there. The man died peacefully, and his family was consoled and grateful for Dave and his priestly presence in their lives.

Father Dave loved to celebrate Mass. He enjoyed the liturgy and to sing. He had a liturgical sense and liked it when ceremonies were done well and there was a sense of reverence and prayer. As his trips to the hospital became more frequent, Dave would celebrate Mass less frequently. Upon his return to the house, he missed being able to take his turn as main celebrant. He would then resign himself to vest in his alb and stole and so concelebrate the Eucharist. It was another detachment the Lord required.

April 24, 1998, was just such a day. It was Dave's 56th birthday. He was supposed to be the main concelebrant at the community Mass, but he just didn't have the energy. Jokingly he asked another priest to take his place. That evening, at his birthday celebration, he was given a beautiful statue of Mary Help of Christians. He loved it, and asked Father Provincial to bless it. Later he telephoned his mother and sister to tell them all about the day. After Dave's death his mother received the statue as a keepsake.

May 1-3 was the centenary celebrations of the province. Dave enjoyed the Rector Major's company and

came for the dinner celebration on May 1. He greeted old friends and then, feeling tired, he went home early. It pained him not to be able to join the youth rally at Great Adventure the next day. On May 3 was the centenary Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. Father Dave was there, but being unable to walk in the procession, he took his place in the sanctuary earlier. When someone expressed his regret, he said, "It wasn't that bad at all; I saw the procession, and I enjoyed seeing how fine everyone looked."

On May 6, the feast of St. Dominic Savio, Dave was the main celebrant of the community Mass, and he preached about what a gift it was to be a Salesian, to spend our lives for the young, to be present with them and to love them. Dave's Salesian heart shone that morning.

The next day, May 7, was raining, but he fulfilled his promise and went to the First Communion of his hospital friend's grandson. How happy he was when he returned home! Not only had he been welcomed to concelebrate, but the pastor had allowed him to give Holy Communion to the first communicants. Father Dave beamed with joy as he spoke about the day and the wonderful celebration with the family of his friend and the fulfillment of his promise.

The next day, May 8, was Mother's Day. When Dave came down for Mass, he had a cold and said he was feeling a slight back pain. He was concerned because he did not want this to set back his next chemotherapy treatment. At noon, he had little appetite. He said his back was hurting him more; he was going to spend the afternoon resting. By 4:30 the back pain was so excruciating that the director, Father David Moreno, brought him to the hospital.

Dave never received his last chemotherapy treatment. In the following weeks and days he grew weaker and weaker. At times he would become a little confused. His main concern was always the same, his mother. He did not want to cause her any undue worry. He did his best "acting" on the telephone. She knew he was sick and could tell; yet she wanted to be strong, so that he would not worry for her. Finally, one evening when I asked him about having her come to see him, he said, "I think it would be a good idea. Please call her."

During the next weeks Dave's mother and sister were constantly at his bedside. He tried to respond. He couldn't eat and had to be given a few drops of water from a straw. Much of the time he slept, occasionally opening his eyes at the familiar voice or to let his mother and sister know he heard them. This was the way he was when I left him that Friday evening, June 5. His mother and sister remained for about an hour longer. When they returned to the provincial house, we spoke about the fact that it seemed it would be only a matter of days. Dave was very weak. At about 11:15 p.m. the hospital called. Dave had quietly returned to God. It was the anniversary of Don Bosco's ordination.

Father Dave's mother, his sister and Father Provincial returned to the hospital. They offered prayers for Dave's soul. It was a time of deep sorrow for his mother and sister. It was also moving to see the nurses and doctors come into the room, eyes wet with tears, offering a prayer and expressing sympathy to his mother.

As word spread, letters came to the provincial office from many people, including Father Juan Vecchi, our Rector Major, from his vicar and from other members of the general council. Father Dave's sister, Kathy, wrote an excellent reflection on Dave which expressed the feelings of his family. That reflection and a few letters are written in the obituary letter which was written by Father Provincial.

Father Dave Gonder was 56 years old, 23 years a Salesian, and 17 years a priest.

(See obituary letter for Father David Gonder, by Father Patrick Angelucci, Provincial, November 1, 1999).



**Father James Henry Jeffcoat, S.D.B.**

**F**ather Jim Jeffcoat was born in Tampa, Fla., on January 3, 1932, to parents of Cherokee ancestry. He was very proud of that ancestry, valuing its spirituality, closeness to nature, and sense of family. Orphaned at the age of ten, Jim and his brother were educated by the Salesian Sisters at Villa Madonna and the Salesians at Mary Help of Christians School. Jim was afflicted with polio in his youth, which prevented him from participating in athletics.

In 1946 Jim decided to try out life as an aspirant to the religious life and priesthood. He studied in Suffern, New York, Goshen, New York, and Newton, N.J., finishing high school with honors. Jim entered the Salesian novitiate in September 1950, professing his first temporary vows on September 8, 1951.

After graduating from Don Bosco College with a bachelor in liberal arts and serving three years at Ramsey for teacher training, he went to Salesian College in Aptos, Cal., to study theology. After his first three years of theology, the college was closed and Jim had to go to Bollengo, Italy, for his last year. He was ordained in Italy on the feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 1961.

Jim had a thirst for learning and used his potential in acquiring an M.S. in science/biology from Villanova University, and after eight years of summer courses, 1962-1970, was awarded his degree, cum laude. He was very proud of this achievement and used his knowledge of the sciences to motivate his many students during his stints as vice principal in Sherbrooke, Que., as teacher and assistant principal in Ramsey, N.J., for eleven years, as director of his former elementary school in Tampa, as principal of Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey for five years, as vice director of Archbishop Shaw High School in Louisiana, as teacher, chaplain, vice principal, and principal at Don Bosco Secondary in Toronto for ten years. In all this time of teaching and administration, Jim held everyone to the highest standards of education, yet with a firm hand and a soft heart, in the path that our founder, St. John Bosco, traced for all Salesians. There are so many enterprises that Jim was involved in while in New Jersey. He was a winning coach of the track and field team and was recognized as Premier Science Teacher in all of New Jersey.

While at Don Bosco Secondary in Toronto, Jim was able to cultivate friendships with both students and parents and kept correspondence with them until his death. He was generous with his time and was sought after for funerals of former friends and students, and weddings and baptisms of many of his former pupils and their children.

Jim's parish ministry began when he left Toronto and went to Montreal to take care of the needs of the English-Italian community of young adults. He was involved in the marriage preparations of young couples and also with the sacramental preparations for Baptism, Communion, and Confirmation. He threw himself so wholeheartedly into the ministry that it led to his illness. After a few operations and a period of

convalescence, Jim was assigned to Edmonton as director of the confreres who were ministering in four parishes. When our Chinese parish lost its pastor, Father Jim lovingly and enthusiastically took over the service and ministry of this vibrant parish. The people took to Father Jim with love and devotion, appreciating his approach to their situation with delicacy. Father Jim started a noon-time Mass that was much appreciated by people working in the downtown area, where the church was situated.

As Jim's health began to deteriorate, the Chinese community was present nearly every moment of Jim's short illness. As Jim recognized his fragility, he asked the confreres to say a Mass for him and anoint him with the Sacrament of Healing. Father Jim was taken to the Oblates' Foyer Lacombe, a palliative center for ailing priests and brothers, where he succumbed to his illness. Throughout his slow health decline, Father Jim accepted his sufferings for the Salesians, with whom he worked throughout his life, and for his dear Chinese parishioners, who loved him very much.

At the vigil prayer service many Chinese university students gave glowing testimony of how Father Jim had an impact on their lives. Many more tributes were given at the Mass of Christian Burial. Father Jim is buried in the Salesian plot in St. Michael's Cemetery alongside our two valiant Hungarian pioneers, Father Josef Hamor and Father Michael Gombos.

Father Jim had a great devotion to St. Joseph, and he died on the transferred feast of St. Joseph, March 20, 2006. May he rest in peace.

Father Bernard Gilliece, S.D.B.

### *A Few Impressions about Father Jeffcoat*

After just a few weeks of fighting a very aggressive form of cancer, Father Jim Jeffcoat returned to our Father's home in the early hours of Monday, March 20. Since that day was the transferred feast of St. Joseph, the 19th having been a Lenten Sunday, it is fitting to believe that it was Jesus' foster father who received him into eternal life: Joseph, the meek and just man, the patron of the Church, of Canada, of our Salesian Canadian Province, and of a happy death. On March 14, surrounded by Salesian confreres and a few faithful friends, he had received the Anointing of the Sick, fully conscious of his proximity to death. Two days later, he was transferred from his residence of Villa St. Joseph to the Father Lacombe Home, where he would receive special care, given his very weak condition. He was still receiving visitors Sunday afternoon. Near the end of the afternoon, Father Provincial celebrated Mass at the foot of his bed. But I believe no one thought he would leave this world so soon.

I do not mean to write here a mortuary letter, just a few impressions, a few notes about what Father Jim has meant to so many people in the course of his many apostolic commitments. He leaves behind scores of past pupils, families, friends, parishioners. He was 74 years of age and on the day following the funeral Mass, March 25, would have celebrated 45 years as a priest.

He was born in Tampa, Florida, of partly Cherokee parents. He was always proud of his Native American heritage, valuing its deep spirituality, its closeness to nature, and its keen sense of the larger family.

Unfortunately, he and his brother were orphaned at a very early age. They were both accepted and educated by the Salesian Sisters at Villa Madonna and then by the Salesians of Mary Help of Christians School. Reaching high school age, Jim, showed an interest for Salesian religious life. He went north, completing high school in Newton, New Jersey, and entered the novitiate there in 1950. That is where we met for the first time – him, a novice, and me, an aspirant beginning high school.

Brother Jim followed the usual course of Salesian studies and apostolate: philosophy in Newton, tirocinium in different houses as a teacher and assistant, theology in Aptos, California, and Bollengo, Italy.

After his ordination in 1961, we find Father Jim in Sherbrooke, Quebec, as vice principal. He then served in different schools in the States, including Tampa and Marrero, Louisiana. His longest contribution was to Ramsey, New Jersey, where he served at different times as teacher, catechist, and principal.



## 52 Short Sketches

In 1983 he was invited to come to Toronto, and he did so very willingly. He spent a dozen years at Don Bosco Secondary School. These past years he worked in parishes, first in Montreal, then in Edmonton. A year ago, he was named pastor of the Chinese parish of Mary Help of Christians, endearing himself to the youths, especially those at college and university levels. Although he considered himself not too well prepared for parish work, his innate sense of family and relations made him esteemed and loved.

The teacher always remained a part of Father Jim. In spite of his many commitments, he had managed over the years to obtain a master's degree in physics, chemistry, and biology. It was enough to ask him a question in those fields and, as one of the young men told me in Edmonton, "he would go on and on, telling you much more than you wanted to know or could take in." He was very much interested also in the study of Holy Scriptures, animating a Bible group at the Chinese parish, just as he had done previously at St. Dominic Savio Parish.

To show how the young adults respected and loved him, shortly after he passed away in the middle of the night (at 3:30 a.m.), a dozen or so of them went to the Lacombe Home, kneeling around his bed, praying, singing, weeping, or just keeping a respectful silence, until the funeral home personnel came to take the body away about 9:00 a.m. During the wake on Thursday, and Friday until the funeral Mass, two of them, alternating every hour, served as the guard of honor at the head of the open coffin, as numerous faithful filed by the mortal remains of Father Jim, resting in priestly vestments. The wake service on Thursday afternoon was centered on the Virgin Mary, and the evening service on St. Joseph. The testimonies of young people – spoken in Chinese and in English – at the evening celebration were very moving.

The funeral took place at 1:00 p.m., Father Luc Lantagne, the Salesian provincial, presiding. Archbishop Thomas Collins was represented by his chancellor. The previous day the archbishop emeritus of Edmonton, Joseph MacNeil, was present to pray and offer his condolences to the parish community and the confreres. The presence of the Knights of Columbus and the 36 concelebrating priests showed the esteem and respect in which Father Jeffcoat was held. In his meaningful homily, Father Luc spoke of the man that Father Jim was, of the Catholic (in his youth he left the Baptist Church to become a Catholic), and of the good Salesian priest he always strove to be.

His mortal remains were taken to the Catholic Ukrainian Cemetery to be interred in the Salesian plot, awaiting the final resurrection in Christ. As everyone was leaving – the funeral home had put three busses at the disposition of the parishioners – a group of 20 young adults encircled the tomb, alternating between vocal prayer and silence. I was told that some came back the next day to lay flowers at the foot of the monument.

I firmly believe that Father Jim had taken to heart the words of the prophet: "You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Mic 6:8)

Romeo Trotter, S.D.B.

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**Father Bernard S. Justen, S.D.B.**

After years of prayer and disciplined preparation for a life of eternity, Father Bernard S. Justen, is no doubt, able to repeat the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us! This is the Lord for whom we looked: let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!" The man we affectionately called "B.J." has joined the ranks of notable Salesians who have gone before him.

I first met Father Justen when I was in elementary school. The traffic moved at a steady pace in spite of the rain that Friday afternoon in the fall of 1967. After a one-hour journey to Goshen, New York., I arrived at Salesian Junior Seminary to attend a weekend vocation retreat. Upon my arrival I recalled my father's instruction, "Call home as soon as you get there, so we'll know you made it." In the main hall, while looking for a telephone, I met a priest. He stood erect, wearing a neatly pressed cassock, and gave me the impression that perhaps he came from a military background. I introduced myself, asking whether I could use the telephone.

"You'll need to use the pay phone in that booth," he said. "The procedure is this: ask Father Director for permission to make the call. If he gives you permission, he will also give you a dime. Use the dime to make a collect call from the phone. When you are finished, bring the dime back to Father Director."

His instructions were very clear. But his voice was compassionate and reassuring. So I asked, "Where might I find Father Director?"

"Come with me," he said. We headed to the front of the building, to an office that was simple and neat. In the center of the room was a very large desk. The few items on the desk were organized in an efficient row. A set of two desk pens, fountain pens, was perched at the head of the desk.

The priest opened an upper drawer of the desk. I looked down and noticed that there was nothing in the drawer but a dime. The priest ceremoniously lifted this dime from the drawer. With a smile he handed me the dime and said, "I am Father Justen. I'm the director. Here's your dime."

With that a friendship began which lasted many years. Although our paths crossed only a few times over the years, those years we were together were always good ones. Many of the characteristics that make a devoted Salesian I learned from Father Bernard Justen, not so much by his preaching but by his example. Among these characteristics are charity, prayer, work, and temperance.

St. Francis de Sales has written, "True virtue has no limits, but goes on and on, and especially holy charity, which is the virtue of virtues." One often thinks of charity as simply doing a good deed for someone in need. But Father Justen displayed charity in a more powerful way. For him charity became a way of living. He was the consummate gentleman. Standing tall, neatly dressed, he did everything well, with the proper decorum one would expect from royalty. Whether working with the poorest of the poor or addressing

an assembly of wealthy benefactors, he treated everyone with equal, dignified respect. By his demeanor he preached that all people deserve the respect that comes with being created in the image and likeness of God.

Prayer was important to Father Justen. In the Gospel of Luke we read, "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival." Recognizing that daily practices of piety were important tools to help one attain union with God, he encouraged his confreres to pray, and to pray well. During his years as director of Don Bosco Seminary in Newton, New Jersey, Father Justen revised the Salesian Manual of Prayers into a five-volume set that included prayers for daily use, penance services, and activities for days of recollection. He prepared for the daily liturgy with great care, writing his homilies well in advance. He expected every detail to be executed properly. And his personal union with God became evident when individual confreres turned to him for spiritual direction and guidance about daily matters.

Father Justen was not afraid of hard work. While his work was not so much of the manual variety, he certainly accomplished many things. During his years in Newton he perfected his knowledge of Latin, the official language of the Church, often writing his daily notes using the language. He was fluent in many languages and helpful to those learning a foreign language.

His temperance was outstanding. We never saw him drink too much. We never heard him speak with innuendoes or repeat off-color jokes. He was always well mannered at table. And on the few occasions where he might disagree about something, he spoke deliberately, stating his case clearly, without emotion or anger.

Although Father Justen gave the appearance of being somewhat austere and reserved, there would often appear a great sense of humor and a kind and gentle way about him. His preferred outlet, into which he placed great energy, was his love for music in all its forms. He was an accomplished musician, especially with the organ and piano. During his early days as a priest he played the trumpet and directed the seminary band. A mischievous seminarian referred to them as "Hot Lips Justen and His Rubber Band."

When Father Justen was director of Don Bosco College, he directed the choir. They practiced daily, becoming quite accomplished at singing Gregorian chant, Latin motets, and classical liturgical music. He invited me to play the piano during their rehearsals and performances. In addition to popular tunes like "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," we also sang great sacred music for the liturgy. During those years the choir and seminarians sang the entire Passion of Christ during the Holy Week services. He also challenged the Salesians to prepare well for the liturgy so that every aspect could be conducted with proper decorum and attention to detail.

Through charity, prayer, work, and temperance Father Justen imitated the founder of the Salesians. He enjoyed the sharing of facts about the life of the saint. Clearly, Father Justen's pastoral style was modeled after that of Don Bosco. This was especially evident when he became provincial superior of the Salesians' Western U.S.A. Province, based in San Francisco.

During his assignments in New York, Ohio, Texas, and Tampa, many confreres recall that he served well, with humility, and gave great attention to the priests and brothers who remember him as a kind and compassionate man, another Don Bosco. The hundreds of young men, myself included, whom he guided in the process of discerning their vocation in the seminary, held him in the highest regard. They saw in him a model priest, experienced his kindness, and found him a tremendous spiritual influence on their lives.

I witnessed Father's pastoral nature during a trip he asked me to make with him during my days in the seminary in Newton. He had been invited to attend the dedication of a new pipe organ built by the Peragallo Organ Company of Paterson, New Jersey. Father Justen had been close friends with the Peragallo family. He noted that this new organ was located in my hometown of Nyack, New York, so he asked me whether I would drive him to Nyack for the concert, which was on a Sunday afternoon.

During the recital, Father Justen listened intently to the music. Between pieces he would explain the history of the composer with anecdotes about the music. During the intermission he asked whether I would like to visit my parents before going home. Of course I agreed, and called home to tell them about our unexpected visit. They were delighted, surprised, but had one request: Could I stop at the A & P to pick up a cake. So on our way to my home we went shopping.

Father Justen entered the store with me and examined closely everything about it. He marveled that one

could buy sliced ham and bologna, ready wrapped and hanging from a hook on a shelf. He was amazed at the rows and variety of cereal. And the little conveyor to the cash register really fascinated him. He explained to me that for all the years he was a Salesian, he had never gone shopping. That was always the job of the prefect of the house. Father revealed that this brief visit to the supermarket gave him a new appreciation for the work that was being done by those Salesians who did the shopping for their communities, and for the people who worked so hard in those stores. I noted that his focus was not on the material items in the store, but rather on the people who worked there or shopped there.

Father Justen returned to his native Tampa, where he semi-retired at Mary Help of Christians. He remained active in weekend priestly ministry in several parishes and in the Hillsborough County jails. At his parish assignments and especially in prison ministry, Father Justen's fluency in Spanish was of great pastoral advantage. Working around the restrictions of space and time that the jail authorities placed upon him and the inmates, he made himself available as much as possible to provide the sacraments.

In 2002 Father Justen was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. While his memory slowly faded, he always maintained that quiet dignity for which he was known. Although he began to forget a few daily details, he would always speak up when riding past the old Washington Public School on Columbus Avenue in Tampa to tell us his mother taught there for many years. Every day he made it a point to visit the grave of his godmother, Alicia Neve, the foundress of Mary Help of Christians School. She is buried in the little cemetery in the orange grove on the school grounds. She supported him financially through much of his life. He would head for the cemetery, behind St. Philip's Residence, the home for retired Salesians, with the rosary on his hands.

In 2002 Father Justen moved to Palm Garden of Largo, where he received full-time nursing care. To his last days he never complained, displaying a quiet dignity and an awareness of how close God was to him.

Today we rejoice in the Lord and thank God for bringing Bernard Justen into our lives. Through his marvelous example of charity, prayer, work, and temperance, Father Justen taught us how to live what we believe, to go beyond speaking about God's love by living our faith, becoming physical signs and bearers of God's love, especially for the young. Through his life, and even in his death, Father Justen proclaims the words of St. Paul: "If then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him."

Father Dennis Donovan, S.D.B.

Director

January 4, 2007

### Obituary Notice

*Tampa Tribune, January 3, 2007*

Father Bernard Sebastian Justen, S.D.B., 86, died January 2, 2007, at Palm Garden of Largo, Florida. He was a member of the Salesians of Don Bosco for 68 years, and a Catholic priest for 58 years.

Although Father Justen held many important national positions with the Salesians during his life, he began and ended his life in his native Tampa. He was buried with his family at Myrtle Hill Memorial Park in Tampa.

Bernard was born to Bernard and Mary Arco Justen on Nov. 12, 1920. As a boy he worshiped at Our Lady of Mercy Church run by the Salesians (now Our Lady of Perpetual Help). He completed his elementary schooling with the Salesians at Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa. He entered Don Bosco Seminary in Newton, N.J., for high school (1933-37) and novitiate (1937-38) and professed religious vows on Sept. 8, 1938. He graduated from Don Bosco College, Newton, in 1941 and then taught in the high school seminary for three years.

Father Justen studied theology at Don Bosco Seminary (1944-48) and was ordained in Newton on Dec. 18, 1948. He remained at a college seminary for the next 10 years as assistant to candidates for admission to the Salesians (1949-50), prefect of studies (1950-55), and director of religious activities (1955-58). In 1958 he was appointed director of the high school seminary, located at Haverstraw, New York, at that time;

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it relocated to Goshen, New York, in 1961, and Father Justen remained director there until 1967.

In 1967 Father Justen became provincial superior of the Salesians' Western U.S.A. Province, based in San Francisco, for a term of six years. After that he served in various capacities in Texas, Florida, New York and Ohio. In 1997, Father Justen semi-retired in Tampa, returning to Mary Help of Christians. But he remained active in weekend priestly ministry in several parishes in the Hillsborough County jails. In all his parish assignments and especially in prison ministry, Father Justen's fluency in Spanish was of great pastoral advantage. He was grieved at the restrictions of space and time that the jail authorities placed upon him and the inmates as he brought them the sacraments. In 2002 Father Justen was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. This forced him, in 2004, to retire fully to St. Philip the Apostle Residence, located on the grounds of the Tampa school. Early in 2006 Father Justen moved to Palm Garden of Largo to receive full-time nursing care.

Father Justen is remembered by Salesians for his learning, austerity, and compassion. He was passionate about the sacred liturgy and was an accomplished organist. He loved to teach both vocal and instrumental music and Latin, particularly Vergil (he always spelled it that way). His knowledge of St. John Bosco's life, educational method, and spirit was legendary. The hundreds of young men whom he guided in the process of discerning their vocation in the junior seminary at Haverstraw and Goshen held him in the highest regard. They saw in him a model priest, experienced his kindness, and found him a tremendous spiritual influence on their lives. Some regarded him as their second father.

Funeral services were held in the chapel at Mary Help of Christians Center on Thursday, January 4, 2007. Burial followed one mile from Mary Help at Myrtle Hill Memorial Park, 4207 E. Lake Avenue, Tampa Florida 33610 in Section 40, Lot 19, Space 2.

### Testimonials

To my spiritual father and guide during my early years at Goshen. May you rest in peace with Don Bosco and all the saints where you truly belong. – *Kevin Brophy*

*In paradisum – deducant te angeli...* Father, mentor, inspiration, hero in so many ways – the world is poorer because you're gone – but so many lives are richer because you were here. Thank you, Father Justen – thank you! – *Pete McClernon*

Rest with our Lord & our Lady, my beloved Father. You were to me a father, a mentor, a source of love & understanding. I wait to see you again in our Father's house. – *Ed Lord*

He set the standard on my way to the priesthood. His life personified his dedication to fostering vocations. May his virtues be extolled for generations. – *Jerry Marcial*

You spent most of your life instilling the spirit of St. John Bosco in young men who are better for it today. We loved you like a father and are blessed for having known you. – *Jim Howe*



**Father Denis Kelleher, S.D.B.**

On the eve of All Saints, October 31, 2006, at approximately 6:30 P.M., our brother and friend, Father Dennis Kelleher returned to the home of the Father at the age of 84, after 64 years of Salesian consecrated life; 54 of which he spent ministering to the young as a Salesian priest. He had been in declining health for the past six years. In early September, a debilitating stroke took away his speech and his strength and awareness began to steadily deteriorate. Having received the Last Rites a few days before this, and surrounded by the loving care and attention of his confreres of Salesian High School and of the Little Sisters of the Poor, who were caring for him, he quietly let go of this world to journey homeward for the celebration of All Saints.

Denis was born in Millstreet in County Cork, Ireland to Denis and Catherine Kelleher on February 27, 1922 and was baptized in the church of St. Patrick on the same day. All of his life, Father Denis remained Irish to the bone and deeply proud of his heritage. He always maintained his Irish citizenship and kept his Irish passport – which became extremely important in the last decade of his life when, each summer, he would ask the provincial if he could pay “one last visit” to Ireland before dying! Permission was granted, and Father Denis was happy to return to Millstreet to visit family and friends. Indeed, even those last three summers of his life, when severe diabetes and a heat condition greatly limited even short distance travel, he, nonetheless, religiously asked permission for that “one last visit” to his beloved Ireland!

Young Denis joined the Salesians early in his life, as an aspirant at Salesian College in Shrigley and a novice in Beckford, both in England. Father Larry Byrne, a companion of Father Denis who presently belongs to the San Francisco province, recalls how soon after he arrived in England, Denis left behind his Cork accent and began to speak (almost overnight) with a British accent – perhaps a sign of how well he would adjust in his Salesian life to the many places where he lived and worked!

He was fond of recalling his novice master, the famed Father James Simonetti, who held the position for decades, training generations of Salesians in the 37 degrees of humility...which Father Denis readily admitted he had never mastered! According to him, towards the end of Father Simonetti’s tenure as novice master the phrase had developed among the aspirants: “Death but not Sim!”

Blaisdon, Pallaskenry, Farnborough, Shrigley, Beckford, Chertsey, Battersea, and Warrenstown – the names of the houses in England and Ireland in which Father Denis worked after his first profession on August 31, 1942, or his priestly ordination on July 20, 1952. As a confrere of the Anglo-Irish Province, he was a teacher, assistant and, in some cases, prefect over the course of 28 years.

As a prefect, he was known for being generous to a fault, concerned about the kitchen and making sure the feast days were “properly” celebrated in the dig room. He took pains to see to it that the boys (and

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sometimes the confreres) were properly trained in the proprieties of English etiquette! This was a pattern he continued to follow when he was prefect at our school in Cedar Lake, Indiana. Father Timothy Ploch, our former provincial, who was a cleric at Cedar Lake at that time, recalls Father Denis' weekly "Civility Night" in the boys' dining room: table clothes, candles, good china and the boys were required to wear shoes! Meanwhile, all during the meal Father Denis would be giving the boys tips on why not to eat French fries with their fingers!

Father James Curran, a boyhood friend from aspirant days, recalls that the confreres always knew when Denis had something special planned in the kitchen, because a truck from the famous Harrods' of London, would pull up to the kitchen door bearing sumptuous delicacies for the feast day meal. He also recalls that after a long day of teaching and caring for the boys 24/7, one could always experience the human touch by passing the Prefect's Office before retiring for the night to find lights on, the door open, and Father Denis ready to share a few moments of relaxation and laughter while enjoying a "bit of a nightcap"!

Always with a bit of a flare for the dramatic, as a cleric, Father Larry Byrne tells us, Denis was excellent on the stage and was very much involved in producing plays. Like Don Bosco, he saw drama as a real and valuable educative tool and as a young priest he was truly gifted in getting the clerics in formation interested in drama. Father Denis loved what the boys loved (and got others to do the same!) And because of this, it is no wonder that he was so endeared by his students.

Through the years, some of Denis' siblings migrated from Ireland to the United States and were raising their families here. During those years, Denis had visited the United States for mission preaching and to see his family, and so, as early as 1966, discussions between provincials began which led to the United States becoming his second home in 1970.

In July 1970, a month or so before his arrival in the United States, Father Denis wrote to Father John Malloy, the provincial of the eastern U.S. province at that time: "It will be my privilege to work in the eastern Province of the U.S.A. and to have you as my major superior for some time to come. It is something I look forward to and promise to do what I can in the assignments you give me. My talents are not top drawer, but my good will is at the service of Don Bosco under your guidance... prayers that God will continue to bless the efforts in America made by generous and whole-hearted confreres."

With that declaration of availability, Father Denis began 36 years of life and work in the eastern province of the United States. His assignments brought him to our houses in Cedar Lake, West Haverstraw, Birmingham, Marrero, Boston, East Boston, Harvey, Stony Point, Ipswich, New York City, South Orange, and finally New Rochelle.

Boston would be the obedience in which he felt most at home. For eleven continuous years (1975-1986), he served the young people of Boston and East Boston first at Don Bosco Tech and then at St. Dominic Savio High School. In the classroom, he taught Religion and English; out of the classroom, he was an ardent supporter of all student activities but especially ice hockey. It was there, on the "playground," so to say, that he truly came to know and befriend "his boys" and they came to know and befriend him. Nor was his concern only for his students, but also for friends of his students who did not attend our schools but who came to know and love Father Denis as the priest who was at all the neighborhood games, family get-togethers and who never failed to visit their corner hangouts. Denis was never anyone who waited for the boys to come to him; he was always ready to make the first approach meeting them where they were, with an outstretched hand and a warm "Hello, friend!" Among these young men, he would develop friendships that could last a lifetime. He became for more than one a "family chaplain," called upon to witness their marriages, baptize their children, and bury their dead.

Father Larry Byrne recalls how one summer Father Denis picked him up at the airport in East Boston to take him on an on-going formation course in Ipswich. Well, the trip took longer than usual, as Denis had a number of "stops" to make along the way to greet alumni and their delighted families. Till his death, his former students were always delighted to see him, and in those last months when he was no longer able to travel to see them, they came to New York to visit their dear old friend, Father Denis! What an impression it made to see so many of these boys, now men, come to New Rochelle from Boston to be present at his

wake and funeral. Six months later, so many of them, with their families and loved ones, were in attendance at the Memorial Mass they themselves organized in a local Boston parish.

Friend and priest are perhaps two words that capture the essence of Father Denis for so many. He had a rich capacity for making acquaintances and then sustaining those relationships over many years. With a telephone call, a note or card, a visit or a small gift brought back from Ireland, he sensitively let people know they were important to him.

Denis was always the priest. His joy was not just to be with others, but to remind them of, and offer them, God. He was fond of preaching and administering the sacraments, and always ready to fill in at parishes when pastors went on vacation. No distance was too great for Denis to travel for such ministries! Indeed, I was Father Denis' new Director at the Marian Shrine when one afternoon he came into the office and asked me if he could assist "George" who needed some help with Penance services. Assuming "George" to be the local pastor, I naturally said "yes" – little did I know that George was the pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in the Roslindale section of Boston and Denis would be gone for three days! But this was Denis, and everyone knew it! As one of our alumni said at the close of the Memorial Mass in Boston, "Sod never for to attached to Father Denis' shoes, and I'm sure it must have been a difficult task for his superiors to keep track of where he would show up next in the service of an old friend!" Truly, this was the case: it was difficult to keep tabs on Denis, but one could always be sure that wherever he was, he was, indeed, serving. Always and everywhere, Denis was the priest and loved his priesthood. Even in these last two years of his life, when he was in a nursing home, he was always ready to hear confessions of the staff, administer sacraments to the sick and dying and to be brought here to Salesian High School to hear the boys' confessions for hours on end to participate in school Masses and events. His heart beat with an interest for the young.

Always the priest, Denis had a deep love for the Mass. Celebrating the Mass was truly the center of his day, and regardless of how early he got in at night, he celebrated Mass. Scrupulously attentive to Mass intentions, the celebration of the Eucharist became the privileged place where he remembered by name all those he had promised to pray for and the needs of all his family and friends. Indeed, the last years of his life, his biggest frustration and complaint was that circumstances in the nursing home did not allow him to celebrate daily Mass. Soon after I arrived as director, he asked me to please not count on him for any Mass intentions because he was uncertain as to whether or not he would have the opportunity to celebrate every day and he was afraid he would get confused or forget; instead, he asked if all his intentions could be for his deceased relatives and friends and to be able to continue to offer Mass for the many for whom he promised to pray. When I told him I had no problems with this, he was visibly relieved and grateful. He was so happy to be moved to the care of the Little Sisters of the Poor at Jeanne Jugan residence, because there, he would finally have the opportunity to once again celebrate Mass everyday. Unfortunately, his stay there was to be the shortest before he was called to celebrate the eternal liturgy of praise with the Triune God. Still, for the brief time he was there, he loved the beautiful prayerful chapel and the chance to celebrate daily Mass.

Together with the Mass, the other prayer which sustained Father Denis in his spiritual journey was his daily Rosary. Whether it was with a finger rosary or with the traditional beads, everyday Denis faithfully prayed the Marian prayer. Salesian to the core, Father Denis' daily prayer of the Eucharist and the Rosary was mission driven. People counted on him, and when he felt he could no longer "do" for them, he was going to be sure that to his last breath he prayed for them.

I had the privilege of living and working with Father Denis in four different communities: Boston, Marrero, West Haverstraw, and finally, here in New Rochelle. As I look back at those times, I can truly say that his life was always marked by one overriding characteristic: his interest in the young and his desire to be present among them. In these last two years when he was confined to the nursing home while a member of this community, besides being available for priestly ministry, especially in the confessional, he always had a keen interest in what was going on in the school. We frequently brought him home to the community for a Sunday meal and family celebrations. He always had questions about what was going on in the school,



how we were able to make ends meet, whether the lay staff was cooperative and really accepting our spirit and system, how the boys' athletic teams were doing, if we were planning a play this year and how the re-birth of the band was going. He wanted to know how we kept contact with our alumni and whether they were generous with us. While at the table, enjoying a good meal (always commenting on how much better it was than the "tasteless stuff" he got to eat in the home!), he showed a keen interest in the clerics in practical training and head many questions for them about how things were going in their classes and activities and whether the boys were responding. One morning he called me insisting that I go visit him that very afternoon. When I got to the nursing home, he pulled out an envelope with a check inside it for a thousand dollars. An "old dear friend" had died and left Father Denis this in his will. "Paddy," he said, "take this money and help some poor kid with it and," he added, "you don't have to bother telling the provincial about it if you don't want to!" That scene was typical of Father Denis, always wanting to be able to help "some poor kid." If he bent the Rule, it was because he believed he had to do this or that thing in order to be of service to someone else.

Illness began to burden Father Denis, and heart disease, kidney problems, diabetes, cancer and mild dementia all began to take their toll. For those of us who lived with Father Denis through the years, this became very evident when he was no longer able to recall the name of his "old boys," as he used to previously. For the past three years he made his home in nursing facilities: Blue Gate, Frances Schervier, Nyack Manor, Providence Rest and finally Jeanne Jugan Residence in the Bronx. He bore his infirmities with dignity. In November 2005, his last surviving sibling and dear sister, Mary, died. Denis was not able to be the main celebrant at the funeral Mass due to the many steps surrounding the altar, but before the final commendation, he spoke glowingly and with emotion of his sister and the family life they shared together and, as usual, he was sure to say thank-you to all who had come to the funeral. While Denis stood strong that day, it was clear to all that a bit of the "spark" in him died with Mary. After the funeral, although Father Denis never lost his desire to visit Ireland for "one last time," he, too, began to realize that this was no longer possible, and his heart gradually became more firmly set on his final home. Truly surrounded by the love of so many of the confreres he lived with, in these aging periods of his life, the Lord blessed him with three very special "guardian angels" in the persons of Father Steve Ryan, Brother Emile Dube, and Father Jim Mulloy. Father Denis himself would want these confreres mentioned for all the brotherly love, service, care and attention each showed him at three very different but crucial periods during these last years of his life.

The last weeks of Father Denis' life were spent peacefully and joyfully at the nursing home. He was especially cheered by the visit of some of his old students from Boston. The Little Sisters of the Poor cared for him with exquisite kindness. However, his kidney failure began to worsen and the decision was made that he should no longer continue with dialysis – it caused him too much pain and discomfort. He received the Anointing of the Sick, and a few days later began to drift into semi-consciousness. Members of the community were constantly with him, and the Little Sisters surrounded him with prayer letting him know that it was alright for him to "go home to God." Late on the night of October 30, Sisters informed us that it would be a matter of a day or two. The next day, October 31, the members of the community took turns from their class schedules to keep watch and pray with and for Father Denis. At around 5:15 P.M., Sister suggested to Father Jim Mulloy that he go home and get something to eat and to get some rest. While Father Denis was worsening, it did not seem that death was imminent and the Sisters were planning an all night vigil of prayer around Father's bedside. At around 7 P.M., just as the community had finished dinner, the phone rang. One of the Sisters had gone to check on Father Denis only to find that he had ever so quietly taken his last journey – to the house of the Father. Typical of Denis' style, he was not going to disturb anyone if he could help it and was going to surprise everyone! All of us in the community quickly returned to the nursing home to be greeted by the Sisters who had already surrounded his bedside. With candles lit and rosaries in hand, we said the prayers for those who have just expired, prayed the rosary together and sang some hymns. Then, just as Father Denis would have wanted it, together with the Little Sisters we shared stories about Father Denis and laughed as we reminisced. Father Jim Mulloy shared with us an Old Irish legend that says on the eve of All Hallows departed family members, who died during the year, visit



earth to invite others to come along with them to celebrate All Saints together. We commented that if that was the case, no doubt, Father Denis was greeted by his sister Mary and some others of his departed family members and quickly followed along to celebrate a great and sumptuous feast!

Father Denis' wake and funeral were beautiful tributes to his zeal and concern for others. Throughout the days, classes of boys from Salesian High together with their teachers took turns paying their respects and praying for the man who had become their "regular confessor" during the past two years. It truly became a "teachable moment" for them, as we spoke to them about the impact of a life well lived. Confreres, family and friends came from all parts – even from far away as Ireland! It was great to hear the stories of his visits home to Millstreet and the central role he played in the lives of so many of his family members. Old married couples came – couples whose lives he had touched in the early days of Marriage Encounter, when, in 1971, he was stationed at our retreat house at the Marian Shrine. Nurses and care takers from the nursing homes where he had been in recent years came – he had served as their confessor and confident while they were caring for him! People from the various parishes where he had helped out over the years came to pray and share stories of how Father Denis had touched their lives. Yet, none of this could match the number of young men who came down from Boston to pay their respects to their "old friend" for the last time. Many of them with tears in their eyes told of how Father Denis had stayed on their cases and helped them get through high school when studies, or discipline or things at home were shaky and not going well!!! They told of his surprise "family visits" – always a reason for their Moms to make a good Irish meal, which, of course, Father Denis would relish in eating! They reminisced of how he took part in their weddings, the baptisms of their children and the funerals of their parents. It made us all deeply aware that Father Denis was truly "their priest" – and even if, at times, they had drifted away from the institutional Church, "their priest" was there for them and they knew who they could turn to in time of need. They knew that in Father Denis they could find a listening ear and an understanding heart. In Father Denis, they knew they would always find the Good Shepherd.

In these months, we find ourselves in preparation for General Chapter XXVI, with its theme: *Da mihi animas, Caetera tolle*. Surely, the life of Father Denis Kelleher bears witness to the Rector Major's call to "return to the young." Denis never left them! As we reflect on his life, it more than compensates for any of his unorthodox methods or sometimes nerve grating ways in community (only Denis could smash a car, back into the house, put the key back up on the board and take another car to continue his visits, and not say a word to anyone!). After a full and fruitful life, Father Denis has now rejoined his confreres of three provinces and his family members who have preceded him.

Much of what has been shared in this letter comes from the pen of our provincial, Father James Heuser. He asked us to pray in a special way that the witness of Father Denis' priesthood and friendship be a source of new vocations for our provinces. May his witness also serve as a source of encouragement and inspiration to us, as we continue to follow Jesus and serve the young in the footsteps of Don Bosco!

Please pray for this community, the last in which Father Denis worked, and for the mission entrusted to it.

Father Patrick Angelucci, S.D.B.  
Director

### ***Necrology:***

*Kelleher, Father Denis + New Rochelle, New York, October 31, 2006 at age 84, 64 years of profession and 54 years of priesthood.*



**Father Francis J. Klauder, S.D.B.**

IESU, QUEN VELATUM NUNC ASPICIO,  
ORO FIAT ILLUD QUOD TAM SITIO:  
UT, TE REVELATA CERNENS FACIE,  
VISU SIM BEATUS TUAE GLORIAE.

JESUS, WHOM I LOOK AT SHROUDED HERE BELOW,  
I BESEECH THEE SEND ME WHAT I THIRST FOR SO,  
SOMEDAY TO GAZE ON THEE FACE TO FACE IN LIGHT  
AND BE BLEST FOR EVER WITH THY GLORY'S SIGHT.

– ST. THOMAS AQUINAS –

*“The learned will shine like the brilliance of the firmament,  
and those who teach many in the ways of justice will sparkle  
like the stars for all eternity.” (Daniel 12:3)*



With these words from the introductory antiphon, the formation community of Don Bosco Residence in Orange, New Jersey, began our morning celebration of the Eucharist. It was January 28, 2000, the memorial of St. Thomas Aquinas, and while we prayed, one of our beloved brothers lay upstairs dying. A few hours later, at 12:50 P.M., Father Francis John Klauder, S.D.B., who was both learned and taught many, peacefully breathed his last and set off on his journey into eternity.

For several days prior, the young men in formation had been taking turns remaining at Father Frank's bedside in the residence day and night, reading Scripture and reciting prayers, as he suffered through the final stages of liver disease. On January 27, Father Pat Angelucci, provincial superior, had come and administered the sacrament of Anointing, with members of the community as well as a Salesian Cooperator gathered around.

Early in the morning of the 28th, Father Mario Balbi had given Father Frank the Apostolic Pardon. Then about midday, some community members stood around the bedside and prayed the Rosary, before going to have lunch. A few moments later, we were summoned back to the bedroom. As it became apparent that the moment of death was near, Father Jim Berning held Father Frank while Father Jim Heuser, the director, led

the community in the Litany of the Saints and the prayers for the dying. When the final prayer was completed, Father Frank peacefully uttered his last, short breath. He entered the communion of saints on the feast day of his much beloved Thomas Aquinas.

Two days later, on Sunday, January 30, the body of Father Frank was received by the community of Orange at the Church of Our Lady of the Valley, adjacent to the community residence. The wake and funeral, in addition to bringing together members of the Klauder family, and the Salesian Family, also drew many of Father Frank's past students. The pastor and parishioners of St. Thomas of Aquin Parish in Ogdensburg, where Father Frank had served on weekends for many years, also came to pay their respects.

The funeral Mass was celebrated in the evening of January 31, solemnity of St. John Bosco. Father Patrick Angelucci, provincial, was main celebrant, and Bishop Dominic Marconi, an auxiliary of the archdiocese of Newark, presided. Over 75 priests concelebrated. Father Harry Rasmussen represented the confreres of the Western Province while Father Joseph Occhio represented the confreres of the Canadian Province. Abbot Joel Macul represented the Benedictines of St. Paul's Abbey in Newton.

On the morning of February 1, the annual day of prayer for deceased Salesians, the community celebrated a final Eucharist around the body of Father Frank. A funeral procession then brought the body to Philadelphia, where it was laid to rest in the Klauder family plot in Holy Sepulcher Cemetery. This was in keeping with the wishes of Father Frank, who had sensitively written in a spiritual testament:

*After my death, I have asked to be buried in the family plot in Philadelphia. I hope that this will not be taken adversely by my Salesian confreres. Please consider this gesture on my part as an expression of gratitude for the baptismal faith I have received as God's most precious gift through the instrumentality of my parents and family. They too, form a part of the larger Salesian family.*

### ***The Klauder Family***

Indeed, the Klauder family had imparted to young Frank a rich faith. Frank was born in the family home on North Broad Street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on December 1, 1918, to Francis and Agnes (Quinlan) Klauder and baptized three weeks later on December 22 in St. Stephen's Church. He was the youngest of nine children, having four older sisters and four older brothers.

When Frank was four years old his mother died. The memory of the family gathered around her bed, and of a nurse indicating to Frank that his mother must go to heaven now, would remain with him all his life. He would also recall his father bringing him by the hand halfway down the stairs of the family home to point out his mother's body laid out in the parlor. The love he knew from her – brief yet intense – marked his existence.

After the death of his mother, his father then became his greatest love. Francis Klauder, Sr., a college graduate, was a prominent hide and leather broker in Philadelphia. But he was a man whose devotion to his family came first. Years later, at the first Mass of Father Frank with his family after his priestly ordination, Father Frank would say:

*To him I owe my life and my faith. Unless he had handed down the faith to me, where would I have gotten it...? I rejoice that having such a father it is easy for me to enter into the thought of the fatherliness of God which is at the very basis of Catholic belief. If I ever want to fathom the depth of God's love for me..., I find it sufficient to reflect on my own earthly father*

## 64 Short Sketches

The two oldest girls, Mary and Anne, assisted their dad in raising the family. In 1933 the father would marry Agatha Heade Mills, who soon won the hearts of the entire family.

After all the children had grown up, Frank's sister Mary – affectionately known as “Toots” – became a Visitation nun. Father Frank would remain especially close to her and to the Visitation Order for years to come. (It's worth noting that church vocations were abundant in the Klauder family. Father Frank's two great-uncles, Alexander and Francis, were Redemptorist priests. His uncle, Msgr. Charles Klauder, was a diocesan priest in Buffalo. His one aunt, Sister Mary Magdalen Klauder, was a Visitandine, while another aunt, Sister Mary Verena, was a Good Shepherd sister. In addition, two first cousins were priests, Father Charles Schnoor, a Jesuit, and Father Joseph Schnoor, a diocesan priest for Philadelphia. Father Frank's nephew, himself named Frank, is a permanent deacon).

Father Frank's father died in 1955 and his stepmother died in 1963. Six of Father Frank's siblings would also precede him in death: Charles in 1957, Philip in 1977, George in 1979, Gerard in 1985, Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart in 1990 and Frances (McGlynn) in 1993. Only Anne, age 95, and Kay (Markey), age 85, would survive him. The names of all his immediate family members were written on a card in his breviary, and never a day passed that he did not pray for them.

### **Early Life in Philadelphia**

Relations of the heart and strong faith marked the family of the Klauders. They were active parishioners of St. Stephen's Parish. All of the children were educated in Catholic elementary schools by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chestnut Hill and the La Salle Christian Brothers. Whenever possible, they would vacation together in the summer at the Jersey Shore.

From the age of seven, young Frank had his eyes set on the priesthood. Years later, he would recall:

*My brother Philip built an altar for me and there I would pretend to celebrate Mass. My faithful “parishioner” for a long time was the family cook, a great black woman with the name of Rebecca, who though a Baptist would attend my “Mass” and even contribute to the “collection.” She was ever devoted to our family.... I used to compose a monthly “magazine” on religious matters with many pasted-together pictures of different saints. I called it the “All Saints” magazine and was delighted when members of my family or visitors would read its brief accounts. The desire to write about the things of God and serious matters has never left me.*

Frank went to Northeast Catholic High School, conducted by the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales. A number of the Oblates became close to the family and would visit the Klauder home on occasion. Through them he was introduced to the figure of our Salesian patron, St. Francis de Sales, and, indeed, would have become an Oblate himself had not Divine Providence intervened.

During his senior year of high school, in 1935, one of his aunts, a cloistered nun, sent him literature on St. John Bosco, canonized just the year before. In Father Frank's own words, “He stole my heart and has never given it back.” Frank interrupted his senior year of high school in Philadelphia and, on December 1, 1935, his seventeenth birthday, he entered Don Bosco Seminary in Newton, New Jersey, a place destined to be his home for most of the next 50 years.

### **Early Salesian Formation**

Extant letters written by young Frank to his father and family indicate just how difficult his first days in Newton were. Indeed, he underwent a painful homesickness that left him melancholy, in spiritual crisis, and without sleep for many days. The director, Father Alvin Fedrigotti, wisely stayed his impulse to leave. A few weeks later, when young Frank made a novena together with another classmate to Our Lady Help of Christians, going to chapel each day together to recite the prayers, the anguish was lifted and peace

in his choice of vocation returned.

Frank made his novitiate in Newton in 1936-1937, professing on September 8, 1937, and to his surprise, was immediately sent by the provincial, Father Ambrose Rossi, to Rome for philosophical studies. For three years, 1937-1940, he studied under the Jesuits at the Gregorian University. Those years left lasting effects on Father Frank, as he himself testifies:

*Three years in Rome brought me countless graces. First among these was the closeness to the Holy Father. At the time Pius XI was the Pope. I was present in Rome when Pius XII was elected. I still recite his prayer for peace, uttered on the day of his election....*

*I had never known the Jesuits before my student days in Rome. I am grateful to them for their constant allegiance, in their teaching, to the Holy See and to the principles of St. Thomas Aquinas....*

*But my stay in Rome and Italy created another important link in my life – personal acquaintance with the origins of the Salesian Society and with many outstanding Salesians of Don Bosco. I heard retreats preached by famous Salesians such as Fathers Caviglia, Vismara, Favini, and others. I came to know Father Emmanuel Manasserro, who had been the American Provincial and who had been present at the Oratory at the time of Don Bosco's death. He was my confessor and spiritual director. Before leaving Italy and returning to the United States after three years, it fell to my lot to be the first American to pronounce my vows of renewal in the very rooms where Don Bosco had died. I cannot measure gifts such as these and other favors granted to me as a student in Rome.... I remain forever in debt to God for these treasures of grace.*

It is worth noting that Father Frank's Salesian writing began at this time, for the benefit of the aspirants back in Newton. During these years he translated Father Auffray's biography on Father Rua from Italian into English. He also wrote *Two Friends*, a combined life of Andrew Beltrami and Prince Augustus Czartoryski, from Italian biographies.

### **Further Salesian Formation**

Returning to the United States in 1940, Brother Frank was assigned to Newton for three years as teacher and assistant, first to the novices and then to the aspirants. On September 8, 1943, he made his perpetual vows in the Salesian Society, declaring,

*"Six years have passed since I received the grace of being admitted into our beloved Society. Within a short time, however, the vows which bind me to Her will expire. For my part, I choose Her as my portion now and forever...for the salvation of my own soul and those of many others, especially of youth."*

After his perpetual profession, the provincial at the time Father Eneas Tozzi, intended to send Brother Frank back to Rome for his theology studies, but the events of World War II made it impossible. And so he remained in Newton for four more years to study theology. The superiors at the time were unanimous in lauding his keen intelligence and his sincere piety.

On June 29, 1947, in the chapel at Newton, the dream of a seven-year-old boy of Philadelphia was fulfilled. Frank was ordained a priest by Bishop Francis X. Ford of Maryknoll. It was for Father Frank an

*“inestimable grace.”* For his ordination souvenir he chose the words of Pope Pius XII: *“Love Holy Mother the Church with a devoted and active love. Nothing more glorious can be imagined than to belong to the Holy Catholic Church of Rome.”*

After his ordination, Father Frank was assigned as a teacher to Salesian High School in New Rochelle, New York, from 1947-1950. At the same time he began studies at Fordham University towards a doctorate in philosophy (which he would be awarded in 1953 following a thesis on St. Bonaventure). By his own admission, he found high school teaching to be quite challenging. He lacked discipline with the young and also lacked a natural practicality in work. Superiors soon decided to restore him to the work of seminary formation, and so he returned to Newton in 1950.

### ***Philosophy Teacher***

For all of the period from 1950 to 1990 – save for a sabbatical year of study at the Institute of Salesian Studies in Berkeley, California – Father Frank was assigned to the formation house in Newton. A constant throughout was his service as teacher, primarily a teacher of philosophy.

In his own writings, Father Frank would define a true Thomist. In essence, he was describing himself: *“To me the true Thomist is the one who can glean the essential truths in the tradition of St. Thomas and translate them into terms that are intelligible to the people of his times.”* For years, class after class of seminarians – primarily Salesian, but also Capuchin, Benedictine and diocesan – would be led by Father Frank gently yet securely towards a grounding in Thomistic philosophy. For him, the method and doctrine of Thomas was the perennial philosophy upon which the Christian faith of our age – and any age – could be based.

To make learning easier for his students, Father Frank wrote several philosophy books. His first trilogy, authored in 1963-1964, was subsequently bound into one volume entitled *The Christian Idea*. The original separate volumes were:

- *The Vision of Faith*
- *The Philosophy of Common Sense*
- *The Witness of History*

In 1971 his *Aspects of the Thought of Teilhard de Chardin* presented in a series of essays the insights of this paleontologist-philosopher’s scientific faith. While quite favorably reviewed by some newspapers, it is ironic to note that this publication actually generated a bit of controversy, prompting some letters to the provincial, Father John Malloy, who then had to defend Father Frank’s reputation for orthodoxy!

During the years 1973-1983, Father Frank authored a series of philosophy books noted for their clarity, brevity and soundness. They were all aimed at initiating “wonder”:

- *The Wonder of the Real*
- *The Wonder of Intelligence*
- *The Wonder of Man*
- *The Wonder of God*
- *The Wonder of Matter*
- *The Wonder of Philosophy*
- *The Wonder of Philosophers*

Father Frank taught with a love and a passion for philosophy, sentiments that he tried to instill in others. He attempted to generate a community focused around the tradition, a fellowship ardently seeking the true, the beautiful and the good. He possessed, and communicated, a capacity for awe. Oftentimes he would quote a maxim of St. Thomas, and then stand back with a look of wonder, as if he himself were hearing the words for the first time. He had the advantageous ability of explaining Scholastic concepts in a way that gave the unphilosophical mind a hold on the subject.

But it must be noted that the student remained always the center of concern. While Father Frank's intelligence was keen, his heart was grander. His students testify that he was unfailing in his encouragement, would in some cases wait months for late assignments, and always gave A's and B's for a grade. The one exception noted was when an accrediting agency for the college noted an inordinate number of students receiving high grades. For the next semester, Father Frank gave some students a C+, resulting in the good-hearted student cheer: "Good-bye A and B, long live the C+!" Once the accreditation was secured, however, Father Frank returned to awarding A's and B's.

### ***College Administrator***

Throughout his years of teaching, Father Frank served at Don Bosco Seminary-College in various roles as well:

• 1953-1965	Dean of the College
• 1958	Catechist
• 1973 and 1983	Moderator of the Sons of Mary
• 1973-1985	Vice Director
• 1974-1986	College President

It is to be noted that the efforts of Father Frank were key to the initial and ongoing retention of the accreditation of Don Bosco College by the Middle States Association, enabling the formation house to grant degrees that were recognized and accepted civilly. The process to seek accreditation was begun in 1958, a first evaluation took place in 1963, and first accreditation was awarded in 1966 for a ten-year period. This accreditation was reaffirmed in 1976 and again in 1986, the Association lauding the College for the fine work of education it was accomplishing so well. In 1988 Father Frank himself was awarded a Certificate of Recognition by Governor Tom Kean for his "outstanding contribution to higher education in the State of New Jersey."

Another development for which Father Frank was significantly responsible was a cooperative plan between Don Bosco College and St. Peter's College in Jersey City, New Jersey. This partnership enabled students of Don Bosco College to graduate with teacher certification, invaluable for the schools in which most of the Salesian students did their years of practical training after graduation.

Statistics show that over the years of its existence, Don Bosco College had over 3,000 registrants. The education it imparted can be considered significant, not only for Salesians who professed and remained members of the North American provinces, but also in the lives of other students who are religious of other orders, diocesan priests and laity today. While this accomplishment is certainly the achievement of many, it is likewise true that this story of success is unthinkable without Father Frank Klauder. His efforts kept the College on a high standard before both the Department of Education of the State of New Jersey and the Congregation.

### ***Formator***

To speak of philosophy teaching and college administration alone conveys only part of the influence of Father Frank on young men in formation. He was a former not only of mind and heart, but of soul as well.

He kept on a piece of paper, copied in his own hand, a quote from Pope Paul VI that served as his vision: "The seminary is the school of interior silence, in which the mysterious voice of God speaks. It is the training ground for difficult virtues. It is the house where Christ the Master lives."

Father Frank knew that the truth to which he sought to introduce his students was ultimately a person: Jesus Christ. Hence his daily commitment to pray with and for his students.

Every class, meeting or activity unfailingly began with a prayer. He was regularly present at communal practices of piety, giving a witness that was intense and devout. And on his own, throughout the day, he would spend time before the Blessed Sacrament and time also passing the rosary beads through his fingers, lifting up to God the needs of the young men in formation.

### ***A Heavy Cross***

In the fall of 1988, Fr. Frank was diagnosed with prostate cancer. After surgery that proved to be successful, months of convalescence were required, for which he stayed with his family in Philadelphia.

It was during his absence from Newton that several factors led to discussions about the future of the formation program there. The decline in enrollment at Don Bosco College, the financial and personnel resources required to maintain it as an accredited institution, and changing perspectives on formation processes eventually led to the decision to close down the college seminary, the fate of many other free-standing college seminaries in the United States as well.

It was a rather abrupt decision, one around which Father Frank urged greater discernment. But it was not to be, and in June 1989 the formation program at Newton was effectively terminated. The College had to remain open for one further year at the request of the Chancellor of Higher Education of the State of New Jersey so that six more students might complete their degrees. But essentially a new formation program began to be set up in South Orange, New Jersey.

There is no doubt that for Father Frank the closing of Don Bosco College was a wrenching experience – his dark night of the soul. As he wrote in his spiritual autobiography, “This was the severest heartbreak of my life, so that my whole life was naught.” Father Frank shared with St. Thomas not only the knowledge of the true, the beautiful and the good, but also the knowledge of the cross.

### ***Ten Years in the Oranges***

It is a witness to the deep spirituality of Father Frank that he was able to continue teaching and publishing for ten more years – in the new formation houses in the Oranges – with courage and generosity and selflessness. He struggled to accept in faith what had happened and to make his own the sentiments of St. Francis de Sales that he kept written on a scrap of paper: “*Lord Jesus, without reservation, without if, without but, without exception, without limitation, let your will be done... in all things and everywhere!*”

Father Frank became an adjunct professor at Immaculate Conception Seminary, part of Seton Hall University. He continued teaching and tutoring in philosophy, having numerous diocesan seminarians and members of other religious orders as his students. At the same time he authored new works:

- *A Philosophy Rooted in Love: The Dominant Themes in the Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*
- *Knowledge of the Heart: A Christian Epistemology*
- *A Marvelous Synthesis: A Tracing of the Perennial Philosophy*
- *Key to the Understanding of Thomistic Philosophy (unpublished)*

In his later years Father Frank chaired a province commission to evaluate the prenovitiate and postnovitiate programs, focusing on three main areas: academics, community life and apostolic works. His findings and suggestions pointed the way to a more solidly re-founded program of initial formation in Orange, with a strengthened prenovitiate, a more stable academic program focusing on philosophy and education, and a vibrant oratory work among poor youth. It can truly be said that in his last years Father Frank declined the temptation to withdraw from formation work and instead spent his energies on giving birth to a new initial formation program, one that holds great promise for our province.

### ***Salesian Spirituality***

Besides tracing the key events in the life and work of Father Frank, it is worth our while to explore further the inner dynamics of his life, and to appreciate the facets of his deep spirituality.

First among them is his devotion to St. Francis de Sales. He possessed a natural affinity for our patron since his first encounter with Salesian spirituality in high school. He studied his life and worked to spread awareness of the saint’s richness, preaching often on him and, in addition, publishing two works:



- *Every Day with St. Francis de Sales*
- *St. Francis de Sales: Don Bosco's Patron*

He kept personal and professional contact with various Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, the Visitation Sisters, and the Fraternity of Francis de Sales, a lay organization that strives to live by Salesian spirituality. And like Francis, he gave himself to “the apostolate of the pen,” writing over the years numerous articles for the *Salesian Bulletin*, as well as other religious magazines, diocesan newspapers and scholarly journals.

But beyond his scholarship and his professional contributions, it was his living of Salesian spirituality that was his greatest witness.

Father Frank made Don Bosco’s ordination resolution his own: “*The charity and gentleness of St. Francis de Sales are to be my guide.*” He was a true gentleman, unfathomably kind and meek. Although possessing remarkable gifts of intellect and scholarship, he had a profound humility shown in an unassuming manner that never pushed himself forward and always deflected praise and credit to others. While his convictions ran deep, it was alien to his nature to do or say anything that might cause offense to others. For he possessed that optimistic humanism that saw God in each human heart and trusted in the inherent goodness of all. Such gentleness and faith made him sought out as a confessor.

Father Frank also made his own the “*Live Jesus!*” conviction of Francis de Sales or the “*union with God*” faith of Don Bosco. He sought holiness in his daily routine and made his daily occupations a prayer. He cultivated the habit of praying constantly with short aspirations, a practice he considered most important:

*It is clearly a grace, and it should be stressed much more than it is, precisely because it is so much needed as an antidote to the many distractions of contemporary life. It is the remedy against all superficiality, light-mindedness, scurrility and “the empty life of show.”... I have admired the “gift of union” in many souls and marvel at God’s hidden presence in so many good people who are not fully aware of their own precious condition in God’s sight.*

### **Key Salesian Devotions**

Special elements of Father Frank’s spirituality were the typical Salesian devotions to the Eucharist, Mary and the Pope.

The celebration of the Eucharist was the highlight of his day. He celebrated always with reverence and, although he felt himself to be inadequate as a preacher, he prepared his homilies with diligence and care. He enjoyed helping in various parishes on weekends for many years. Father Frank also sought to extend the grace of the Eucharist throughout the day with brief yet frequent visits. In his later years he would take his daily exercise in chapel, walking back and forth in the presence of his Eucharistic friend. He drew nourishment from Eucharistic adoration, and longed for it when it became less common.

Mary was an active presence on Father Frank’s life. She was one of his favorite subjects for preaching and also writing. In addition to his book *The Wonder of Mary*, he printed monthly pamphlets during the Marian Year of 1984, and wrote articles on the Help of Christians for the *Salesian Bulletin*, *Soul* and other journals. He served on a province Marian Commission, exploring ways to reawaken devotion to Mary Help of Christians within the province. But more importantly, Father Frank lived as the gospel disciple who took Mary to his home. He knew her personal love and intervention in his life, and strove to love her in return. His was the custom to recite daily the complete Rosary – fifteen decades – as a sign of affection for his Mother. It was not uncommon to see him walking up and down an aisle in the classroom fingering the beads while his students took a philosophy exam. In his final months, when his illness removed from him the ability to pray the Rosary, he wept.

## 70 Short Sketches

The Church – and its center of communion, the Pope – were Father Frank's third great love. While he felt his love for the Church had not been sacrificial enough, he was convinced that the love he did feel was *"a very special gift of God."* And his adherence to the person and teaching of each Pope was legendary. Rarely did Father Frank preach a homily and fail to quote a Pope. Never a week passed that he did not read *L'Osservatore Romano*. He was especially attuned to the sufferings of popes in our time and prayed for them.

A journal that he wrote during his years as a young cleric in Rome contains moving accounts of his visit to St. Peter's Basilica after the death of Pius XI to pray at his bier; his presence in St. Peter's Square during the conclave of election, observing only black smoke; his running through the streets to get to the square again when there was word that a new Pope was finally elected; and his witnessing of Pius XII's first appearance on the balcony and first blessing. It is hard to tell whether his keen interest in politics – civil, church and province – arose from his Philadelphia roots or from these conclave experiences!

In his intense love for the Eucharist, his tender love for Mary and his devoted love for the Holy Father, Father Frank was a true son of Don Bosco.

### ***Final Illness***

In the spring of 1999, Father Frank began to experience pain. Medical tests indicated that he had liver disease – cirrhosis – of unknown origin. The doctor was forthright in indicating that there was no cure. The prognosis was that he might live another year.

True to his character, Father Frank received the news intellectually at first. He researched the disease, gathering as much information as he could. He assured the community that, since we had just buried Brother Ben Natoli seven months earlier and didn't need another funeral right away, he would try to take his time! He continued to give himself to the teaching of prenovices and the tutoring of postnovices.

But at the months passed, and the disease progressed, Father Frank received the news in his heart. He quietly began to go through his possessions and dispose of them. He organized important papers. He promoted the sale of his books that remained in stock, and he wrote out instructions for the director, who would have to dispose of whatever was left after his death. True to his characteristic graciousness, he did not want to leave much work behind for anyone else.

In November, Father Frank made his final visit to his family in Philadelphia. By December he was pretty much confined to his room, from which he continued to tutor students. He was delighted when a small altar was set up there, and members of the community took turns celebrating the Eucharist with him. On Christmas Eve he slept most of the day, so that he might stay awake at night to watch television coverage of the opening of the Holy Year Door by Pope John Paul II. It thrilled him.

In January he had to be brought to the hospital, but after a stay of only a few days, he returned at his request to the community. Hospice was arranged to assist the community in caring for him. Doctors, nurses and hospice aides all were touched by his spiritual presence and the gratefulness he manifested for anything that was done for him.

As word spread about his weakening condition, visitors came – Salesians, family members and others – to say good-bye and ask for his blessing. Letters and e-mails arrived from across the continent, which were read to him, messages expressing gratitude and support. They moved him.

But ultimately his union with God was what saw him through the final struggle. As St. Francis de Sales put it, *"I suppose it is very easy for a Christian to follow Christ curing the sick and bringing the dead back to life. We can all do that. It is another matter to follow him suffering and dying. Only a few are capable of this."* Father Frank was one of those few. In a moment of rather intense pain, he remarked, "Our tears mingle with the tears of Christ." Then after a pause, he continued, *"Do you remember the station of the cross when Jesus meets the women. He says to them, 'Do not cry for me, but for your children.' This teaches us that every one of us must consolidate our offering with the offering of Christ."*

In the early afternoon of January 28, in the Year of Jubilee 2000, Father Frank made his offering complete and breathed his last. He was surrounded by the young men in formation, who represented so many for whom he had spent his life over the years.

### Conclusion

Another quote cherished by Father Frank was from Blessed Pope John XXIII: *"Every believer in this world of ours must be a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying leaven amidst his fellowmen; and he will be this all the more perfectly the more closely he lives in communion with God and in the intimacy of his own soul."*

These are the words descriptive of Father Frank Klauder himself. They point us to his true legacy, not a college, a building, an institution, but the countless human hearts that are forever changed, enlightened and inspired because of his transformation, by God's grace, into light and love. And these are not the hearts of his students alone. They also include the hearts of countless people, especially young people, whom he never knew, but whom his students have served.

Join me in giving thanks to God for this giant of our province, a giant of scholarship, kindness and holiness. Join me in praying for Father Frank, that he might inherit the promise made to teachers in Daniel 12:3, to *"shine like the brilliance of the firmament, and... sparkle like the stars for all eternity."* Join me in praying for our houses of initial formation, that they may be truly places where minds are formed in truth, hearts are formed in love, and souls are formed in union with God. And join me in praying for many good and worthy vocations to consecrated Salesian life, to further the mission of Don Bosco in North America.

Father James Heuser, S.D.B., Director



**Father Attilio G. Klinger, S.D.B.**

*"Suffering joined to faith is a blessing" (Father Klinger)*

**F**

ather Attilio Klinger died on May 3, 2002 at the Shervier Nursing Home, Bronx, New York. He died on the same day his mother had died, way back in 1935, when she was only 44 years old. The wake for Father Attilio was held on Sunday, May 5, at the Salesian High School chapel. The funeral Mass was celebrated by Father Pat Angelucci, provincial and assisted by many priests and some confreres who had come from the nearby houses. The homilist at the Mass was Father Javier Aracil. There were also some representatives of the Bahamas where Father Attilio had worked for so many years. The burial was at our Goshen Salesian Cemetery, on May 6, 2002. Father Attilio was 73 years old (July 26, 1928). He had been a priest for 47 years (Dec. 8, 1954) and a Salesian for 54 (1948) years.

The life story of Father Attilio Klinger comes from his own pen:

*Friends and relatives suggested I write about my life, but I could never apply myself to relive all the difficulties of my childhood, adolescence, and later as a man and a priest. What I wanted to tell everyone is that: suffering joined to faith is a blessing! For now, however, I have decided to write a summary of my life to help my director with some information for my obituary letter.*

**January 24, 1990, Feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron of writers**

I dedicate this writing to my mother, Amelia Klinger Cornalba, who taught me how to read and write when I was very small. Her memory has been the beacon of my life.

Each one of us is called to life in a different way, though the biological process is just about the same for all. I do not speak here about physical life. I speak about that special person God made me as the product of many joys and sorrows, of many accomplishments and failures, of many deeds and endeavors in the lives of dozens of generations before I existed on earth.

It was a sunny day in late July when my first cry was heard. That day was Thursday July 26, 1928, the year of the dragon according to the Chinese calendar, and under the sign of the lion. I am sure it was a very warm day, as it can be in Savona, Italy, where the so-called Riviera begins. My brother, Enrico, and my sister, Matilde, so I was told, had been taken to the beach at Albisola since the midwife and many other persons would be around the house. When lunch was brought to them, they received the news that a little brother was born to make their life happier. A few weeks later, I was baptized on August 28 at the parish church of St. Andrew.

My family is of Austrian origin. My great-great-grandfather was an officer in Vienna and fought against Napoleon in the early 19th century. His son married an Italian girl in Trent, which later reunited with Italy. Thus my grandfather became an Italian and raised his family in Venice.

My father was a corvette captain. He married my mother, Amelia Cornalba, in 1919, a college graduate from Milan and a school teacher. My sister, Matilde, was born in 1920. My brother, Enrico, was born two years later in 1923, and I in 1928. My mother longed to have her husband at home to raise their children together. That was impossible, for my father had a two month vacation every two years. But being a captain, he could take his family on board the ship. Thus my mother with Matilde and Enrico went to New York, Baltimore, England, the Black Sea, and other places. I was born after the trip to the USA in Savona, Italy, the seaport of Turin. I grew very close to my mother, an artist who could paint, play the piano beautifully, sing famous arias, and who knew everything about gardening, literature and politics. She even engaged in debates with journalists and city politicians.

Soon her health began to fail. When she was forty, the doctor informed my mother that she had cancer. This attached her more and more to her children. She started to teach me how to read and write when I was five. Shortly thereafter, surgery followed. Two years later the cancer spread, and my mother died in May 1935 at the age of 44. This was the end of my family life.

As a child of seven, I was sent to Turin, Italy, to live with my uncle Mario Klinger, a notary public. His wife was a stranger to me. She was my mother's age, but had little patience. Frequently, I was slapped for the least little thing. For four years I cried myself to sleep every night, longing for my family. I received my First Holy Communion and Confirmation in Turin on May 13, 1937 from Cardinal Fossati. To reunite the family, my father decided to give up his job in 1939 and work in Genoa. This dream was short lived with the outbreak of World War II; he was called back to the navy. Besides, he had married a woman twenty years younger. With our young attractive stepmother, life was not easy. As a result I spent five years in boarding schools, and only the summers with my stepmother.

The last boarding school was a Salesian high school. The priests and brothers were so kind to me (now an orphan, since my father was missing in action in Corsica), and I enjoyed their company. Soon I heard talks about missionary life, vocation, etc. Within five months, I decided to join the Salesians of St. John Bosco and become a missionary. It was at this time that I found out that my father was alive, serving as a captain in the U.S. Navy. He spoke English very well, besides four other languages. The war ended and my father returned home. I asked permission to become a religious, but he said, "No, that's a childish whim!"

Thus I thought my vocation had ended.

Two years later, God was calling me again. It was a dream I had on Sunday, August 22, 1946. Three Salesian priests were in my dream telling me to “leave the world.” The following year, when I was 19, my father gave his permission. I was also glad to get away from my stepmother and her daughter (not my father’s). My brother was at the academy to become a captain, and my sister was to be married very shortly. All prompted me to leave and give my life to God as a Salesian of St. John Bosco.

Having completed junior college, I made my novitiate and professed my vows on August 22, 1948, feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the anniversary of my dream. I was then sent to Milan to teach at St. Ambrose School. There I was responsible for 42 sixth graders. In 1949 I became general assistant at the Salesian agricultural school of Montechiarugolo in Parma. It was a tough job! Meanwhile my application to go to the missions was approved. On April 1, 1950, at the age of 21, I sailed for Japan where I planned to spend the rest of my life.

I, along with three other Salesians, arrived in Tokyo on May 28, 1950, feast of Pentecost. After a year of teaching science (in Italian) to young Italian and Spanish brothers at the Salesian seminary of Chofu, Tokyo, I began my studies of theology in the same place. We were students from 15 nations. The classes were held in Latin and Italian. I was happy to study for the priesthood while learning more Japanese every day. What a difficult language!

Within a year I started to experience terrible headaches along with other physical ailments. After lunch I had to rest instead of recreating with the community. At the same time, I was in charge of the infirmary, and landscaping jobs I liked very much as I always had a natural inclination to science. In early 1954, because of my declining health, I made a request to interrupt my studies. But my director, the now Venerable Vincenzo Cimatti S.D.B., said, “No, have faith.” Thus with medication and rest, when possible, I completed my preparation to the priesthood. I was ordained on December 8, 1954, the centennial of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, at the Salesian church of Our Lady of Tokyo. I celebrated my first Mass at the seminary for the community; then I toured Tokyo Salesian houses.

My first assignment as a priest was to be in charge of the Sons of Mary, college students who wanted to become Salesians. I taught them Latin and religious studies. It was a special blessing to be a “colleague” of Msgr. Vincent Cimatti. In the five years we spent together, we developed a beautiful closeness, for both of us liked science. A year later I was put in charge of the junior seminary in Miyazaki, Japan. By then, having studied the language for seven years, I was able to teach and preach in good Japanese. There life was hard. We lived in a barracks donated by the U.S. army. In the winter I froze; in summer the humidity and heat overwhelmed me. I worked seven days a week, 24 hours a day. There were about 50 seminarians; good boys, mostly from Catholic families. They attended the Salesian high school next to the seminary. It was a big responsibility for my young age. I enjoyed my work, but my headaches increased.

After three years, I returned to my birth city, Savona, where I rested. It was there in 1959 that I was able to sing my first Mass. I had requested and received permission to return to Japan via the U.S. This enabled me to practice my English, which I had started to study two years before. Also I met my father, whose ship’s company headquarters were in New York. Those ten months of traveling along the East Coast to raise funds for the poor of Japan gave me the opportunity to grasp better the English language. I was very much helped by the Salesian provincials and American confreres.

Back in Japan I was assigned to teach Latin, Italian, English and Greek at the Tokyo Salesian seminary. Because of my past success, a year later I was once again assigned to the seminary of Miyazaki as director. After three years I began to experience the increasing headaches and insomnia. The doctors told me to quit working in Japan, concluding that it was the climate and the hard life that did not agree with me. It was during this time, my father died of a very fast cancer in Rome. In retrospect, I may say that he left me free to plan my future, as God called him to Himself before I could fly to Italy to assist him.

At this time, I concluded that wherever I might be sent, I could teach English. With this thought in mind, I asked for a scholarship to pursue a degree in English. Loyola University of Los Angeles, California, later granted me such a scholarship. After the death of my father, I was granted permission to return to the U.S.A.

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to study for two years. I was delighted to return to school at the age of 37. Studying was a kind of vacation for me. My headaches practically disappeared. The Salesian confreres at Bishop Mora High School in Los Angeles were very kind to me. After a year, I asked to be transferred to Washington, D.C., to take linguistics and languages at Georgetown University. This was my main interest. I completed my courses in 1967.

By this time there was a new provincial in Japan. My love for missionary work was still very much alive. Thus I returned to Japan hoping my good health would continue. While in Japan I taught English and served as associate pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church, a Salesian parish. Later, I was chaplain for a community of 32 Salesian Sisters and their large orphanage. In 1969 I was transferred to the parish of Our Lady of Tokyo to be associate pastor and teacher of English at our middle school. Once again, my health began to fail me. In 1970 I began to experience heart problems. Twenty years after my arrival, at age 41, I had to leave my beloved Japan forever.

I was sent to Zapopan, Mexico, to recuperate. There I learned Spanish at the Salesian seminary. Afterwards, the superiors called me back to Italy. There I spent one year in Milan, at Don Bosco Technical School teaching English and religion. I found the adjustment to the Italian culture most difficult. Even though I was of Italian descent, after having lived abroad for 20 years, the culture was foreign to me. After four months, I pleaded with my superiors to send me to a place where I could work as a missionary again since I had regained my health. I felt that I could use my five languages in a more productive way since the Italian students showed no interest in learning English. The superiors in Turin assigned me to the U.S.A.

I arrived in New York in September 1971. There I was assigned to Holy Rosary Church in Port Chester, New York, just 30 minutes from Grand Central. I liked the new environment and the wonderful people of the parish. I felt at home in the U.S.A. But as winter approached, I could not endure the cold, the ice and the snow. All the cold I had suffered in Italy (no heating from 1940 to 1947) and in Japan came back to my bones! This is the reason why I was sent to the Bahamas in 1972, to be pastor of West End, Grand Bahama.

What a different life it was here. As a Salesian my first care went to the youth of the village, no matter what religion. Within two weeks I had poles put in place for the mounting of basketball hoops. Soon the boys came from all over. The parish had many members, among them 300 Haitians. We had Masses in English and sometimes in French. The Grand Bahama Hotel was in full swing and tourists filled the church, enjoying the beautiful singing. The church choir included boys and girls as well as adults. The church was repaired and later repainted. The rectory was furnished and a new car bought. Later a large van was purchased to bring children to the church, and to the beach and to Freeport. We had delightful summer camps with a Salesian brother coming from the New Rochelle Province to direct it. Many of the tourists became generous benefactors, helping in many ways. Some even provided scholarships for the education of deserving and needy boys and girls of the village so that they could study at Catholic high schools. By the time I left the Bahamas in 1992, 22 Bahamian students had received scholarships, some up to six years of Catholic high school.

The greatest consolation I was granted in the Bahamas was the sending to the seminary of the now-Father Glen Nixon, pastor of St. Thomas More in Nassau, to study for the priesthood. I had known Father Glen since he was ten. I had sent him to Hunter Elementary School and then to Catholic High; also to the U.S. Salesian camps for three summers to learn the spirit of St. John Bosco towards the young.

After nine years in West End I was transferred to the island of Bimini in 1981 as pastor of Holy Name Church, a completely different place and situation. It was a small island with 300 Catholics and a Catholic elementary school run by the Benedictine Sisters. I found it difficult in the beginning. The people wanted a Bahamian pastor. But within a year, the adjustment was made. I enjoyed working with Sister Cecilia Albury, OSB, who was the principal of the school. Here too we found generous benefactors. Besides repairing the buildings and property, we built a large wall on the coastline of the ocean to prevent erosion and damage to the rectory. Then word came from supervisors in Rome; they did not want me to be "alone" in the middle of the ocean with no other Catholic priest nearby. So after three years I was transferred to Nassau. I will never forget Bimini!

St. Bede's Church, located in one of the poorest sections of Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, was

quite different from Holy Name in Bimini. The people who became well established were able to build a house somewhere else but would continue to attend and work for the church where they had been baptized. My four years stationed there were very active and satisfying. The elementary school had a good staff, a very active youth group, a parish council that was very supportive and willing to give of themselves. Besides improving the property and buildings, a good basketball court and parish hall theater were built. Thanks to the hard work of many benefactors and parishioners, funds were raised to cover one-fifth of the expenses. The dedication for the improvements were held in January 1988 to celebrate the centennial of the death of St. John Bosco, to whom it was dedicated.

Due to new decisions in the Salesian Congregation, which wanted all the Salesians to work on the same island in the Bahamas, in August 1988 I was transferred to St. Michael's Church in West End, my parish of old.

The church had changed a lot and also the surrounding village. The Grand Bahama Hotel, lately called the Jack Tar Village, was going to be closed. The property and the house as well as the church building and the grounds needed much work to make them functional again. Thanks to good and generous benefactors the work went forward. The basketball court was repaved, and the hoops were repaired and mounted on iron poles made in Nassau. Since Harold Sonny Waugh had given the church the adjoining field, we now had a football field, which was leveled and later fenced. The youth could now play in the field and also utilize the basketball court at the same time. Once again the church became an attraction for many. We continued to have summer camps (a total of 11 I had in West End), and a bazaar similar to the one during my first tenure. But the kids were different now. They wanted more. With the advent of video games, they had become Americanized!

Once again due to the generosity of so many benefactors who were concerned over the poverty of so many families in the village, donations were given to purchase or repair houses for them. The two poorest families of the village, one Catholic and one Baptist, both with several children, were given a three-room, brand new house, built by the government in Eight Mile Rock. They still live there. Eight houses in very miserable condition were repaired from top to bottom. Three houses were completely remodeled after purchasing the existing structures. St. John Bosco said that the world should be told about the good done by the Catholic Church, and so I write this. Besides all the building and repairs that took place during the 20 years that I was in the Bahamas, food and clothing were also constantly given away. Of the 24 Bahamian students who received scholarships, several have succeeded well in life. God willing, by the year 2000, the last two Bahamian students will have completed their studies. Deo gratias!

In March 1991, on a Sunday early in the morning, I had a heart attack that was repeated while I was celebrating Mass at 9:40 A.M. I sat down and told the congregation to sing. The Bahamian people sing very well. Somehow I was able to finish the Mass and go upstairs to rest. Later I was flown to Miami, where I had open-heart surgery at Mercy Hospital. Two months later I was back in West End, but life was not the same. In the spring of 1992, I asked to be relieved of my pastorate because my failing health prevented me from fulfilling my ministerial duties. Thus I left my beloved Bahamas on September 10, 1992. I went to Belle Glade, Florida, where I joined a community of five Salesians. There I worked at St. Philip Benizi Church, a parish built among the sugar cane fields, south of Lake Okeechobee.

At Belle Glade, I helped to raise funds for that poor place which was in debt. Divine Providence has been very generous towards our work. Many poor families were aided in various ways, and a thousand youngsters have a safe place to play and receive religious instruction. The community consisted of five priests and a brother, everyone busy in the different works of the apostolate. The Bishop of Palm Beach praised the work and moved other parishes to concur in the success of our work.

*(Here Father Klinger's personal notes end. In the summer of 2000, for health reasons, Father Klinger was transferred to the Provincial House in New Rochelle, New York. In the winter, he would return to Belle Glade for the warmth.)*

I knew Father Attilio Klinger ever since he came to the United States in 1971 from the Japanese province to which he originally belonged. I lived with Father Attilio Klinger these past two years. I know what he endured. These are the reflections that I would like to share, based on my partial



knowledge of Father Attilio.

We all know that Jesus Christ began to suffer ever since he began “to walk towards Jerusalem.” It was approximately a three-year period. We know that Jesus suffered in a special manner during the last year of his life on earth. We also know that before he died, Jesus carried a cross, a heavy cross on his way to his crucifixion on Mount Calvary. The way of the cross lasted approximately a few hours. My dear confreres, I know a lot of people who followed the example of Jesus Christ to the letter. I also know that Father Attilio Klinger was one of them. His suffering, however, did not last a few years, a few months, a few days, or even a few hours. His suffering lasted for many years!

When the head nurse of the nursing home called and asked me kindly to fax her Father Klinger’s medical history and list all of the operations and sicknesses that Father Klinger had, I obliged and sent her the fax. She could not believe her eyes when she saw it! Father Attilio Klinger had been confronted with a lot of health problems ever since he went to Japan and ever since he came to America. And the last big problem he had to face was cancer – a cancer that had practically spread all over his body, particularly affecting his liver and lymphatic glands.

Dear confreres, Father Klinger suffered a lot these past few months before he died: he could hardly speak, he could hardly eat, he could hardly do anything, even with the helpful presence of his nephew, Luca, who had come from Italy to spend a few days with him. When Father Pat, the provincial, bent down to say something to him a few days before his death, Father Klinger whispered: “It’s all right, Father. Don’t worry about anything. Everything will be just OK!” Father Attilio had accepted his lot; he was ready for the embrace of Jesus Christ, his suffering companion.

Jesus Christ did have a Cyrenian who helped Him carry his cross. So did Father Attilio find several Cyrenians who willingly helped him carry his very heavy cross. The first Cyrenian was someone who loved him dearly to the point of following him all the way to the priesthood: it was Jesus Christ Himself. Father Klinger loved Jesus Christ. That is why he volunteered to work in the missions, especially in the Bahamas. He was a good religious and a good priest; he was a good missionary. That is why Jesus Christ chose to be his Cyrenian all the way.

As pointed out earlier; Father Attilio lost his mother when still young. But someone else took her place: our Blessed Mother, the Help of Christians. Father Klinger had a tender devotion towards our Blessed Mother. That is why he constantly kept the rosary beads in his hand. He recognized Her as Don Bosco did, as his Mother, his guide and his teacher.

In his quiet and unassuming ways, Father Klinger kept in touch with hundreds of people who were helped by him and who in turn helped him and comforted him, even more so during the last two years of his life. There were countless phone calls coming from all over the world, especially from the Bahamas! They too were Cyrenians who tried to help Father Klinger.

Among the Salesian Cyrenians, there is one who helped him more than anyone else, Father Francisco Javier Aracil. He had been his director for some years and in these past two years he did anything and everything to help and comfort Father Klinger. Father Aracil took care of Father Klinger better than any family member could or would.

These are the reflections that I offer you, hoping they will help all of us Salesians to carry on the same mission of sacrifice so well lived by Father Klinger during his life here on earth. As well stated by Father Klinger:

***Suffering joined to faith is a blessing***

May the Lord grant Father Attilio Klinger an eternal rest, and may he, from heaven, obtain from the same Lord the grace to have new vocations follow his example and dedicate their lives to God’s service.

Father Vincent Zuliani, S.D.B.

Director of the Provincial Residence of New Rochelle





**Father Serges Lamaute, S.D.B.**

*"It is not what you are nor what you have been that God sees with his all-merciful eyes, but what you desire to be."* These words from a little book, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, are written inside a journal by our departed friend Pierre Serges Lamaute.

They held special meaning to Father Serges while he was alive. They bear witness to a man who fulfilled his lifelong desire to be a priest. During the 90 years of his life, Father Serges not only became a priest, but also embodied the Beatitudes, becoming poor in spirit, meek, merciful, clean of heart, and a peacemaker.

The seventh of ten children, Pierre Serges Lamaute was born on Friday, February 23, 1917. His mother was Lamerchie Salomon; his father, Emmanuel Lamaute. He was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in a section filled with the beautiful homes of the elite. According to Father Serges, there are only two large classes of people in Haiti: the rich and the poor. The rich own and control everything. The poor have nothing. But there is a group of people in between, educated people who live apart from the others, practice self-discipline and make themselves respected for their knowledge, experience, and hard work. These join a new breed, the upper middle class, so to speak. The Lamaute family was among them. Serges's father worked in a prestigious position as the secretary general to the Council of the State. He earned enough so that his family never experienced material need. At home, they even had people working in their service: a cook, housekeeper, and gardener.

Serges was baptized on March 8, 1917, in the metropolitan cathedral of Port-au-Prince by a priest who would have a profound influence on his life: Father Jean-Marie Mahot. Father Mahot was a close friend of Serges's parents. They asked him to be Serges's godfather, but the archbishop of Port-au-Prince would not allow him, saying that it was inappropriate for a priest to have such a relationship with the faithful. Nonetheless, the love which Father Mahot showed him from his birth worked so profoundly on Serges that he was hardly three years of age when he declared, "I want to be a priest, just like my godfather."

Serges writes in his journal that at age 12 he was admitted to the junior seminary. It happened that his godfather was the superior of the seminary. He spent three years there but encountered difficulties. One of the teachers, thinking Serges was getting preferential treatment because of his relationship to the superior, made it especially difficult for Serges. Serges admits that he was a bit spoiled, proud, and perhaps a little arrogant, having come from the better part of town. The seminary was meant for poor people who aspired

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to the priesthood, and Serges was a man of means just coasting along.

As things went, he was forced to leave the seminary. It was a rough departure. His godfather cried, deeply grieved. And to Serges, there was a feeling of shame. He was rejecting the strong call he felt to be a priest. There was a saying in those days that hell and the seminary were alike: once you pass into hell, the doors lock behind you and you can't get out. Once you pass out of the seminary, the doors lock behind you and you can't get back in.

Serges wrote: "What made me suffer intensely, following the year of my departure from the seminary... was that the desire to become a priest never died, but rather became more and more persistent with the years. And at the same time, the awareness that it was an ideal I would never reach made it a terrible nightmare."

He referred to this six-year period that followed as the "period of psychosis." It was a period of moral chaos and personal confusion, years when Serges, by his own admission, wandered from Christ. He attempted to study law, and when that failed he thought of being a doctor. With the help of his brother Paul he landed two jobs and earned way too much money for someone his age. He was a popular friend to many. He was very handsome, and women adored him. He had everything, needed nothing, yet was not happy. He struggled with many temptations and frequently gave in to them. While his pride made him feel invincible, he would always come crashing down, feeling that he was a condemned man because he did not respond to God's call to be a priest.

But Serges had a great devotion to Mary. He prayed daily that the Blessed Mother of Jesus would help him. And Mary answered his prayer in a unique way. He began reading spiritual classics like *The Imitation of Christ*, and prayed the Rosary daily. With his sister Marie-Therese, he began praying the Little Office of the Virgin. Then he befriended a priest who told Serges that he needed a spiritual director and that he should make use of confession regularly. The priest told him not to be depressed about leaving the seminary. He said: "There's more than one seminary. Try them all if you have to." Serges thought about religious life as a Trappist or Carthusian, and to practice austerity he even decided to live on nothing but tomatoes.

Then one evening he was on his way home when he was stopped by a man and his wife. The couple knew him from church. The man was Giovanni di Dio (John of God), an Italian. The man spoke to Serges with a very sincere but firm voice.

"Sergio," he called him. "My wife and I have been watching you for some time. We've been watching the way you behave at church. Contrary to those of your age, you're often at church, even on weekdays, and you serve Mass. We're convinced that you aspire to become a priest."

Full of enthusiasm, Giovanni di Dio told Serges all about a new religious order that only a few years before had come to Haiti – the Salesians, sons of Don Bosco. They had been invited by the president of Haiti to take charge of a trade school built by the government. And, best of all, Giovanni di Dio knew a Salesian from Italy, a personal friend of his, Father Angelo Garau, who had renounced a well-to-do life in Italy to dedicate himself completely to the education and formation of poor youth. Giovanni told Serges so many amazing things about these Salesians, and about Don Bosco, their founder, how this man walked on a tightrope as a kid to attract his friends to church. Finally, Giovanni's message to Serges was straightforward: "You, Sergio, are being called by God to be a priest."

That night Serges returned home and related to his mother everything he had been told by Giovanni di Dio. He says of her: "Mother usually did not talk much and kind of avoided conversations. When she did open her mouth you had to ponder all of her words. After reflecting in silence for a moment, she told me: 'This man is like a guardian angel, a visible one that God put in your path to dictate to you His Will. Do as he told you.'"

Serges testified, "If I am now a Salesian, for over 50 years, I owe it to my mother's advice." He also maintained that it was Mary who guided him from his state of confusion to a new condition in which he could truly serve the Lord.

From the time he joined the Salesians, things improved greatly for Serges. He practiced humility and

was able to overcome the temptations of his youth. In fact, he found that while leaving his native Haiti to study for the priesthood was a great sacrifice for him and for his family, it afforded him an opportunity to begin a new life in a new country. He worked hard with his spiritual director so that the Beatitudes became an important part of his plan of life.

On August 15, 1944, the feast of the Assumption of Mary, Serges entered the Salesian novitiate in Matanzas, Cuba. He was the first native of Haiti to enter the Salesian Society. He professed his religious vows in Matanzas on August 16, 1945. Then Serges studied theology at colleges in Belgium and France. And at last, he was ordained a Catholic priest in Lyons, France, on June 29, 1950. The motto he chose during his ordination was, "To Jesus through Mary."

After his ordination his pastoral work led him to many places in Haiti and Cuba, where he served as a teacher and worked in parishes. He served as the director of the Salesian community in Pétion Ville, Haiti, from 1969 to 1972, and Port-au-Prince from 1972 to 1975 and again from 1980 to 1985. He also worked in the Dominican Republic and the United States.

Father Serges was always a gentleman, a trait which he attributes to his father. At home it was forbidden that anyone speak Creole; they had to speak French. The boys had to wear a tie to the dinner table. They had to show respect to others.

Sometimes Serges learned to respect others the hard way. When he was 17 there was a servant named Lise who waited on tables. She was in her 20s and poor. According to the Haitian class system, Serges and Lise were not on the same level. Lise would act as the humble servant when Serges's parents were around, but when he was alone she dealt with him as his superior. This really annoyed him, so he decided to teach her a lesson in public. One day he purposely dropped his knife on the floor during dinner and ordered, "Lise, pick up my knife." Serges's father responded with, "No, sir, you pick it up yourself!" Well, this infuriated Serges all the more. He spent a great deal of his teenage years trying to put Lise in her place. Sixteen years later, when he returned from France as a newly ordained priest, he felt ashamed when Lise came to see him, hugged him and said: "My little Serges, what a blessing the Lord had in store for you! Who would think that one day YOU would become a priest!"

Anyone who ever attended Mass with Father Serges can bear witness to his profound respect for Jesus in the Eucharist. He prepared his scripture lessons well and delivered homilies with sincerity. The fulfillment of his lifelong desire to be a priest was evident every time he stood at the altar and presented the faithful with the Body and Blood of Christ.

Serges loved to study languages. His ability to speak fluent English, French, Spanish, German and Creole endeared him to many. After World War II he was invited to preach a series of mission appeal tours in the United States. His audience loved his humility and candor. In the 1980's his American relatives suggested that he stay in this country. With their help Father Serges became an American citizen in 1986. After that he served in various positions in the New Rochelle Province, including pastor, teacher, and hospital chaplain in places like Miami, Goshen, New York, and Marrero, Louisiana.

On June 25, 1993, while residing at the Salesian community in Columbus, Ohio, Father Lamaute was appointed by Bishop James A. Griffin of Columbus to serve as the founding pastor of Santa Cruz Parish, a non-territorial parish serving the Spanish-speaking community of Columbus. After that he served with the Salesians at parishes in New Orleans and Chicago. On the occasion of his 50th anniversary of priesthood at St. John Bosco Parish in Chicago, Father Serges told his congregation, "I am in the hands of God; happy to serve Him, the best I humanly can, for as long as He wishes."

Father William Bucciferro, S.D.B., related that during the years Father Serges was stationed with him in Columbus and a few years later when he was Father Serges's director in Chicago, he would often find Father Serges with the children after school in the youth centers at both locations. Father Serges would draw pencil sketches for them, and especially enjoyed giving them a drawing of Jesus, Mary, or Joseph. His kind and gentle manner gave everyone, young and old, confidence to speak with him about their deepest thoughts.

In 2004 Father Serges retired to the St. Philip Residence at Mary Help of Christians Center in Tampa, Florida. Declining health during recent months required a move to Bon Secours-Maria Manor in St.

Petersburg. Even though he was a resident at the nursing home, he never forgot that first and foremost he was a priest. He had a regular schedule of confessions to hear, and he attended, or even presided at, the daily Mass. And he treasured the photo of his sister Marie-Therese, who had become the first Salesian Sister in Haiti.

Father Serges celebrated his 90th birthday on February 23, 2007. In his journal he wrote this about his last days: "The only thing I ask, through Mary, is that Jesus not forsake me forever, so that I may be with Him for all eternity. My life has no meaning without Him."

On Thursday, April 26, 2007, it was clear that Father Serges's life was near the end. His breathing was shallow, and he could no longer speak. At about 8:15 p.m. Father Serges suddenly lifted his right arm, holding outward. Those of us in the room tried to interpret what this meant. Did he want to hold someone's hand? Perhaps he wanted a sip of water? Maybe he wanted his glasses? We tried everything – placing there a book, the Bible, a tissue ... whatever we thought he might want. And then we noticed that perhaps he was pointing ... at something on the wall. In the direction of his arm, across the room on the wall, there was a crucifix. We took it off the wall, placed it close to Father Serges's face, and pressed it upon his lips. He was too weak to kiss it, but we did notice one thing – after that, he put his arm back down on his chest. He died a little over one hour later.

As soon as word got around the nursing home that Father Serges had died, an amazing thing happened. As we were busy packing his things, clearing the room so that the undertakers could move him, one by one, minutes apart, staff from all over the nursing home came to his room to pause, pray, and say out loud, "Thank you, Father Serges. I love you Father Serges." They came to visit for one last time the man who was called by God to be a priest: one who would comfort those who mourn, who satisfied those who hungered, who showed mercy, who offered peace, and most of all, who brought Jesus into their lives just as Jesus had touched his own life with His love.

A funeral Mass was celebrated at Mary Help of Christians Center in Tampa, Florida, on Monday, April 30, 2007. Another funeral Mass was celebrated the following evening at Our Lady of the Valley Church in Orange, New Jersey. Our provincial, Father James Heuser, S.D.B., presided at both. Members of the Lamaute family, including Father Serges's younger brother, Leon, were present in good numbers in the North, as were confreres of the vice province of Haiti: Father Julio Nau, Father Zucchi Ange Olibrice, and Father Hector Pascal. Since Father Serges's sister, Sr. Marie-Therese, F.M.A., was too ill to travel, the Salesian Sisters of Haiti sent another to represent her.

In his homily during the funeral Mass in Orange, Father Quesnel Delvard, S.D.B., described his mentor and friend as a bridge builder, one who made it possible for sinners to come closer to Christ. Father Serges could do this so well because he realized that he, too, was a sinner and fully understood the condition of those people in his care.

In a letter written on May 3, 2007, to the confreres of the Eastern USA Province, Father Heuser wrote: "The life of a man can be summarized by listing dates, places, and duties that defined him. And Father Serges can be described as the first Haitian national to become a Salesian. Yet stats and facts alone do not adequately define a man, certainly not a man such as Father Serges, who himself indicated that his life could not be understood 'apart from Jesus Christ.' When one examines the life of Father Serges from the standpoint of this relationship, one grasps a deeper reality."

Referring to the personal struggles of Father Serges's early years. Father Heuser explains: "Therein began a spiritual journey taken up in earnest. Therein began the sincere effort to overcome his character defects, to grow in virtue, to put on Christ. He would fail again, to be sure. He would struggle with himself repeatedly. But underway was a process of transformation by grace into the Serges we were blessed to know so many years later – a man of humility and gentleness, a Salesian at home in a simple manner with all: the young, the immigrant, his confreres; a priest who was a shepherd of mercy and compassion. And, let it be said, a mystic.

"In the twilight of his life he could write: 'I feel an urge – unless I am really mistaken – to do something for the Lord, to offer myself, the remaining days of my life, as a victim of love to the Lord. I offended so much in the past.'

"And yet, the knowledge of Christ's love and acceptance overwhelmed and sustained Serges. It was an

assurance that came to him in quiet prayer before the tabernacle. It was a conviction he gained through daily meditation on the Scripture. It was a security he achieved through a filial relationship to Christ's mother, Mary.

"The mystic knows his nothingness before the Lord, his sinfulness. Yet the mystic knows that God is all, and daily ensures space for God. Thus the urgency, when he lay dying, for Serges to kiss the cross. In that gesture was contained the full gathering of his total life, with its failures and its graces, and a full surrender to the One apart from whom his life could not be understood. It was a kiss of infinite gratitude."

Father Serges Lamaute was laid to rest on Tuesday morning, May 2, 2007, among his confreres at the Salesian cemetery in Goshen, New York.

Father Dennis Donovan, S.D.B.  
Director  
May 3, 2007

***Data for the Necrology:***

Father Serges Lamaute

Born: February 23, 1917, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Professed: August 16, 1945, Matanzas, Cuba

Ordained: June 29, 1950, Lyons, France

Died: April 26, 2007, St. Petersburg, Florida, at the age of 90

He was professed 61 years, 8 months, and 10 days. He was a priest 56 years, 9 months, 27 days.



**Father Peter Lappin, S.D.B.**

P

eter Lappin was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on April 28, 1911. His early life was marked by poverty, hardship and oppression. When Peter was six years old, his father James was tragically killed in a railway accident, leaving a poor family even poorer. Though his mother Sarah remarried, there were always financial struggles.

Through the eyes of a boy, Peter saw violence related to British rule in Northern Ireland. Thus he served as a bicycle scout for the IRA in the early 1920's. All this engendered in him a fierce Irish patriotism that remained with him all his life.

In his early youth Peter attended a trade school to become an electrician, which to us, who lived with

him, seems so out of character, for he struggled to work a washing machine or a microwave. One, therefore, doesn't wonder that electricity was not his career.

However, there were other mysterious stirrings within Peter. At the age of 19, he spoke with a Redemptorist priest about a possible vocation to the priesthood. That wise priest saw more of a Salesian in the youth, and so directed him along the path. Thus young Peter Lappin arrived at the doorstep of the Salesians in Pallaskenry.

Peter did not remain long at Pallaskenry. After determining for themselves that there was "no insanity... in the boy," the Salesians sent Peter over to Oxford, England, for philosophy and other studies. There, at the age of 22, he made his profession of poverty, chastity and obedience for the sake of the young in Don Bosco's religious family. He was now Brother Peter Lappin. From then onward, no matter where life's events would take him, Brother Lappin had pledged to remain with Don Bosco, and that he did.

While he was at Oxford, the community received word that Father Harrigan, a Salesian whom Peter had come to know, had been slain in China while serving as a missionary. It was stunning news, and it tapped into a deep generosity in young Brother Peter Lappin. He volunteered to go to China in place of the slain missionary. Soon Brother Lappin traveled from Oxford to Turin and from Turin on to Venice, where he set sail on Friday, the 13, 1935. After a voyage of four weeks aboard the *Conte di Verdi*, Brother Peter landed and very soon arrived at the Salesian house in Hong Kong. There he began to study Cantonese.

It required several years to learn that language well, but Brother Lappin did, as anyone who went to a Chinese restaurant with him can attest. Once his language skills were adequate, he was sent to Shanghai in 1939 to study theology, and also to begin working with Chinese youth.

World War II intervened. The Japanese invaded China, and by late 1941, Shanghai was a city at war. All the clergy and religious were imprisoned by order of the Japanese government. It was in an internment camp that Brother Peter finished his theological studies. In that internment camp, on the feast of St. Francis de Sales, January 29, 1942, surrounded by religious priests of various nationalities, including German, Peter Lappin was ordained a priest by a bishop who was himself a prisoner. Perhaps it was the very circumstances of his ordination that caused Father Lappin always to cherish his priesthood so deeply.

Father lived in the same camp for another two and a half years until the end of the war in 1945, and everyone was freed. Freedom was indeed welcome, but the situation remained very difficult because food was very scarce. Father Peter and his fellow Salesians worked to provide food for both themselves and the people in their care.

Father Lappin once recounted how an American naval officer invited him aboard ship and to his stateroom for a drink. Father went with the officer, and after a toast he asked for some food for his people. The officer explained that he could not give away the Navy's food unless it had been condemned. Father Lappin was never precise about the ensuing conversation, but he related that at one point the officer took him to the storeroom and began to mark "CONDEMNED" on box after box of Navy food! Those who have experienced Father Lappin's charm could see how this would happen. Four years later, with the Communist takeover in China, the Salesians had to leave their mission in Shanghai. Circumstances then led Father Lappin to the United States.

In 1950, Father Lappin arrived in New York aboard a plane to begin what was to be practically 50 years of service in this country. He spent the first decade working out of New Rochelle, New York, lecturing, preaching about foreign missions, publishing the *Salesian Bulletin*, fostering the Salesian Cooperator vocation, taking writing courses at Fordham University, and publishing.

In 1960, Father was assigned to the Salesian work in West Haverstraw, New York. There he helped to develop the Marian Shrine, and to begin almost 40 years of ministry to the Irish community of Rockland County, New York.

For Father Lappin writing was a passion. The missionary spirit that had taken him halfway around the world to China, now expressed itself through writing. His lectures and books allowed him to broaden his mission field to encompass the world. Sixteen of his books could be named, and most are translated into several languages. Two of them were made into films, which, besides taking third place at the Venice Film

Festival, brought his message to even wider audiences.

Father Lappin was painstaking in his research. For the biography of Cardinal John Cagliero, *Conquistador*, and the biography of Cererino Namuncura, *Bury Me Deep*, Father Lappin spent over a year of travel throughout South America. He journeyed by plane, jeep, horse and donkey to check out the old mission archives. For the biography of Blessed Michael Rua, *Wine in the Chalice*, he spent ten months in the archives of the Salesian General Headquarters in Rome.

It was during that time that the bones of St. Dominic Savio were stolen. Father Lappin wrote to the provincial of that time, Father John Malloy. It was a tongue-in-cheek letter fraught with typographical errors. "As you have probably noticed I am not using your typewriter. It seems to have vanished along with Savio's bones. Things like typewriters have a habit of doing that around here. Instead, I am making the best use of a typewriter that speaks German. We rarely quarrel, but when we do, you can see who wins the argument."

Father Lappin was convinced that the field of communication was most ripe for the Salesian mission. He often lamented that here in the United States we Salesians did not use the field of communications to better advantage.

His first foray into the television media was less than successful. He appeared on the TV show *What's My Line?* He was one of the four people dressed as priests answering questions about Salesian missionary life. In the end, when they were asked, "Will the real Father Peter Lappin please stand up?" All were surprised to discover that neither Kitty Carlisle nor any other panelist had chosen correctly. No one suspected him to be the real priest! This was followed by more successful work in video. He saw himself as one commissioned to preach to the people, and he grasped the effectiveness of the newer forms of media for the sake of the mission.

For Father Lappin Ireland also was a passion. To him Irish heritage meant Catholic heritage. There was no compromise in this. He took special delight in sacramental moments with the Irish community, particularly at baptisms and weddings for so many families he had come to know. Not just church moments, but every moment was in some way sacramental to him. Father Lappin really believed in the incarnation, that Jesus took on our human flesh, so that he considered life and faith to be one piece. There was no separation between the sacred and secular for him. There was one world in which we lived and experienced the presence of God.

The countless hours that he spent working with the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Feis organization, and other Irish groups were really liturgy for him. Life and faith were joined. He sensed God's nearness as much in a pipe and drum performance as he sensed in a Blessed Sacrament chapel. God was incredibly near in both places. He lifted the spirits of those at the dinner table with a joke as he lifted the spirit of penitents in confession with a word of counsel and absolution. God meant us to be happy. He walked as proudly down the main street of Pearl River in 1993 as the grand marshal of the St. Patrick's Day Parade as he walked proudly down the aisle of St. Gregory's or St. Augustine's many a Sunday morning as main celebrant of Mass. Father Lappin was always on a mission, to reveal God's nearness, love and joy.

The fact that God was near meant that injustice could not stand, for we should experience God's nearness and freedom. Therefore Father Lappin was passionately compelled to do all he could to work for a resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland. While a resolution was not near at hand, he was compelled to join his efforts to those who worked to bring young children out of settings of violence and spend their summers in Rockland County. These efforts flowed from his faith, for to him faith and life were of one piece.

Finally, Mary was a passion for Father Lappin. When he was assigned to the Shrine almost 40 years ago, it was specifically to help to devote this site as a shrine to our Lady. "My bread and butter job," he used to say, "is promotion director for the Shrine." To this end he wrote numerous articles, traveled to speak to various parish groups, to chambers of commerce, and to other organizations. He even appeared on a nationally televised CBS news program to talk about the Shrine. Of particular concern to him was the place of the Shrine in the Rockland County community. He believed that Mary's Shrine must certainly reach out to the New York metropolitan area, but it must, he believed, be of special concrete service to Rockland County. His book about Mary, entitled *First Lady of the World*, makes clear that she was the first lady of his life.

After 88 years of an active and fruitful life, Father Peter Lappin suddenly entered eternity. It was at approximately 6:15 A.M., on Sunday, August 1, 1999, that two members of the Marian Shrine community in



Stony Point, New York, found the body of Father Lappin. The coroner determined that Father had died of a heart attack as he was going downstairs. It was determined that he was already dead when he reached the bottom of the stairs.

Father Lappin is survived by his half-brother, Father James Brawley, S.D.B., who is a member of the Australian Province. Father's death was a great shock to the Salesians and to many people of Rockland County.

On Wednesday evening, August 4, with over 400 people in attendance, funeral services for Father Lappin were held at the pavilion church of the Marian Shrine, a place where Father had often celebrated Mass, preached, and welcomed pilgrims. The services brought together numerous Salesians, members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Cooperators, politicians, co-workers and friends. Father James Heuser, S.D.B., vice-provincial of the New Rochelle Province and close friend of Father Lappin, was the homilist at the funeral liturgy. Many agreed that Father Heuser's homily was an excellent presentation of the life and ministry of Father Peter Lappin. Therefore most of that homily is presented in his obituary letter.

Father Lappin's body was interred in the Salesian cemetery in Goshen, New York. Father was 88 years old, 66 years a Salesian, and 57 years a priest.

(See obituary letter for Father Peter Lappin, S.D.B., by Father Roy Shelly, S.D.B., September 14, 1999.)



**Father Angelo Joseph Louis, S.D.B.**

At approximately 1:30 p.m. on September 16, 2001, the Angel of Death called on our well beloved and much admired confrere.

He was born in Fornovo (Parma), Italy, on March 22, 1916. His father's name was Guglielmo Monichi, and his mother's maiden name was Maria Orazi. Angelo was baptized three days after his birth, on March 25, 1916, in the local parish church of Respiccio and given the name Angelo Joseph Louis. He received the sacrament of Confirmation on June 11, 1921, in the parish church of Bruscello. His elementary education was received in the local schools of his home town. On December 28, 1953, Angelo legally changed his name to simply Angelo Joseph Louis.

At the age of thirteen, on July 1, 1934, Angelo Joseph Louis entered the Salesian school for aspirants in Ivrea. From there he entered the novitiate, and with other novices from Italy, he came to the United States as a missionary and continued his novitiate in Newton, New Jersey, from October 10, 1934,



to October 11, 1935, on which date he professed his first triennial vows. He was nineteen years old.

Brother Louis then studied philosophy and other college subjects at Don Bosco College in Newton and finished with a Bachelor of Arts in 1938. His class was the first to receive the B.A. degree from Don Bosco College, which had been approved by the educational authorities in Trenton in the spring of 1938. Brother Louis was then assigned the duties of teacher and assistant at Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa, Florida. After two years practical training, Brother Louis professed perpetual vows in Newton on September 8, 1940. He was twenty-four years old.

In those days, Father Ambrose Rossi, who was provincial until the end of June 1941, had allowed Brother Louis along with a few others to profess perpetual vows after two years of practical training instead of after three years, which was the norm in those days. Thus Brother Louis began the study of theology in September 1940.

Because of the Second World War, which began September 1939, Father Rossi introduced the study of theology for the brothers after practical training at Don Bosco College in Newton. It was there, at that time, that Brother Louis studied theology for four years. Father Rossi had begun to send the theology students to Fordham University during the summer months, to do graduate work in various subjects. Brother Louis was sent to study for a Master of Arts degree in history. During the time after priestly ordination he finished the course work, but he didn't take the comprehensive examinations, and therefore he never obtained the degree.

Having finished the study of theology in Newton, Brother Louis was ordained to the priesthood on July 2, 1944, in the chapel of Don Bosco College, in Newton. He was 28 years old. The first assignment of Father Louis after his ordination was as prefect of studies (principal) at Salesian High in New Rochelle, New York. It was during these years that Father Louis began to be called Father Louis. The students began to nickname him "King Louis." He knew it, but he raised no fuss about it. In September 1948, Father Louis was assigned to do oratory (boys' club) and vocation work at the Salesian Oratory on Paris Street in East Boston. In fact, the property there had just been obtained through the good graces of Cardinal Richard Cushing for the purpose of oratory work by the Salesians. Thus Father Louis was the first Salesian in charge there, and it was he who began to set the work on a good foundation. Father John Colombo succeeded Father Louis in that work. The year 1951-1952 found Father Louis in Jacquet River, New Brunswick, doing the work of the prefect (financial administrator) of the house, and in 1952-1953 he was performing the same work in the Salesian School in Goshen, New York. It was in September 1953, that the provincial Father Ernest Giovannini appointed Father Louis to succeed Father James O'Loughlen as Salesian mission procurator. Father O'Loughlen, who was the provincial secretary at the time, had begun that work on a small scale with himself and some occasional Salesian priest to preach on behalf of the Salesian missions on Sundays in parishes.

From 1953 to 1959 Father Louis expanded the work from a small office on the main floor of the provincial residence to the space which is now the chapel and reading room of the provincial residence, and from there he moved to the basement and took up the entire area which is now (2001) the financial offices, archives and records room of closed Salesian schools.

Having left the Mission Office in 1959, Father Louis took up Latin American Catholic Relief Services until 1963, at which time he was appointed to be the pastor and director of the St. Anthony Parish in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He held that office until 1967, during which year he began to move from place to place filling various duties. These included: Bogota, Colombia, in the Office of Cooperation with Salesians in Latin America (OCSALA) during 1967-1968. After that Father Louis was appointed pastor of Mary Help of Christians Church on East 12th Street, New York. He held that office during 1968-1969. From New York, Father Louis was assigned work in the house at Becchi, Italy, during 1969-1970. The year 1970 found him at the Marian Shrine in Stony Point, New York, where he began the retreat center. During 1972-1973 Father Louis was in Goshen, New York. Then during the years from 1973 to 1980, Father was pastor of the English-speaking Catholics in Venezuela. During 1980 he was in the House of Ipswich, Massachusetts preaching retreats. During 1981 he was in Newton

preparing Salesian lay missionaries. In 1982 he was director of the house of Ipswich and was engaged in the work of instructing prospective Salesian Lay Missioners. Father Louis was back in the provincial house in New Rochelle from 1983 to 1991 promoting the lay missionary movement and training its candidates. During 1991-1992 Father was chaplain to a community of nuns in Goshen, New York. From 1992 to 1995 he was in the Marian Shrine community in Stony Point, New York. From 1995 to 1997 Father Louis was back in Goshen, and then during May 1997, he went to the Blue Gate residence in Stony Point.

Father's health at this time began to decline rapidly. In several letters to relatives he mentioned his poor health and how it prevented him from writing as he would like. His condition became so bad that on January 19, 2001, he entered the Schervier Nursing Care Center in the Bronx, New York. Nine months later, on Sunday, September 16, Father Louis left this world to go to our Father in heaven.

The wake was held on Wednesday, September 19, from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. It was immediately followed by the Mass of Christian Burial in the Don Bosco Chapel of the Marian Shrine in Stony Point. The interment took place at the Salesian cemetery in Goshen on September 20, 2001 at 9:30 a.m.

All who knew Father Louis have said or written that he was a caring person who dedicated himself to helping others in need. His niece, Marisa L. Augello, remarked that Father "never, never wore a new pair of shoes or any new clothes. Even if she gave him a shirt as a gift, or a pair of shoes, he always gave them to someone else in need."

One former pupil who is now a Salesian in San Salvador wrote: "Father Louis taught us Cicero in the third year of high school. It was really a memorable course. We learned plenty, and he was terrific. Father was really a great disciplinarian. He was always full of energy and organizing new programs. He started OCSALA in San Salvador in the late fifties. Father is well remembered here in Central America."

Rose Marie Morton wrote: "Father Louis had a strong, unshaking loyalty to his order. He said many times he could never repay them for the education, support and happiness the order gave him throughout his life. He was a man dedicated to the poor. One of the projects in Venezuela when we shared some work was finding a shelter for the newspaper boys who had no home and slept under the bridges. He found someone to donate a piece of land, not in the high rent district, and somehow he managed to build dormitories, a kitchen, and a 'living' room. The newspaper boys went to public school in the morning, sold papers in the afternoon, and slept in the house built by Father Louis for the boys. After the earthquake in Guatemala, Father Louis and I organized a fund-raiser card party with cake and coffee. With the money thus raised we helped to rebuild houses, hospital and finally the church."

Lucia Calandra wrote to Father Louis and reminisced about his work with Caritas in South America; how he was the pastor of the American church in Caracas, Venezuela; the wonderful work he did for the Boys' Club and getting nuns from Peru to run it; building a new place for them and, best of all, becoming their priest. Mrs. Calandra then wrote: "Father, I believe some of the happiest times of my life were spent working with that small orphanage with never more than 33 abandoned boys. I was so happy when you took over!"

Such are the remarks and observations of various persons who knew and worked with Father Louis. It was admitted by several Salesians that Father was a very good organizer of apostolic projects. When the work was in operation and functioning well, he would withdraw and allow someone else to carry the apostolate. He would then go on to some other plan he had in mind.

We pray that Almighty God will soon welcome Father Angelo Joseph Louis, if He hasn't done so already, into His heavenly home. Please pray for our beloved deceased confrere and for the Marian Shrine Community in Stony Point, New York.

Father John Puntino, S.D.B.



**Father Anthony M. Luzzi, S.D.B.**

On Monday evening, July 25, 2005, our brother, Father Anthony M. Luzzi, S.D.B., was called to his place in the Salesian Garden suddenly, after being sent to Horton Medical Center in Middletown, New York, for observation earlier in the evening. A member of the Salesian community at the Marian Shrine in Stony Point, New York, since 1995, Father Anthony will be greatly missed and warmly remembered by his community and the province at large.

Father Anthony M. Luzzi was born the fourth of ten children to Arcangela Amone and Joseph Luzzi in the town of Sassono, Salerno, south of Naples on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1916. From an early age little Anthony felt a special attraction to the religious activities of his parish. He was a faithful altar server and expressed to his parish pastor his desire to become a priest. In spite of the opposition of his father against “priests and monks,” he began his studies and was continually encouraged in his vocation by this same pastor. After time and prayers, his father relented and told him, “Son, if you want to become a priest, I cannot go against God’s plans.” He was 17 when he entered the Salesian minor seminary in Gaeta, Latina. While there he had the great and unique privilege of attending the services for the canonization of St. John Bosco in Rome. It was April 1, 1934. The occasion invigorated his Salesian and missionary vocation, and he prayed to St. John Bosco to help him fulfill his desire to be with him always.

At the end of four years, on July 4, 1937, he received his cassock at the annual clothing ceremony. On that day the members of his class were assigned to their missions overseas. Father Anthony and two others were assigned to Ecuador. Before leaving for their new assignments, they went to their homes for a farewell to their parents, family and friends. After a twenty-two day journey on the ship, *Virgillio*, they arrived in Cuenca, the capital of the Azuay province, feeling a bit lost in a new land, and with new customs, dress and an unknown language.

After one year of novitiate, on October 3, 1938, he made his first profession into the Society of St. Francis de Sales. For three years he was a student of philosophy at the Salesian college Manuel J. Calle. During those same years, he practiced his teaching skills at the Salesian school Cornelio Merchan. After obtaining all the necessary titles and degrees, he was assigned to work in the missions at Macas-Sevilla Don Bosco. Under the leadership of Father Louis Casiraghi, a great missionary of the Jivaro-Shuar Indians, he was able to learn some of the missionary work that he longed for and deeply desired. His experiences in the missions made a deep, lasting, and loving impression on him.

On October 3, 1944, he made his perpetual vows in the Salesian Congregation and prayed once more to Don Bosco to give him the strength to stay with him until the end of his life.

In August 1945 Father Anthony went to Quito, Ecuador, to start his theological studies at the major Salesian seminary El Jiron.

On August 24, 1948 he came to the U.S.A. to complete his last year of studies at the Salesian theologate in Aptos, California. On June 29, 1949, at the Salesian church of Mary Help of Christians in Watsonville, California, Bishop Aloysius Willinger of the Monterey-Fresno Diocese ordained him a priest along with seven other Salesians. This was a special day for him as he realized his life-long dream of becoming a Salesian, a missionary, and a priest. On this occasion he chose as his motto: "*Domine, doce me docere Te.*" – My Lord, teach me to make you known.

His first assignment as a Salesian in the United States was in Goshen, New York. While there he studied English and familiarized himself with the ways of American young people. In January 1950, he was sent to Salesian High School in New Rochelle, New York, to teach mathematics and foreign languages. During the summer of 1950 he went to Italy, where he offered his first Solemn High Mass in his home parish of St. John the Evangelist. The whole parish community and town gathered to celebrate and honor the first Salesian of Sassano.

Returning from Italy, he arrived back in New Rochelle. Shortly afterwards he was sent to Goshen as principal of that Salesian school for three years.

On December 16, 1955, Father Anthony became an American citizen, and that same year was inducted as a 1st-, 2nd-, 3rd-, and 4th-degree member of the Knights of Columbus.

After Goshen, Father Anthony was moved to Don Bosco Technical High School in Paterson, New Jersey, where he stayed for a rather lengthy and illustrious career as a financial administrator. In August of 1957 his next apostolate carried him into the deep south of Tampa, Florida, and the Mary Help of Christians School.

On August 15, 1959, the Salesian provincial, Father Felix Penna, assigned him as financial administrator to Don Bosco Prep High School in Ramsey, New Jersey. Over the seventeen years of his service there, Don Bosco Prep experienced unprecedented growth and development.

In August 1975, Father Anthony was reassigned to St. Dominic Savio High School in East Boston, Massachusetts, where he successfully spent the last of his twenty-one years as a financial administrator in our province schools.

For the next three years, Father Anthony was an associate pastor to Father Alvin Manni in Corpus Christi Church in Port Chester, New York. Once again he brought a spirit of joy, dedication and commitment to his ministry and was much loved by the people of this community.

In August 1980 Father was called to take up the mantle as pastor of St. Anthony Church in Paterson, New Jersey. His knowledge and familiarity with the three languages of Italian, Spanish and English proved to be a godsend in his trilingual parish community. As usual, wherever Father Anthony went, the material and physical plant always was better off for his being there. Growth and development became hallmarks of his administration.

On July 23, 1989, his tenure as pastor came to an end. Once again, trusting in Divine Providence, and living his vow of obedience, Father Anthony left his beloved people at St. Anthony's and continued his ministerial odyssey at Mary Help of Christians Church in Manhattan, New York, as associate pastor for Spanish affairs. For the next several years, Father immersed himself into every aspect of ministry and service that the parish had to offer. As time went on, however, his health began to deteriorate. He was rushed to Columbia Medical Center in June 1995 for a five-bypass heart surgery.

After one month of convalescence, he was sent to the Marian Shrine in Stony Point, New York. Never satisfied with sitting quietly and passively on the sidelines, in October of that same year Father Anthony accepted the responsibility as chaplain at Helen Hayes Hospital in Haverstraw, New York, where, for six years, he gave untiring and faithful service to patients, staff and visitors alike.

In 2001, because of failing kidneys and a weakened heart, Father had to make the most difficult of all transitions, from a totally active ministerial priesthood that was completely immersed in apostolate and community, to a semi-retired and home-bound religious, dependent on dialysis, doctors, and medications to sustain him from day to day. The real depth and strength of Father Anthony's spirit came

shining through in these declining years of his health.

In 2003, two successive heart attacks forced him to go into 24-hour nursing care: first at Nyack Manor in Valley Cottage, New York, then to Helen Hayes Hospital, Northern Riverview Nursing Center in Haverstraw, New York, and finally to St. Theresa's Nursing Center in Middletown, New York. He bore all these moves with some angst but with an overall spirit of openness to the will of God. Even during this troubling period, he remained open to ministry opportunities of anointings, confessions, spiritual direction and Masses on a daily basis, which were available to both staff and patients.

While he was at St. Theresa's Nursing Home, his nephew Joseph, his niece Cecilie and his older brother Giovanni lived in Middletown just ten minutes away. He had a strong devotion and love of family and was never at a loss for speaking warmly and at length about his parents and his childhood. While in the different nursing facilities during the last years of his life, he kept himself busy with ministry, reading, computer chess, checking his e-mail and writing letters and cards to a myriad of family, friends, and previous benefactors.

If there was one thing that really troubled Father Anthony, it was his absence from and his inability to remain an active and contributing member of the Stony Point community. He loved his priesthood, and he missed terribly community life. He had a tremendous love for the Marian Shrine community in particular, and looked for every possible way to remain a viable and dynamic part of it.

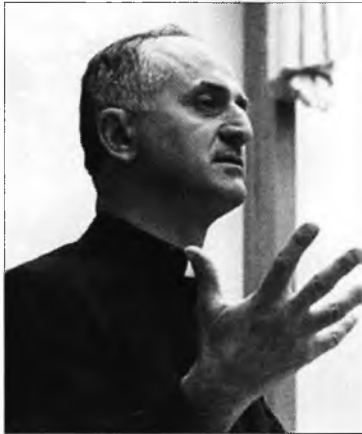
On several occasions, though hampered with a stressed heart, weak legs, and failed kidneys, he would sit for hours in the summer heat, hearing confessions while the crowds waited patiently to speak to this kindly priest. Once, when the heat was unbearable for all, he was creative enough, for the sake of the penitents, to move to the inside of an air-conditioned automobile where confessions went on undisturbed to the end.

One other reason Father Anthony loved the Salesian life was because of his faithful and ardent love of Mary, especially under the title of Mary Help of Christians. Always with a rosary in hand he would get after me on our weekly visits: "When will the new light for Our Lady of the Rosary be put in place?" I would always tell him that particular project was on my list of things to do. He would then emphatically tell me, "Not just on your list, but at the top of your list. Trust and believe that if you take care of Mary, she will most assuredly take care of you!"

To the very end Father Anthony was true to his call. He lived his life to his last breath as a faithful Salesian, a zealous missionary and a loving priest. What better epitaph can there be for a true son of Don Bosco?

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon him! May he rest in peace! Amen.

Father Steve Dumais, S.D.B.  
Director, Marian Shrine



**Father Alvin Manni, S.D.B.**

The community of Sondrio is grateful to the Lord for having enjoyed the presence of Father Alvin Manni in these last years. He was a model of serenity, a reference point of communion and dialogue with his advice and counsel.

Father Manni was born in Cosio (Sondrio), Italy, on September 30, 1922. After his aspirantate in Ivrea (1933-1937), he left for the United States and made his novitiate at Newton, New Jersey (1937-1938). He made his first profession on September 8, 1938, and his perpetual vows on September 8, 1944. He did his practical training in Tampa (1941-1942) and Goshen (1942-1944). After his theological studies at Newton, he was ordained on June 29, 1948, by Archbishop Mathias of Madras, India.

Father Manni's priestly assignments found him as pastor in Huttonsville, West Virginia, from 1948 to 1959, and director there from 1959 to 1961. He was then director of various houses: Tampa (1961-1965, 1966-1967, and 1971-1974), Don Bosco Tech in Boston (1965-1966), and Columbus (1967-1971), and pastor of Corpus Christi Parish in Port Chester, New York (1975-1985). After five years as an assistant pastor in Elizabeth, he spent his last ten years (1990-2000) as pastor of the parish of Gerola Alta (Sondrio), Italy.

On February 16, 2000, after a long and serious illness, Father Manni completed his earthly pilgrimage and returned to his heavenly Father, whom he had served with love and dedication among his brothers and in the Church.

One of his schoolmates from the years of his aspirantate in Ivrea described Alvin as a very serious student who occupied every moment of his time with his studies and the fulfillment of his duties. His years as a student of philosophy and theology in the United States were marked by a similar dedication to his intellectual and spiritual formation.

In his priestly apostolate Father Manni impressed everyone with his love and willingness to be of service to his people. He brought a generous measure of devotion and kindness in working with young people, the sick, and the elderly. He coupled these qualities with his skills as an administrator and builder.

During his years as director of the students of theology in Columbus, Ohio, he instilled them with the Salesian spirit of Don Bosco's oratory, preparing them to face the demands of their future apostolate as Salesian priests.

His superiors realized and appreciated his priestly gifts and entrusted him with even more demanding parish communities, where he was able to promote parish life with exceptional success.

Serenity, goodness of heart, and a generous spirit were characteristic of Father Manni at all times. He was always available to meet with people who wanted to discuss their problems. Everyone felt his joy in dealing with people and making them his friends. One person remarked of him, "He wishes everyone well

and wins their respect and friendship.”

He was a man of great and profound faith, and he was able to guide his people and familiarize them with the Scriptures. He often said: “It’s not enough to give people copies of the Bible. We have to show them how to apply the Scriptures to their own lives and teach them the patience and wisdom given to us by the word of God.”

Father Manni was also a man of God for his fellow Salesians. They sensed that his moral strength was born of his spirit of prayer. In truth, the Church was his spouse, and he gave her his all in terms of dedication, sacrifice, and devotion.

He loved his Salesian community, bringing to it the fullness of his priestly and Salesian virtues. He valued the assistance and cooperation of his fellow Salesians and encouraged them to share in his pastoral leadership.

One of the finest tributes paid to Father Manni was expressed by Father Patrick Angelucci, provincial of the New Rochelle Province: “For more than fifty years Father Manni was an outstanding treasure in this province. He was unquestionably an exemplary Salesian and most worthy son of Don Bosco.”

Father Agostino Sosio, Director  
and the Salesian community of Sondrio, Italy



**Father John Patrick Murphy, S.D.B.**

**I**t was during the last days of March 2001 that his confreres at Holy Rosary Parish in Port Chester, New York, took Father John Patrick Murphy, S.D.B., to the Schervier Nursing Care Center in the Bronx, after a long life of hard work in the Lord’s vineyard. He certainly did not want to go to the nursing home, but he knew it was necessary. He had been very sick, could no longer say Mass, was increasingly and uncharacteristically confused, and could barely walk even with his trusted Irish cane. He was, after all, 87 years old! For 65 of those years he lived as a Salesian consecrated by vows. He was just one month short of celebrating 56 years as a Salesian priest.

So when we presented him with all the options, he asked us to pray the Rosary. After his director

assured him that there would be sisters in the nursing home to take better care of him than we could, he forcefully declared: "It's settled then. I'm ready." He was resigned and went willingly, if warily. He was effusive with his thanks and blessed us all. We all felt so relieved.

The very next day I went to visit him at the nursing home after his first night there. As he saw me approaching, he said: "Whatever they sent me here for has been accomplished. Take me home."

I believe that's exactly what he said at 3:00 in the early morning of the 23rd of October, 2001, to the Lord Himself, some seven months after his arrival at Schervier, some 38 years after his arrival in the United States, and some 87 years after his birth in Belfast, Northern Ireland, "Whatever they sent me here for has been accomplished. Take me home."

Belfast was his birthplace on September 3, 1914. Just one month before, World War I had broken out. John Patrick came from a family of three boys and one girl. He loved to tell how closely knit the family was, how deeply religious, and how happy. That family was the prime factor in molding his character and personality. His father, Patrick Murphy, worked in the shipyards of Harland & Wolff, builders of the ill-fated *Titanic*. His mother, Mary MacGee, took care of the home; it was she who kept it all together, John Patrick would often say. From this family background there arose another priestly vocation as well, that of John's brother Robert. He died just months before John, still working hard as a monsignor and canon in Belfast.

John was only seven when civil strife broke out in Belfast. It was very acute in the shipyards – they were owned by Protestants loyal to Britain. Patrick Murphy was a staunch Catholic; his loyalties were no secret. After several threats to his life and to his family, he decided to move to Southern Ireland. He became an exile in his own land; his wife and children shared the same fate.

When the Lord inspired young John Patrick Murphy with a dream of the foreign missions, he generously volunteered at the tender age of 17. His Salesian superiors sent him to Argentina. For 37 years he labored there as a priest and Salesian. Indeed, his mission there has been accomplished.

When Father Murphy came to the United States, through a series of consequences and happenstance that we can now recognize as the provident hand of God, he came here with a mission. It too has been accomplished.

And when the Lord called him from his sleep and dreams on the 23rd of October, he brought the good work that he had begun in him some 87 years earlier to fulfillment; whatever God sent him for had been accomplished and with love.

He was ever so proud of reminding anyone who would listen, and when Father Murphy spoke, EVERYBODY LISTENED, that he was a subject of the British crown by birth, an Irishman by nationality, a naturalized citizen of Argentina, and a permanent resident of the United States. Our faith convinces us now of what John Patrick Murphy always knew: that in all these earthly nations Jesus had always been showing him the way to his true home: not Ireland, nor Argentina, nor Elizabeth, nor Port Chester. These places are nothing but the "tents" Saint Peter speaks of: "We know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God" (2 Cor. 5). Now John Patrick Murphy had a BUILDING, a dwelling not made with hands, a home in the Father's house, eternal in heaven. Jesus was and is his WAY there, because like and with Jesus, Father Murphy has accomplished here on earth what the good Lord sent him for.

What was it that God sent him to accomplish? I think we can summarize it in one word, PRIEST. He was honored as Man of the Year in Elizabeth (1983). He won a papal honor, the Bene Merenti Medal, in 1986. He was honored by the Lions Club with the Nicholas Migliore Award in 1996. He never spoke of these honors. We in Port Chester did not even know about them until the director started going through Father's belongings after his death! But we did know his true pride and joy, that on the 24th of November 1945, in Bernal, Argentina, he was anointed to his real mission. That was the day he was ordained as FATHER John Patrick Murphy, Salesian of Don Bosco. In Ireland, in Argentina, in Elizabeth, in Port Chester, "whatever they sent him for has been accomplished," because in those places he loved and exercised his priesthood to the very end.



He was a hard working priest, a priest dedicated to Hispanic ministry, both here in the U.S. and in his beloved Argentina, a priest with a distinctive pastoral style.

### **HARD WORKING**

On one of my visits to Schervier Nursing Care Center, another confrere and I entered to find him dozing in his chair. We knelt on either side of his chair and gently woke him. His first instinctive reaction was to raise his hands and start the words for the sacrament of confession. I guess he recognized me and just knew there was a sinner nearby needing absolution. Ministering the forgiveness of God in confession as a priest was second nature to him, literally his first thought and gesture upon waking.

On my last visit to him, I became alarmed at how much he had failed and at how weak he appeared. I asked him how he was doing, and he said: "Working very hard, working very hard." It was in his blood.

He loved to watch the news after supper. We had to end the meal within 30 minutes; else his impatience would show unmistakably, because he wanted the full hour of news. It was fodder for his political salvos and insightful commentary. But the minute someone came to the door looking for confession during the news hour, and it happened a lot, the day's news was history and he quickly went to be the priest.

He continued celebrating daily and Sunday Masses when he arrived at Holy Rosary Parish, Port Chester, bad as his knees were, summer, fall, winter and spring, until the very end when he went to the nursing home. He was utterly faithful to his Saturday assignment in the confessional, and his line was the longest.

He was intelligent. He loved to keep up with the latest in politics and theology, and he read the *New York Times* from cover to cover every day, with a red pen. He highlighted articles he thought we should all read and they became the topic of conversation at the table.

### **HISPANIC MINISTRY**

He would delight in the tongue-in-cheek remark that soon began spreading among the clergy of Elizabeth concerning his work for the newly arrived Cuban immigrants there in the mid sixties: "*If you want to learn anything about Hispanic ministry, go to the Italian church and ask for the Irish priest.*"

So true. He was a pioneer of Hispanic ministry, where and when it was not always understood or wanted, in both the Archdiocese of Newark as well as in our Salesian province. When they write the history of the growth of Hispanic ministry among the Salesians in this part of the U.S., yes, they will refer to all the wonderful Salesian priests we were able to get from Spain to join our province and start us off on the right foot, one of whom, Emilio Allue, is now a bishop, and two of whom, Javier Aracil and José Santa Bibiana, became members of the provincial council. Yes, they will speak of the students of theology studying in Mexico. Yes, they will speak of St. John Bosco Parish in Chicago, and of Mary Help of Christians Parish in New York City, of St. Anthony's and Don Bosco Tech in Paterson, and of St. Philip's in Belle Glade, St. Kieran's in Miami, and of Holy Rosary in Port Chester. But no such history would ever be complete without the whole first chapter being dedicated to the trailblazing work of Father John Patrick Murphy in the Italian Parish of St. Anthony of Padua, Elizabeth, New Jersey, spending himself there for the neighborhood's Hispanic immigrants. Early on he caught the eye of Archbishop Peter Gerety of Newark, who appointed him coordinator of Hispanic ministry for all of Union County in 1980. It was true then and it is still true now. If you want to learn about Hispanic ministry, go to the Irish priest.

When he came to Port Chester five years before his death and well into his 80's, retirement was no thought of his! Instead he continued his pastoral work among the immigrants of that area: Mexicans, Ecuadorians, Colombians, Peruvians, Dominicans, Guatemalans, for as long as he could: serving them as priest, challenging them to become saints, chastising them when they sat in the back of the church instead of up front, or chewed gum, or didn't discipline their children, or didn't come dressed looking like Eva Peron – in her saintly days, that is. "El Regañón" they called him, but they loved him.

And when his weak knees did battle with his priestly heart, and he could no longer walk around so easily, he had to stay up in the residence, and they came to him. And there he kept his wits sharp translating

everything he was asked to render into Spanish, from the *Salesian Bulletin* to our own parish bulletin. And he would apologize that his impeccable Spanish was not always so beautiful, saying that a translation was like a woman – his words, not mine – either faithful or beautiful, but never both.

### UNIQUE STYLE

Over his 56 years of Salesian priesthood, Father John Patrick Murphy had exercised his ministry in many an Argentine classroom during his early years. But soon he found his preferred place in the pulpit, in the hospital, and in the confessional. He preached with fiery fierceness, down-to-earth and practical, and loud. His lungs were formidable right up to the end, as anyone who ever heard him bellow the “PADRE NUESTRO” well knows. But he could be so sweet and gentle too. That he was to the penitent in the confessional, to the countless sick people he visited in the hospitals of Elizabeth and thereabout, in the homes of the sick and dying, and among people suffering unspeakable tragedies like that awful fire in Elizabeth that took the loves of so many children some years ago. He once said that event he considered to be the crown of his priesthood.

His style was unique, because he was able to put together and balance, like no one else, sugar and spice. You could describe him as both milk and honey at the same time as some other unmentionable liquid and vinegar. He once vested for Mass in the sacristy, and while he was waiting there piously, hands folded, a woman sheepishly came in asking to go to confession. He threw everyone else out, closed the door and welcomed her warmly. But she must have launched into a catalogue of her husband’s faults, and then she started to cry, “*No lloras,*” he literally shouted, “*dime tus pecados*” (“Don’t cry. Tell me YOUR sins.”). There was and still is only an open wooden grill on the door, so the whole church heard. Then it got very quiet, and later she came out smiling. Father Murphy then began the Mass with his usual warm welcome!

Whether it was the hand raised in compassionate blessing, or the hand raised with the punishing whip, it was always Jesus’ hand he raised. Jesus was his way. Like Don Bosco he was always and everywhere the priest. Jesus who said on the cross, “It is finished,” taught John Patrick Murphy to put it in his own words: “What I was sent for had been accomplished. Take me home.”

Two funeral Masses were offered for Father Murphy, one in Holy Rosary, Port Chester, New York, and one in St. Anthony, Elizabeth, New Jersey. Father’s remains await the resurrection of the body in the Salesian cemetery, Goshen, New York.

All of us owe a debt of gratitude to Father Murphy for accomplishing his mission in Argentina, in Elizabeth, in Port Chester, and now in death. We want to thank him for showing us that Jesus would go out to the poor, especially the immigrant, and to work hard to learn their language and culture and to be their priest. We are thankful for his wit and Irish humor, his unshakeable fidelity to his Salesian vocation, and his outstanding example of what a priest is. May Jesus, who was his way from Ireland to Argentina to the United States, now be his way to his true homeland, where crowns and citizenship papers don’t matter at all, to that eternal dwelling place in heaven, the house of the Father. For what He and Jesus sent John Patrick Murphy here for, has been accomplished. And now dear friend, brother, Father Murphy, may you rest in peace.

Que Jesús, que era tu camino de Ireland a la Argentina y a los Estados Unidos, sea tu camino a tu patria verdadera, es decir, el cielo, la casa del Padre, en donde no important por nada los papeles de ciudadanía ni de inmigración. Por lo que El y Jesús te mandarin a cumplir, ha sido cumplido. Ahora pues, amigo, hermano, padrecito, descanse en paz.

Timothy C. Ploch, S.D.B., Director,  
and confreres of Port Chester, New York



**Brother Benjamin Natoli, S.D.B.**

**B**enjamin Luciano Natoli was one of twin children born on December 13, 1924, to immigrant parents, Biagio and Tina (Rotina) Natoli, in St. Joseph's Hospital in Paterson, New Jersey. The hospital chaplain immediately baptized both infants since their health was frail. In fact, Benjamin's twin sister, Lucy, did not survive, but died hours later. Four months after his birth, on April 6, 1925, Ben was brought to the Salesian parish church of St. Anthony in Paterson, where Father Modesto Valenti, the pastor, supplied the missing baptismal ceremonies.

Benjamin Natoli was the tenth of a total of thirteen children born to Biagio and Tina Natoli. Several of the children died at birth or at very early ages. Ben's father was a track foreman with the railroad, while his mother remained at home. In his family, Ben learned interpersonal relationships, hard work, and a concern for and generosity towards others in need – all values that characterized his contributions within the Salesian community.

Ben attended public school in Paterson, learning cabinet making, as well as the usual academic subjects. In the meantime, he attended catechism classes at St. Anthony's Parish. There he prepared for the sacraments of Holy Eucharist, Penance and Confirmation. It was at this time that the desire for the Salesian life was enkindled. In a letter to his master of novices, Ben wrote: "I was small then, but I shall not forget those instructions. I knew my catechism, but the preparation I received from Father Valenti was a great help to me. Then I became interested in him. I was also interested in the other Fathers of the parish. I began to have a love for the Salesian fathers and became interested in them."

The Salesians of the parish saw Ben as a good and generous boy, and they began to cultivate within him a Salesian vocation. He was trained to serve Mass and to help in the sacristy and rectory. Many times he was invited to eat with the Salesians. He was enrolled for the seventh and eighth grades in St. Anthony's School, where the Salesian Sisters taught him. Ben developed an appreciation and fondness for the Sisters which remained all his life.

At the same time, Ben was introduced to the figure of Don Bosco and Salesian spiritual life. Here are his written reflections: "In 1935, on Easter Sunday my pastor spread the devotion to St. John Bosco more than I heard the few years I was there. He placed a beautiful statue of Don Bosco at the side altar. I admired the new saint and the words of the panegyric took to my heart. I promised that Don Bosco would be my favorite patron...."

"At this time I was also interested in the devotion to Mary Help of Christians whom I learned to love. I received my First Communion on her feast day... Later I took the habit of receiving Communion on the 24th of each month... Also all the missions were dedicated to her at the parish, and the Salesians often

spoke of the Help of Christians so that soon my frequent ejaculations were ‘Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in Thee; Mary Help of Christians, pray for me; St. John Bosco, pray for me.’ Each time I always invoked these three together. I don’t know why, but it became a habit.

“Soon I said, ‘I want to join the Fathers of St. Anthony’s Church. I want to become like them. I want to follow Don Bosco.’”

Ben sought to enter the Salesian aspirantate in Newton, New Jersey, to which he had made several visits. Poor health intervened, however, and his vocational desires were delayed. He contracted rheumatic fever and spent the next two years in Paterson recovering, while also completing grammar school and then taking some afternoon classes at Eastside High School.

In September 1941, with his health stronger, the tall and slender 16-year-old Ben traveled from Paterson to Newton, where he was welcomed by the director, Father Joseph Caselli, and received as an aspirant for the priesthood. During the next three years he completed high school studies.

Ben was part of the tremendous effort of those years to develop the buildings, grounds and camp in Newton into a formation center for the province. He also developed an openness and trust in Father Caselli and Father Felix Penna, his directors of his early years. He would recall their kindness manifested in a treat of ice cream or chocolate! Ben was also impressed by the example of the coadjutor brothers, especially Brother Frank Gambaro and Brother Vincent Nassetta. As some health problems continued to plague him, and the witness of the coadjutor brothers attracted him, he decided, with guidance, to pursue the brotherhood rather than the priesthood.

When applying for the novitiate, Ben wrote: “I have been a lay-aspirant for two and a half years and have enjoyed it very much. I like the group of lay brothers and am looking forward to join them. I like their work, ways, conversations and cheerfulness... I want to become a lay brother... to ever burn with love for Don Bosco, work for Don Bosco, be active, cheerful, always in the company of Don Bosco’s sons, to sacrifice all for Don Bosco. *Da Mihi Animas. Caetera Tolle.*”

With these sentiments, Ben was accepted for the Salesian novitiate, which he began on September 7, 1944. Father James Szaforz was the master of novices. A year later, on September 8, 1945, before Father Eneas Tozzi, then delegate of the Rector Major, Benjamin Natoli made his first religious profession.

Brother Ben remained in Newton for the next three years. He worked as a cook and baker in the kitchen during the day, and took some college courses in the evening with other coadjutors. Brother was deemed “a good religious in every respect,” and thus he renewed his triennial vows on September 8, 1948, before Father Ernest Giovannini, the provincial.

Brother Ben was now assigned to Don Bosco Technical High School in Paterson. For the next six years he cooked for the lay Brother aspirants, and in 1951 he applied for perpetual profession. Brother wrote of his “urge to serve God under the protection of Mary, Help of Christians and St. John Bosco, as a member of their family” and declared, “I am happy with my vocation as a Salesian. So I beg you to accept me to this final step in my religious life.” Noting in him “solid piety, obedience and a spirit of sacrifice,” the supervisors granted permission. Brother Ben professed perpetually before Father Giovannini on September 8, 1951.

During his life, obedience and a willing spirit of availability took Brother Ben to many places in both the East and the West and to the Bahamas. The moves dictated by the needs of the province and at times by Brother’s health. Each community to which he was assigned felt itself enriched by the presence and work of this Salesian brother.

Of special note were Brother Ben’s contributions at the founding of several houses. He assisted Father Celestine Moskal in the earliest years of Don Bosco Tech in Paterson. With Father Louis Rinaldi he prepared the building for the opening of Don Bosco Tech in downtown Boston. He helped Father Felix Penna in the establishment of Don Bosco Tech in Rosemead, California, an assignment he always recalled with particular delight. Lastly, he worked with Father John Grinsell in the opening of the Salesian residence for the Sons of Mary in South Orange, New Jersey.

Brother Ben was a witness to Father Peter Ricaldone’s exhortation that priests and brothers as sons of

Don Bosco “must stand side by side, complete one another, and go forward in carrying out the aims of their identical mission.” It was Blessed Philip Rinaldi who described the Salesian brother as “the genial creation of the great heart of Don Bosco, inspired by Mary Help of Christians.” That is an apt description of Brother Ben, who epitomized some of the characteristic features of the Salesian brother.

Article 45 of our Salesian Rule of Life describes the Salesian brother as “close to the young.” His simplicity and gentle disposition made Brother Ben easily approachable. He radiated a kindness that attracted the young to him, and he had a capacity to make friends easily, and his friendships endured. His affection was such that some former aspirants of thirty years previous, now grown men with families, drove hours to attend his funeral.

Article 45 also describes the Salesian brother as “close to the realities of working life.” This was true of Brother Ben to a high degree. He cooked. He baked. He painted. He put up walls. He took down walls. He built cabinets. He went to the bank. He went to the store. He went to the farm. As kitchen manager, as assistant to the financial administrator, his concerns were the daily temporal needs of the community, and his conscientious care for those needs enabled the mission to go forward.

“Unremitting and self-sacrificing work is a characteristic left us by Don Bosco,” reads Article 78 of our Rule. It was a characteristic which Brother Ben surely possessed.

Article 45 of our Rule emphasizes that while close to the young as well as to the realities of working life, the Salesian brother is “in a particular way a witness to God’s kingdom in the world.”

Regarding Brother Ben, the rector of the seminary of the archdiocese of Newark expressed his “high regard for this wonderful man of faith and devotion. The Salesians were blessed to have him as a member, and I am grateful to have known him even for a short time.”

A Jewish man who was Brother Ben’s roommate in the hospital at the time that Brother had his triple bypass operation remarked that “Brother Benny is a gentleman, a real gentleman.”

In Brother Ben’s kindness, generosity, and his transparent goodness, people experienced the presence of God. His witness was unclouded by self-centeredness, for he remained other-centered. He was a servant of hospitality. One incident sums up years of such graciousness. A few days before his death, his brother Sam and his sister Annette were visiting him in the hospital with other family members. Brother Ben was in bed, burdened with medical tubes. The most he could do was listen. Yet at one point he turned to the group and asked, “Coffee?” With that word he was ready to call the nurse to attend to his guests.

In that question of one word is contained years of humble service, thousands of meals prepared, countless apple pies baked, and numerous butter-laden steak sandwiches barbecued, infinite cups of coffee poured. It sums up his on going offering of self through hospitality.

Brother Ben’s witness to the presence of God was clear in the simplicity of his lifestyle. He lived poorly. At his funeral, his niece Tina reflected: “He lived simply. If people gave him spending money, it passed through his hands to the Church. After a while we caught on and bought him what he needed. But he needed little and wanted nothing. The only possession he seemed attached to was his black Ferrari jacket, which he wore everywhere, I think, except to bed.”

We who lived with Brother Ben know that whatever money he received he faithfully gave to the community, holding nothing for himself. Whenever he received gifts, clothing or otherwise, he usually gave them all away, either to a Son of Mary or a confrere who might be in need or to a local homeless or veterans shelter. He kept the same black jacket for years, one of his few possessions at the time of his death.

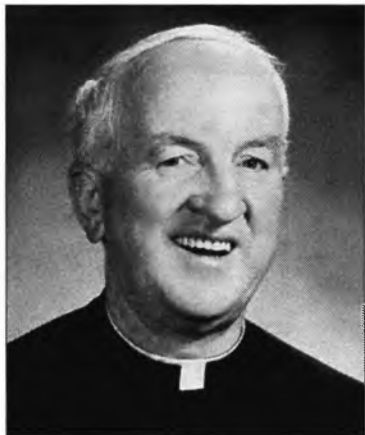
Brother Ben witnessed to God’s Kingdom in the world through his union with the Lord, his generous service of others, and in his simplicity of life. He witnessed not by preaching, but by living his Salesian consecrated life with integrity.

The life of Brother Ben was marked by ever increasing illness. In addition to a heart condition, he suffered from diabetes, and in 1992 he had a massive stroke which resulted in permanent aphasia, even though he regained his ability to move about and to swallow. He endured extended stays in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and a nursing home. His niece Tina reflected at his funeral: “Ben never feared his fate nor asked, ‘Why me?’ He accepted all that was imparted to him with good spirit and grace.”

Brother Ben's director for many years, Father John Puntino, caringly sought the finest care for Brother. The community of young brothers and Sons of Mary surrounded Brother Ben with affectionate support. As mini-strokes became more frequent in early 1998, Brother suffered a fall, and his condition weakened visibly. Since the community was moving from South Orange to Orange, New Jersey, Father Provincial asked Brother to relocate to Blue Gate in Stony Point, New York, for the summer months. After the move he would receive better care at Blue Gate. But on September 21 Brother suffered his second major stroke and was taken to Good Samaritan Hospital in Suffern, New York. At 3:30 in the afternoon of September 30, 1998, Brother's heart and lungs gave out and he went home to God, whom he had served so faithfully.

The wake and funeral for Brother Ben drew numerous relatives and a wide representation of the Salesian family. On October 3, a concelebrated funeral Mass with numerous Salesian priests was presided over by the provincial, Father Patrick Angelucci. Father William Ferruzzi, S.D.B., delivered a homily with many anecdotes from the life of Brother Ben. The body of Brother Ben was interred in the Salesian cemetery in Goshen, New York.

(See obituary letter for Brother Benjamin Natoil, S.D.B., by Father James Heuser, S.D.B., n.d.)



**Father Daniel O'Donovan, S.D.B.**

**D**aniel O'Donovan was born on April 10, 1909, in the town of Leap in the southwestern part of County Cork. His parents were Daniel and Mary O'Donovan. Three of Daniel's sisters became nuns.

The area in which Daniel O'Donovan was born has a Mediterranean-like climate. It is a community of industrious farmers, and one riveted together by the generosity of its people, their spirit of fellowship, strong family life, and a very strong Catholic faith. In the struggle for Irish freedom and independence, the people of this part of Ireland were in the forefront of the battle. They were, and still are, imbued with an intense spirit of national pride.

The characteristics of the community of his birth entered the make-up of Daniel O'Donovan. Behind his wit and humor was an unmistakable seriousness of purpose and a constant awareness that he was always and primarily a Salesian priest. In his community and in his priestly duties, Father O'Donovan's life was one of order and constancy.

Father O'Donovan was blessed with superbly good health. Cold, rain, or wet clothes never deterred him from facing a day's work on the farm. Other than on Sunday, he offered Mass early and was first on the

farm, planning work for students and farm staff. At day's end, after supper he spent an hour or more in the community chapel, reciting his breviary or walking up and down the main aisle, saying the Rosary, always available to anyone who asked for the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Father Dan loved his assignments for Sunday Mass at local parishes. He was a member of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association, and he inculcated in his students the foolishness and dangers of alcohol consumption. He took a special interest in students who came from small farms. Mindful of his own background, he was attentive to their questions about farm improvement and was generous with his sound advice. Where he could, he would visit their farms so as to advise them better in their efforts to improve their holdings.

Father Dan's constant hard work, with that of other priests and dedicated coadjutor brothers, bore fruit and pushed Salesian agricultural education to the very top in Ireland. His legacy to the Salesian school of Pallaskenry was a well organized, well cared for and well managed farm unit where the best management techniques and agricultural demonstration could be taught to young students aspiring to own and manage their own farms, and where intending university students of agriculture could fulfill their practical agricultural requirements stipulated by their universities. Father Dan, by his good nature, his affability and his friendship with the people of the surrounding district of Pallaskenry, built up a fund of goodwill and appreciation for the work of the school.

In a biographical note about himself and his years at the Warrenstown Agricultural School, another Salesian agricultural school in Ireland, he wrote: "I taught English, catechism, and mathematics as well as doing practically all the supervision of the forty agricultural students at the school. I also did some butter making and a great deal of farm work."

Father Dan was thirty-seven years old when he left Pallaskenry in 1947 to come to the United States. He was accepted as a member of the province of St. Philip the Apostle, and was assigned to the Don Bosco Agricultural School in Huttonsville, West Virginia, which had just opened. His expertise and his experience of farm management in Ireland were an excellent preparation for his work in Huttonsville. Here he also expanded his priestly work. He became confessor to the students, took on the duties of supervising the chapel and liturgy and taught classes in catechism. In 1951 he described himself as, "confessor, teacher, parish assistant, prison chaplain, and editor of the *Salesian Sentinel*, organizer of benefits and raffles, and manager of riding horses. I've broken in four colts in the last two years. I've instructed about a dozen converts."

According to the chronicle of the Don Bosco Agricultural School, on May 8, 1962, Father O'Donovan went horseback riding after working all day on the property. The horse fell, throwing Father off. He was partially paralyzed. An ambulance took him to Davis Memorial Hospital, where he was X-rayed. Nothing broken. He must remain for observation.

On May 9, Father O'Donovan was removed from West Virginia University Medical Center in Morgantown. Paralysis returned. Needs neurologist. May be there for awhile.

On May 13, Father Director [Father John Drozda] visited Father O'Donovan at Morgantown; he wasn't too well. The doctors put him in traction, and are feeding intravenously.

On May 14, Father Director visited Father O'Donovan again. He's still in bad shape, though slightly improved. Not critical, but not at all well. Trouble is due to a pinched nerve in the spine, as a result of the fall.

On May 17, Father Director visited Father O'Donovan again. He's feeling much better.

June 2, Father O'Donovan's return delayed because of fever.

June 3, The Director [Father Drozda] baptized at the school the infant, Anthony Bertrand Kyle.

The Chronicle of the Don Bosco Agricultural School ended at this point, and there were no more entries regarding Father O'Donovan. The Don Bosco Agricultural School itself came to an end with the close of the semester at the end of May 1962, and when the camp season ended on August 18, 1962, the Salesian work for youth came to an end in Huttonsville.

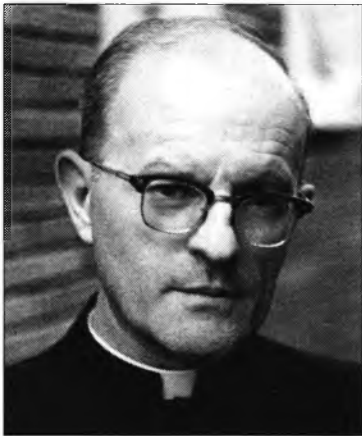
After the Salesians closed the school, Father Dan O'Donovan was given assignments in Tampa, Florida; in New York; and then in Louisiana. From 1975 to 1980, Father Dan was chaplain to the Salesian Sisters in



North Haledon, New Jersey.

In 1980, Father Dan's health began to fail. Actually, he was never the same healthy person after his fall from the horse in Huttonsville. His memory began to fade, and the dynamism that was associated with him was no more. From 1985 until his death he had to enter various nursing homes. Eventually he was cared for at the Salesian residence, Blue Gate, for the sick in Stony Point, New York. Here, in his lucid moments he was conscious of the helplessness that had overtaken him. In these last years, life for Father O'Donovan was years of anguish and sorrow; he was cared for by the Salesian community and by the coadjutor brothers. Finally, on February 3, 1997, at the nursing home in Pomona, New York, the Lord, whom Father Daniel O'Donovan had served so generously and for whom he did not count the cost, took Father Dan home to Himself. Father was 87 years old, in his 65th year of religious life, and in his 56th year of priesthood. His funeral was held at the Marian Shrine in Stony Point, New York. Father Dan was interred in the Salesian cemetery in Goshen, New York.

(See obituary letter for Father Daniel O'Donovan, S.D.B. by Father Dennis Kelleher, S.D.B.)



**Father James O'Driscoll, S.D.B.**

**F**

ather James O'Driscoll died peacefully on Sunday, March 15, 1998. May he rest in peace.

Reflecting on his life brings back happy memories for his confreres, his family, and his many friends at home and abroad. He was one of nature's real gentlemen, always a pleasure to meet and be with. He had a penchant for seeing the funny side of life, and he loved to share it.

Father Jimmy was born on July 5, 1913, at Garranhies, Camp, Tralee, County Kerry. He was the second youngest of a family of ten. His youngest brother, Joe, was a Kiltegan priest, and he died a year ago. Father Jimmy was extremely fond and proud of his family and his native place. Many of his stories, and they were legion, centered around Camp and its people. He loved to speak of his family, especially his nieces and nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews, and their many achievements, academically and on the sports field, and elsewhere. On occasions he would sometimes speak of the tragic death of his father when he was very young.

Father Jimmy left his native Kerry in early 1934 and went to Pallaskenry to begin his studies for the Salesian religious life. In September 1935, together with four other young men (Father Joe Brennan among



them), he set off on his missionary vocation to Argentina. We can only guess how very difficult that change was for a young man in those times. He had to learn a new language and adopt a new culture. He made his novitiate in Argentina and was professed on the feast of St. John Bosco in 1937. There followed the study of philosophy, practical training, and theology. He was ordained on November 24, 1946.

His first trip home was in 1955, eighteen years after he had left. His mother was long since dead. He loved to talk about the joy that trip home brought him, the pleasure of meeting his family and friends, and the welcome that he received.

After his return to Argentina, his health began to fail, and in 1962 he was transferred to the Eastern Province of the United States. In the U.S. he worked in houses of formation for nineteen years. He taught a little Latin, but particularly he was a much valued confessor: of the young Salesians at Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey, from 1963 to 1970, of the novices at St. Joseph's Novitiate in Ipswich, Massachusetts, from 1970 to 1974, and of the aspirants of Sacred Heart Juniorate, also in Ipswich, from 1970 to 1981. He was also the socius of the novices in Newton from 1962 to 1967, i.e., the first assistant of the master of novices. He was famous – and beloved – for sprinkling witticisms throughout his lessons and homilies.

When the juniorate at Ipswich was closed, the house became a retreat center, and Father Jim (he didn't go by "Jimmy" in the States) stayed on for seven more years until the retreat work, too, was phased out. During his eleven years in Ipswich, Father Jim also loved to go to the local parishes on the weekends to celebrate Mass, hear confessions, and of course mix with people, especially the Irish or those of Irish descent, who are so numerous in Massachusetts.

In 1988 Father Jim was asked to move to a totally different clime, namely to Louisiana, as confessor of the confreres and students at Archbishop Shaw High School in Marrero. He found the move and the change it entailed quite difficult.

Father Jim always longed to return to his native soil, and that wish was granted in September 1990, when he returned to Ireland and took up residence at Warrenstown. Many of his former American students called to see him there and were eager to relate the kindness and help they had received from him. His sense of humor and his optimism had helped them through difficult periods.

He was loved and enjoyed by his Salesian confreres at Warrenstown and by all who got to know him. He was a very uninhibited person and talked, chatted, and told jokes to everyone he met, young or old. We really missed him when, because of illness, he had to go into a nursing home. His family, who always reciprocated his love and esteem, took him to a nursing home in his native Camp, just a few hundred yards from his old home. There he spent his last days in peace and tranquility, well looked after by the staff of the nursing home, his family, and friends.

His funeral Mass, concelebrated by the parish priest, Father Tom Crean, and joined by many of Father Jimmy's confreres, was a fitting final celebration of Father Jimmy's fruitful and joyful life. The homily at the Mass was preached by his life-long friend and missionary companion, Father Joe Brennan. The church was packed for the occasion and many of his friends came from afar to join in his final farewell. He is interred in his native soil just beside the church.

Father Joe Harrington, S.D.B.  
Salesian College  
Warrenstown, Drumree, County Meath  
Supplemented by Father Michael Mendl, S.D.B.,  
on the American years

***Data for Necrology:***

Born: July 5, 1913

Professed: January 31, 1937

Ordained: November 24, 1946

Died: March 15, 1998



**Brother Gerard Poirier, S.D.B.**

Brother Gerard Poirier returned peacefully to his Creator at Hotel-Dieu of Sherbrooke, Quebec, on the evening of Saturday June 10, 2006, as the Church was entering the vigil of the feast of the Holy Trinity. He was 83 years old and had been a Salesian for 61 years.

During the last months of his life, he had an almost permanent need of oxygen. Two days before his death, he fell and broke a few ribs. That may have hastened his death, given his respiratory troubles. I believe that in his last weeks he had the presentiment that his end was near. In the course of a visit a few weeks before his death, he told me, “I wonder how much longer I have to live this way,” and he added, “but if the Good God wants it this way...!”

On our community day the week he died, he was with us for Mass and supper. He was ready for the great voyage, and he was not bitter about his situation. He had been suffering from ill health for many years.

Brother Gerard was born in Sturgeon Falls, in the north of Ontario, on September 4, 1922. He was the son of Georges Poirier (+1954) and Claudia Lamarche (+1961) and the brother of Leona (+2002), René (+1989), Liliane (+2003), and Gaetan (+1997). He leaves behind his sister Jacqueline, his sister-in-law Alice, and numerous nephews and nieces. He liked to mention that the north is very different from the rest of the province because of its French heritage. He was baptized the day of his birth at Sacred Heart Parish – he was very proud of his second name, John Paul – and he was confirmed on May 1, 1929. He did his grammar school at École St. Joseph and his secondary studies at Sturgeon Falls High School.

Recruited by Father Lucien Trudel, he went to Newton, New Jersey, to pursue his college studies. Brother Gerard, like Abraham, had to leave his country to answer God’s call, just like the other first Canadian Salesians: Fathers Trudel and Quenneville, and in Quebec, Father Pierre Decarie, since there were no Salesian foundations in Canada. Discerning the call of God as being authentic and wanting to work among youth as a Salesian, he made his first vows on September 8, 1944, as a brother. Let me add here, since he occasionally mentioned it, that his great desire would have been to become a priest.

He was one of the first Salesians from Canada. In fact, he was proud to affirm that he was the first Canadian coadjutor brother. We may say that, with his death, in a sense, it is the end of an era, just like three years before when Father Trudel, the first of all the Canadian Salesians, died.

Already from the time of his novitiate, his openness to the will of God was manifest. In his letter requesting admission to the Salesian Society, signed on the feast of the Sacred Heart, June 16, 1944, he wrote: “Indeed I realize that I am totally unworthy to be admitted into the Salesian Society; however, relying on the mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the aid of Mary, Help of Christians, it is my desire to join the Society forever.” And he continued, “I express the wish that if the Superiors ever intend to send

me to the missions, I will indeed joyfully accept.” (Original in the archives).

He would recall from time to time that one of the graces of his life was when he accompanied the Venerable Father Cimatti, the saintly founder of the Salesian work in Japan, from Newton to the Provincial House in New Rochelle, in 1947, I believe. With him he spoke French. “I met a saint and spoke with him!” he would proudly say. He followed all the stages of his formation in the United States and prepared himself with much seriousness for his future apostolate.

He did his practical training in various Salesian houses, first in the United States because there was no Salesian work as yet in Canada. Thus he worked in Hope Haven, Marrero, Louisiana, then in Goshen, New York. Those were years he liked to recall and which had left pleasant memories, whether about the young people or the superiors and confreres. He was then asked to go to Jacquet River, New Brunswick, for the school year 1948-1949; the house had just opened a year before. He made his perpetual profession in Newton, N.J., on September 8, 1950. He then joined the Goshen community as a teacher.

He came back to Canada definitively in 1951. The years that followed saw him as a teacher and music director – choir and band – in the following communities: Jacquet River (1951-1955), St. Louis-de-Kent (1955-1961), St. Patrick High School, Sherbrooke (1961-1963), Jacquet River (1963-1970), Seminaire Salesien, Sherbrooke (1970-1979), St. Gabriel Parish, Jacquet River, as music animator (1979-1985), Seminaire Salesien (1985-1987), Mary Help of Christians Parish, Montreal (1987-1992). In 1992 he returned to Sherbrooke for good, helping out in the community. Given his frail health and the special care that his condition began to require, he entered the London Residence just a street away from the community residence on Quebec Street, in 2001.

All through his life, he strove to put his talents at the service of the educational and parochial communities where obedience sent him. He had a special love for Gregorian chant; he had taken many summer sessions at the Benedictine Abbey of St. Benoit-du-Lac and was proud of his certificates.

He was very attached to his family, to the Congregation, and to his many friends. With the latter – they were mainly his past students – we can really speak of fidelity. He corresponded with many of them, years after they had left school; he thus exercised a beautiful apostolate by his keeping contact with them, by letter or by phone. He enjoyed receiving their visits. He had an easy way of relating to them. On learning of his death, some wrote to express their condolences. I wish to quote from two of them, both from New Brunswick: “The good Brother had written and even phoned me very recently. In fact I was surprised he had managed to find me in my new parish.... I understand that he was a good religious and that the past pupils and the young were important to him.” (from a past pupil who is now a parish priest). And these words from a layman: “I must admit that the news of his departure affected me very much. He was a great friend, a brother and even more; it was a privilege for me to have kept contact with him during almost half a century....”

During all these years, whether in the United States or in Canada, he had great facility in making friends. As mentioned above, he was always very devoted to his past pupils. He had tried very hard to put together an association of past pupils in New Brunswick, but because of distance and his fragile health he did not see his dream come true. He liked keeping contact with them, and when he found one, he would write to him, reminding him of the days and values of his Salesian education. His correspondence was abundant, even if sometimes, in a moment of distraction, he would put a letter in the mail, forgetting to put stamps on the envelope.

These past years, as much as his health would allow it, and since he had more time at his disposal, he volunteered much of his time to sick, aged, or poor persons in Montreal as well as in Sherbrooke: Rivière-des-Prairies Hospital, Grace Dart Hospital, Centre N.D. de-l’Enfant, Foyer St. Joseph, Maison St. Georges, etc. In an article entitled “Volunteer Work,” he concluded thus: “I am sure that at the base of all volunteer work, of all that we do to help other people, there is, whether we are conscious of it or not, the love that we want to give. And also, I must say, the love we want to receive....”

A tragic moment of his life was a serious car accident near Bathurst, New Brunswick, in 1957, involving five Salesians. He was only 35 years old at the time, and that was the beginning of numerous health problems

and the cause of much suffering throughout his life, since the consequences were lifelong. Even if he had periods of frustration and discouragement, he remained faithful to Don Bosco and to his vocation.

The fact of having been a Salesian for nearly 62 years was to him a motive of great pride and of gratitude to the Lord. He expressed it very firmly on the occasion of his golden jubilee in 1994. On that occasion, surrounded by members of his family, confreres, and friends, a feast was organized for him and two other confreres at the Séminaire Salésien in Sherbrooke. Father Provincial, while expressing to him the gratitude of the Salesian Family, quoted and commented Art. 195 of the Salesian Constitutions: "Fidelity to the commitment made at our religious profession is a response which we continually renew to the special Covenant that the Lord has made with us. Our perseverance is founded entirely on the fidelity of God who loved us first...."

It is well to underline here his devotion to the Eucharist and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the two devotions greatly recommended by Don Bosco to his religious. He was often seen making visits to the chapel, praying before the Blessed Sacrament or in front of the statue of Mary Help of Christians. He liked to pray the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, especially on Saturdays. Great was his devotion to Don Bosco and to the saints and blessed of the Salesian Family. He liked to read about them as well as about Salesian things.

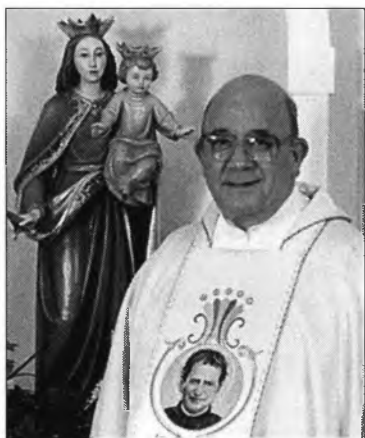
Among the things appreciated about him were his good humor, his facility for relating to people and for conversing – also about spiritual matters – and his attention to young people. These last years, he became interested in the writings of Thomas Merton, and we felt that the mystical Trappist was a source of nourishment for his spiritual life. He was grateful to the persons who had helped him during the difficult periods of his life and especially these past years when his health condition required more attention and care. It is especially by prayer that he expressed his gratitude.

After a celebration of the wake for Brother Gerard in the chapel of the Dominican Sisters in Sherbrooke, where his mortal remains were exposed, the coffin was brought to Maria Ausiliatrice Parish in Montreal, where the Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on June 16. In the presence of numerous concelebrants, members of his family, friends, and parishioners, the funeral was presided over by Father Richard Authier, the provincial, who had first met him as a young student at St. Patrick High School. During the homily, he quoted and commented on those magnificent words of Jesus: "Father, I want that those whom you gave me be also with Me where I am."

We have the firm hope that the Lord welcomed him for his many years of fidelity, service, and love for his God and his heavenly Mother. He liked recalling the memory of the great Salesians, saintly men, whom he had met during his long Salesian journey. May he now enjoy their blessed company, as also that of the members of his human and Salesian families who already live with God!

After the Mass, in committing his remains to the earth at the Repos St. François-d'Assise in Montreal, where he now rests among his Salesian brothers while awaiting the final resurrection, we felt that he already possessed finally in God's arms the final repose that he was hoping for toward the end of his earthly journey.

Romeo Trottier, S.D.B.  
June 10, 2008



**Father Ronald Quenneville, S.D.B.**

**B**orn in Coniston, Ontario, Father Ronald Quenneville made his first profession of vows as a Salesian of St. John Bosco on September 8, 1944. He was ordained a priest on July 1, 1954.

In his priestly ministry, Father Ron served as teacher, administrator, director, provincial delegate, chaplain, and associate pastor in New Rochelle and Goshen, New York; Jacquet River and Dalhousie, New Brunswick; Sherbrooke and Montreal, Quebec.

He began his ministry in the Toronto archdiocese as chaplain at Father Henry Carr High School in 1977-1983, during which time he served the Societa Unita as chaplain. Since 1983, Father Ron taught at Don Bosco Secondary and ministered as associate pastor of St. Benedict Church in Etobicoke.

Father Ron is remembered for his great devotion to the Way of the Cross, to our Blessed Mother Mary, and to the Toronto Maple Leafs. His spirit is best summed up in his favorite song, "This Little Light of Mine."

This summary written at the time of his death gives us some insight into the man whom Cardinal Aloysius Ambrozic of Toronto described as a man of robust faith; it gives us just a small glimpse of the life of Father Ron as to time and place of his vocation and ministry.

### **Blessed Mother**

*"Stay close to our Lady. She is a powerhouse!"*

At the time of Father Quenneville's death, a parishioner from St. Benedict made this statement: "If you have been blessed to know Father Ron, I am sure that you have had the opportunity to hear one of the many stories that filled the heart and soul of this incredible Salesian priest. He never failed to remind his listeners that he became a Salesian at the early age of 12. There is no doubt that he loved being a Salesian priest, faithfully serving the Lord for 48 years, but he reminded everyone that he had been a Salesian for 63 years. Don Bosco and our Blessed Mother were proudly two of his best friends. He made a point of promoting devotion to them throughout his life in word and in deed. As God used these two special heavenly friends to walk with him on his earthly journey, I have no doubt that they accompanied him on his long awaited heavenly journey home."

He had a tender and filial devotion to Mary Help of Christians, convinced Mary was his heavenly mother, and all this with great simplicity and humility. When applying for perpetual vows on May 24, 1950, he expressed his devotion in the following way:

*On this most opportune day I wish to present to you and all my superiors my application for the perpetual vows. I know full well that I have far from lived the rule perfectly in my past six years but I*

*can assure you that any mishaps were not affected with any bad will but only through weakness. However, I trust that, since perfection is not reached in a short time, my superiors well comprehend my human frailty but rather center their attention on God's goodness, Who is seeking to lead another soul into Himself and possibly countless other souls indirectly.*

*This petition could not be presented on a better occasion than this present one – the Feast of our Heavenly Mother, Mary Help of Christians. As the days roll on, I become ever more and more conscious of her maternal love and constant guidance. In the event I become a priest – this is my most firm desire for the salvation and sanctification of my own soul – I shall consecrate my priesthood to her most Immaculate Heart.*

*In conclusion, dear Father, I beg you and all my superiors not to consider my unworthiness lest the balance be wanting, but God's great love for us all and in particular for me in presenting me this singular opportunity of perpetual dedication to Himself.*

*Yours in Don Bosco,  
Bro. Ronald Jean Paul Quenneville*

As Father Richard Authier expressed at his funeral homily, "These words could have been written last week. They express the heart of the man. He never wavered in his faith."

Among the many stories about Father Ron and his devotion to Mary, I share two that speak of his simplicity and robustness. In the first instance, a statue of Our Lady of Fatima was removed from a side chapel of St. Benedict Church and found itself in the hall outside Father Ron's bedroom, but not for long. Father Ron quickly and joyfully welcomed her into his bedroom. A week later, she was back in the hall. It seems that Father Ron found it quite difficult to change his clothes in the presence of the Virgin.

In the second instance, in good weather, it was not uncommon to see Father Ron walking around the church or on Kipling Avenue with his rosary in hand.

One balmy spring day he encountered a local Protestant minister whom he warmly greeted and expressed how nice things were along Kipling Avenue. The minister returned the greeting and said, "Yes, everything is fine along Kipling Avenue except for that statue that you people have erected in front of the church," referring to the statue of Mary Help of Christians. Needless to say, he had a quick and robust reply!

September 15, Father Ron's birthday, is the feast of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady. He liked to quip that his mother said that he was the eighth sorrow, but we all knew that his filial devotion to Mary throughout his life gave joy to Mary and many of us, for it was not childish but childlike.

### **Don Bosco**

Father Ron, reflecting upon his vocation to a St. Benedict parishioner, made this statement: "One summer, when I was 12 years old, I took everyone by surprise, including myself. It was through the presence of a young Salesian priest by the name of Father Trudel, who had been vacationing that summer at the same place that I was. Father Trudel and I met for the first time. I had made a new friend, one who was truly used as an instrument by God to help me understand my true feelings in regard to my vocation."

As I listened to him, I tried hard to picture him as a 12-year-old boy. Looking over to my side I could stare at this jolly 65-year-old priest whose face carried powerful expressions of conviction that no doubt were part of him at such a young age. He continued telling me how those compelling feelings within him gave him the courage to tell his family of his decision and definite change in plans. He was not going to go to high school as planned but to the seminary with Father Trudel.

He laughed at his recollection of his 8th grade teacher, Sister St. William, whom he described in detail. He had a way of making you feel somehow connected with these incredible people that touched him. Sister St. William's name, for example, he would repeat again and again. I believe it was his way of treasuring every person God had blessed him to know throughout his life. "Sister St. William," he would repeat, "was one of the people who was surprised with my decision to go away to the seminary. But under that tough

exterior,” he would stop and nod to himself, “deep down inside, Sister was really a softy at heart.”

He admired toughness. “She truly took an interest in my studies and offered me assistance and guidance whenever possible. Upon my decision to go off to New York, she questioned me. ‘Why are you going to the seminary so far away from home? Why do you choose to go so far away? Why not become a Jesuit or a Redemptorist?’” With those words he’d break out in a roar of laughter which would put a smile on my face too. Then in his tough voice he’d continue his response to Sister, “Because I want to become a Salesian!”

He wanted to be a Salesian because he had come to know and love Don Bosco, a man, a priest, and a saint who spoke so directly to the young boys, had zest for life, and offered natural guidance.

We all could talk for hours, and we have many stories to tell about Father Ron’s zest for life such as sports, barbecues, Swiss Chalet, finance, Vatican II, and how you solve a problem with a harp.

Yet, it was, above all, his natural goodness, often hidden or covered over by a brusque and loud exterior that was the true heart of the man who responded to the Salesian heart of Don Bosco’s “Give me souls, take away the rest.”

Reflecting on his encounter with Father Ron, during his year as a student at St. Patrick’s in Sherbrooke, Father Richard Authier remarks: “When I entered the school, the director was a wonderful Salesian named Father Paul Avallone. However, in 1960, another Salesian became the principal and director of the school. Now the first Salesian, Father Avallone, was shy, quiet, and reserved. The second Salesian was very jovial and a lot louder than the first.

“You have, of course, guessed that I am talking about Father Ron Quenneville. My memories of Father Ron during high school are of someone who was loving and fatherly. He was especially important to me in his role as confessor of the students at the back of the gymnasium during daily Mass.

“This early memory of Father Ron as a confessor touched the essence of the Bosconian heart of the man.”

Father Ron was an apostle, a Salesian, and a priest. He cared in particular for the young. When a student at St. Pat’s or Father Henry Carr got bawled out, he knew it was because Father Ron cared. When Father Ron bashed students into the boards on hockey rinks or drowned them as Orca the whale in the pool at Golfwood Heights, they knew that he was with them through thick and thin.

How he worried about parishioners receiving Communion in a state of sin! He could be called upon at any time to give them the Lord’s forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

How many hours Father Ron clocked in before the Blessed Virgin Mary and how many times did the rosary pass through his fingers in one day and always praying for others.

Part of Father Ron’s love for Don Bosco and the young was his never-ending interest in vocations to the Salesian religious life and the priesthood. Nothing would make Father Ron happier than to know that another young man or woman wanted to join the Salesian family and carry the banner of Don Bosco and his love for the young.

At the time of Father Ron’s death, Sister Patricia Lacharité stated: “Really, Father Quenneville was like a second father to me. If I am an FMA today, it is because of him – although he couldn’t understand why I didn’t have lots of love for Canada and why I am in my beloved Kenya, Africa. He is the one that gave the love for the missions, along with our good Father Moisan of St. Pat’s.

“I owe a lot to Father Quenneville. The last time I saw him was in 1992 when I was coming to Kenya.

“I hope that you can give me something of his. Since I was two years old, he was a part of my life”

Father Ron in his mind and heart of Don Bosco was a true apostle for the young.

When we wanted to celebrate his 50th anniversary as a Salesian, I had him pose for a picture. He fought me on this because he did not want me to take the picture. He finally relented and then he requested 250 copies of the picture. In the picture, Father Ron is wearing his vestments with the image of Don Bosco on his chest and he is standing by the statue of Mary Help of Christians. This picture really says it all.

### **Spirit of His Life**

On the day of his funeral at St. Benedict’s Church, Father Richard Authier started his homily by saying:



"This morning, just after breakfast, I received two e-mails from heaven. Apparently, for the past few days, there had been quite a ruckus up there. Today is the feast of the Chair of St. Peter. The e-mail is from St. Peter himself, who is complaining that Ron has grabbed his chair and he will not get out of it.

"The second e-mail is from a Swiss Chalet in heaven, and a newly arrived customer is pounding on the table and yelling, 'Where is my rum and coke?'

"Each of us could come up here and tell a hilarious story about Father Ron. He's really a legend in his own right. Once you met him, you would never forget him.

"Certainly, Father Ron was put to the test in the last years of his illness and incapacity. But from many points of view, much of his life was a challenge but a challenge lived out in obedience and fidelity to the Church and to the Salesian Congregation.

"From 1954 to 1967, he served back and forth as principal or vice principal in two different provinces [New Brunswick and Quebec] and in two different languages. When he was asked to become pastor at St. Claire Church in Montreal in 1967, he had never even celebrated a marriage or a funeral.

"From 1966 to 1976, he was provincial delegate for Canada, the equivalent of provincial today. How he suffered through those years after the Vatican Council when so many Salesians left the Congregation. Father Ron built up many things we take for granted today, such as the financial autonomy of our Canadian Salesian province.

"He was put to the test and found worthy. Through all the challenges and many works, he remained the obedient servant. His little light didn't just shine; it was a beacon for Don Bosco's Salesian presence on Canadian soil."

That same light shone in a particular way during Ron's last years at St. Benedict's Parish.

After a routine visit to the doctor, the doctor informed me of how precarious the health of Father Ron was, and that Father Ron should not be driving. I knew that this would be a very big blow to Father Ron and I also knew it would be a challenge for me to tell him, as he certainly held dear the freedom the car gave him.

The moment of truth came at a retreat. Father Richard and I spoke with him. His simple "Yes" and his openness to the decision, while costing him much, brought me to tears, although I should not have been surprised, as I had often been witness to his openness, simplicity, and humility as he came to me for confession.

There were many ups and downs for him and the entire loving community of St. Benedict's Parish during his last months. But through it all, we learned and loved to see his light shine. When we could no longer keep him at home and brought him to the hospital, he was placed in intensive care. After two days, I was approached by his doctor and informed that there was nothing more they could do for him and it was just a matter of time.

A decision had to be made as to extending life supports. I informed the doctor that it would be a decision that Father Ron would have to make for himself, for he was fully aware of everything.

I approached Father Ron and told him what the doctor had said, and he told me right off, "You make the decision." I told him that it was a decision he had to make. He replied, "You are the superior; you make the decision." By all appearances he was calm and at peace (*Obedientia et Pax*).

The nurses moved him into a private room and made him as comfortable as possible. After we were there for a while, he began to appear uneasy with the decision, so I asked him, "Father Ron, what are you uneasy about?" He looked around the room and asked, "What's the clip for all this?" Father Ron passed away quietly the following morning.

Father Ron had a great love for his vocation and labored much to build the Canadian province. He was a Salesian to the core.

One of the very last things Father Ron shared with me at the hospital was: "I have only one regret. I did not love my Salesians enough!"

My response to Father Ron is best expressed in the words of a parishioner of St. Benedict. "We knew and saw all Father Ron's shortcomings and foibles, but we knew he was a good man!"



His favorite hymn was “This Little Light of Mine, I’m Gonna Let it Shine,” and he was not shy about letting it shine in every area of his life.

Father Frank Kelly, S.D.B.

***In Father Ron’s Words...***

*“Stay close to our Lady. She is a powerhouse!”*

*“Your life is a joke if you miss the boat.”*

*“This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.”*

*“If your love for the Lord does not sizzle, it will fizzle.”*

*“For all the loving and generous confreres and parishioners in my life, I thank you, Lord.”*

*“It is when you experience the love of God that you find self-esteem.”*

*“Self-esteem will lead you to service, and it is in serving that we become one.”*



**Brother Aldo Roman, S.D.B.**

**O**n March 28, 2001, Brother Aldo Roman was called home to his heavenly Father and the Salesian Garden promised by Don Bosco. He had worked here at Salesian Missions, New Rochelle, New York, since 1979. During these years, Brother Al had worked faithfully in the computer room, keeping the office lists and mailings up to date. He was known and loved by all who worked with him, the staff, the missionaries around the world, and so many people he had met during his years of service here in the United States.

Aldo was born in Fara (Vicenza), Italy, on November 25, 1925, to Maddalena Bonato and Abramo Giovanni Roman. He was the eldest of eight children – four boys and four girls. His sister Silvia died in 1937, just thirteen months after she was born. On November 30, 1925, he was baptized in the parish church in Fara, where he was also confirmed on May 1, 1934.

Aldo’s mother had two brothers who were Salesians. One was a priest, Father Antonio Bonato, and the other was Coadjutor Brother Peter Bonato, who served in the missions of Ecuador for forty years.

Aldo attended the diocesan seminary in Trent in 1936. After a year, he did not wish to stay and came home. His uncle, Father Antonio Bonato, suggested that Aldo go to Turin with him for schooling. This suggestion was accepted, and in 1937 Aldo left home for Turin.

Arriving in Turin, he was accepted at our technical school, Conte Rebaudengo. He was a good student

and loved his new trade in the machine shop. He spent four happy years at Rebaudengo and decided to apply for the Salesian novitiate in 1942.

Aldo was received and entered the novitiate at Villa Moglia in Chieri. He made his first profession on August 16, 1943, and then returned to Rebaudengo to continue his formation and to learn more about his trade. He worked hard and became a professional machinist. On November 3, 1946, he received his certificate as a *magistero professionale*.

During his last year, Brother Al would often speak to us about his years at Rebaudengo after his profession. He said that they were some of his happiest years, and also, some of his most difficult. He grew in his love of Don Bosco, the community and the machinist trade. He told of the struggles to find food, the fear during the Allied bombings and the destruction caused by the war. These three years (1943-1946) that he spent at Rebaudengo would affect the rest of his life.

In 1946, Father Ernest Giovannini convinced Brother Aldo to come to the United States. He left Italy with seven others – five brothers and two clerics. He arrived in Newton in 1946 and spent one year there to learn English. His first assignment was to West Virginia in 1947. After one year there, he was transferred to Don Bosco Trade School in East Boston, Massachusetts (1948-1956).

In 1956 Brother Aldo was transferred to Don Bosco Technical High School in Paterson, New Jersey. He taught in the machine shop until 1962, when he returned to Italy for one year because of poor health. The love and care of his family helped him to recuperate quickly.

When he returned to the United States in 1963, he was assigned to the junior seminary in West Haverstraw, where he worked with Brother Oscar Andrejasic in the machine shop. Brother Aldo was very happy and highly esteemed by the aspirants in the shop.

In 1967 when the junior seminary moved from West Haverstraw to Goshen, Brother Al and Brother Oscar returned to Don Bosco Tech in Paterson. Brother Oscar began to teach drafting to the freshman class, and Brother Al took charge of the machine shop. Here is where he developed his love for the computer.

When the electronics shop purchased the first computer, Brother Al would go up and help students to work on the new technology. He would often be found in the shop with a group of students exploring the many possibilities of the computer. He developed a program for numeric control. He would bring computers into his shop before they became the standard in his trade.

During his years at Don Bosco Tech, Brother Al taught his students the way to be first-rate machinists. He wanted them to be proud of their profession and to be ready to meet the challenges of a changing industry. He loved his trade and even had several patents in his name.

In 1979, Brother Al left Paterson to work in the mission office. A new computer room was being worked on and Brother Al was asked to share his knowledge of computers. He began the computerization of the mission office. Over the years, he would give many hours to reformat outside lists for unduplicating purposes, to maintain annuities, to facilitate letter transfers and to troubleshoot any equipment malfunctions in the computer room. He spent many hours working out problems so that the computer-generated material would be done properly.

When Brother Al was in the hospital at various times during the last few years, he would never want to have the phone connected. He said that he could use the time to pray, meditate and solve the problems he was having with the computer. When you visited him in the hospital, he would begin to explain the theory he was working on to solve a glitch he was having with the program. When he expressed an eagerness to get back to the office to try out his theory, you knew he was ready to leave the hospital. In fact, he once left the hospital on a Friday evening, only to rush back to the office early on Sunday morning to try his new theory. The extra broad smile on his face and the lively greeting at lunch told us he was successful.

Brother Aldo had many extra-curricular activities. With Father Clementi and Father Maffei, he was the cofounder of the Mangia Mangia Club. He was always the first to arrive for the meetings and would check everything to be sure it was perfect. He would always give a positive report to the chef, Father Maffei. He would sit in a place where he could observe everyone; enjoyed seeing old friends and meeting new ones. He enjoyed being with people.

In 1997, in a healing service held at the provincial house, Brother Al made peace with the fact that he had leukemia. It was a surprise to everyone, but it was also the beginning of a new stage in Brother Al's life. In the following years, he would confront many health problems.

His oncologist, Doctor Elizabeth A. Phillips, wrote in a letter to Brother Al's family after his death:

*We went through some tough times together, as he was quite sick more than once, but he always had a sense of serenity and grace about him. He also always took the time to appreciate those who cared for him (something uncommon these days) from the housekeepers to the physicians.*

Brother Al had a strong character and was prone to criticize when he saw things were not done the way they were supposed to be done. Yet in the past few years, he was very detached from things and seemed to be very constant with his situation. Whether here or visiting home in Italy, he always spoke about his work with great interest and enthusiasm but never talked about himself. He made everyone feel special.

When in Italy, he rarely traveled. He enjoyed the company of his family and the neighbors. He took pride in speaking of his brothers, sisters, nieces, and nephews. He would often speak of their accomplishments, their complaints that he did not visit Italy enough, and the wonderful times he had with all of them. He was so proud of them. He was looking forward to visiting them in the summer of 2001, and even had Santa Claus bring him a new suitcase with wheels so he could move around the airport easily.

Brother Al was prone to infections and on Friday, March 16, he developed flu-like symptoms. He visited his internist on Monday, March 19. He looked tired but said he felt okay and was sleeping fine. When I left for the provincial chapter on March 23, 2001, Brother Al promised he would be in good health to go to Province Day the following weekend. He and Father Terry O'Donnell would be together for the week at the residence.

On Tuesday, March 27, Father Terry faxed me that Brother Al's condition was up and down and that he was thinking of bringing him to the doctor. Brother Al refused and said that he would wait for his regular appointment the following week. On Wednesday, March 28 at supper, Father Terry asked Brother Al whether he wished to go to the emergency room at the hospital. Brother said that he wanted to rest, and Father Terry left the residence to lock up the office. When Father Terry returned, he saw the light on in the guest bathroom and thought Brother had forgotten to turn off the light and found Brother Al. His time of pain and suffering was over. He had gone home to God and Don Bosco.

During the past three years of community life with Brother Al, I saw in him a wonderful example of what it means to be a Salesian. He always showed a tremendous love and devotion to Don Bosco, to his vocation and total dedication to his work. He was a true gentleman with a warm, welcoming smile, impeccable manners and a caring way.

Brother Al had accepted his illness. He never felt sorry for himself. He trusted completely in the Lord and put himself into the hands of the doctors and nurses who treated him. He was an outstanding example of the will of God.

He had given witness in Newton, West Virginia, Paterson, and New Rochelle. As a young brother in formation, as a teacher of technology (metals), as a computer programmer, he witnessed to the best of the Preventive System of Don Bosco. He was always present in a very humble and unassuming way, but his presence made everyone feel better. He practiced what Don Bosco taught about the importance of Salesian presence.

I believe that we can all learn four things from Brother Al's life, namely:

1. Love who you are.
2. Love Don Bosco and your vocation.
3. Love the young of all ages.
4. Love the will of God.

Please join our community in thanking God for Brother Aldo Roman. May he rest in peace! May our Blessed Mother, the Help of Christians, lead many generous young men to serve in our Salesian Family.

Father Patrick Diver, S.D.B., Director



**Brother Lino Seneci, S.D.B.**

I'm convinced that Brother Lino was born with a smile on his face. Instead of crying like most babies at the first contact with the outside life, Brother Lino's expression must have been one of wonderment, a smile he carried on his soul all through his life. His friendliness, his ability to enjoy any task, big or small, to engage in social interaction with individuals and groups were among his most noted characteristics.

This aspect of his personality was already evident in his young years. Among his personal papers, he kept a number of beautifully handwritten notebooks, going back to his pre-novitiate and novitiate years. These were not only the spiritual diaries which all masters of novices encouraged their novices to keep, but also scripts of short plays in which he had a part, collections of poems by famous Italian poets, popular songs of the Italian countryside, etc. This bright outlook on life must have been what attracted him to the Salesians.

Brother Lino entered the Salesian house of Ivrea in 1925, moved by the example of his Salesian uncle, Teodosio Bonomi. He had an early inclination of becoming a priest but the superiors, noting he had some difficulty with Latin, or perhaps realizing that there were too many clerical brothers and not enough coadjutor brothers steered him to the brotherhood, which he accepted readily as God's will. Thus he transferred to Foglizzo to study a trade. He chose woodworking and put all his energy and love into it.

He began his novitiate at Villa Moglia in 1933 and made his temporary vows as a Salesian in 1934, the year Don Bosco was canonized.

After taking his temporary vows and a more extended period of professional training at Conte Rebaudengo, Brother Lino came to America, arriving at Don Bosco College, Newton, New Jersey, on October 19, 1938, and moving on to Tampa, Florida, the following year, where Mary Help of Christians School became his veritable second home. There, with relatively short periods of time spent in Boston, Pahokee, Florida, and Belle Glade, Florida, he lived most of his Salesian life.

I personally had the pleasure of spending the three years of my practical training with Brother Lino at Mary Help. I remember him always being with the kids: in the shop; in the playground; in the band, where he played the trumpet under the lively direction of Father Clementi; running the movies on weekends (no easy task if one remembers those big reels projected from those old arc-light contraptions); driving the school bus to take the kids to the circus, to league games, to the beaches and state parks. Those were the days kids never went home – they had no homes to go to – and we Salesians spent all 365 days of the year with them. Ours was a happy and well-knit community and Brother Lino was an integral and inspiring part of it.

Brother Lino never changed his lifestyle. Whether in Tampa or later in Boston, in Pahokee or in Belle

Glade, he was always the same outgoing, friendly, communicative person. He came to be loved by so many, especially young people, who later in life remembered him with deep gratitude. At the celebration of his 50th anniversary of Salesian profession in 1984, the mayor of Tampa, Bob Martinez, had this to say of him: "You are known, admired and loved by more than a generation of young people who have benefited from your guidance and counseling. In the 37 years you have been at Mary Help of Christians School, you have earned the respect of literally thousands of youngsters who have known you as an assistant, teacher and friend."

The people of Pahokee, Florida, where he spent the next six years, came to love him as much as did those in Tampa. Pahokee is a small rural community flanked by extensive sugar cane fields and bordering Lake Okeechobee – The Glades' "window to the Sea." There along with Father Santa-Bibiana, the Salesian pastor at that time, Brother Lino is memorialized by a splendid parish hall that bears their names. One of Pahokee's parishioners, Royal York, noted at Brother Lino's funeral that "Brother Lino never lost his sense of wonderment. He was like a child, awed by everything he saw." That describes Brother Lino's character to a "T," and his ability to attract children of all ages as well.

And then finally Brother Lino came to Belle Glade, Florida. Here he spent the rest of his days working tirelessly at the diverse activities common to any Salesian parish, particularly active at our youth center, all the time keeping an eye on the grounds and parish property, fixing all kinds of things. He kept for the purpose a small shop filled with the old tools he so loved – Brother Lino was never known to throw anything away.

It was here in Belle Glade that one came to realize that, on top of his wonderful human qualities, or maybe as a basis for them, Brother Lino was animated by a deep religious commitment. From cradle to death he lived close to God.

His whole Salesian life was filled by the spirit which St. John Bosco left to his sons: faithful observance of the vows, frequent reception of the sacraments, devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians, work and prayer.

His prayer life was characterized by a child-like simplicity. In his worn-out book of Christian Prayer were found these prayers: "Jesus and Mary, help me. Grant me health, love and grace. I love you with all my heart." "O, my God! I believe. I adore, I trust and I love you with all my whole heart and soul. I thank you! May your Kingdom come, and may your holy will be done." "Mary Immaculate, Help of Christians, grant me the grace never to offend your Son, health that I may dedicate myself to my duties and apostolate, guidance and prudence and kindness in all my work, that I may do everything for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Your son, Brother Lino. Dec. 7, 1976."

Brother Lino went to God on February 19, after a long bout with cancer. His wake took place in our parish church where people from Tampa, Pahokee and Belle Glade came to honor his memory. At the Funeral Mass held in Belle Glade there were representatives from our Salesian communities of Tampa and Miami as well as from the Palm Beach Diocese, including the bishop of the Diocese, Bishop Anthony O'Connell, a great friend of Brother Lino.

The final farewell took place at Stony Point, New York, among our own Salesian confreres of the area. The funeral, presided by the Very Rev. Jim Heuser, the vice provincial, was held in the evening of February 26 and the interment took place the following morning, February 27, at our Salesian cemetery in Goshen, New York.

May the memory of this outstanding Confrere of ours remain alive in our province, and may his example inspire us to live faithfully our commitment to Jesus.

Father Louis Aineto, S.D.B.  
and the Salesian community  
at St. Philip Benizi, Belle Glade, Florida



**Father Alfred Sokol, S.D.B.**

He was big from birth. In his prime, Alfred was 6'2" and weighed over 200 pounds. His hands were like two catcher's mitts! Students in his class were hypnotized by their size. That's probably where he acquired the affectionate name of "Big Al"!

Although he was born in Hudson, New York, he was raised in Albany, where his parents, Alexander and Slicia Sokol, natives of Poland, decided to make their permanent residence. Alfred was one of six children, three girls and three boys.

In Albany, he entered St. John's Catholic School. During his boyhood, he frequented the nearby parish church of St. John the Baptist, conducted by the Salesians of St. John Bosco. The pastor was the Rev. Charles Buss, S.D.B., who took notice of young Alfred and invited him to become an altar boy. Young Alfred was thrilled to wear the cassock and surplice and to serve at the altar. Perhaps without his realizing it, the germ of a vocation to the priesthood originated and developed during this time, but was not to mature for several years to come.

In the meantime, he completed his grammar school studies; then for some practical family reasons, he dropped out of school. He was just 15 years of age when he decided to look for work, instead of going to high school. He readily found a job as a messenger boy for the Delaware and Hudson (D&H) Railroad. Within a few months, the company offered him an opportunity to advance. He gladly accepted and was sent to telegraph school in Saratoga, New York. After a six-month course, he returned to D&H and was put on the "Extra Board," where he was able to run the switches from a railroad tower.

Five years of this work was enough for Alfred. In 1932 a certain Salesian missionary bishop from China happened to be visiting St. John's Parish in Albany. Alfred listened to one of his talks on the missions, which apparently awakened the vocation germ that originated in his altar boy days. He became fired up with the desire to become a missionary and go to China. Alas! That's not what the Lord wanted. He would become a priest but work for the home missions.

In the mid 1930s, with the help of his pastor, Father Buss, Alfred applied and was admitted to Don Bosco Seminary in Newton, New Jersey. There he was given the opportunity to complete his high school. He made his novitiate in 1936-1937 and professed vows on September 8, 1937. On June 29, 1947 he was ordained to the holy priesthood.

Before that great day of ordination, like every Salesian seminarian, Alfred had to go through a period of "practical training," not unlike an "internship." He was sent to one of our schools as a teacher. During this period, the Salesian cleric is given the title of "Brother." In September 1940, Brother Alfred's training ground was Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, New Jersey. Besides the task of teaching, he was assigned to the

athletic department to help with the rebuilding of the athletic program. He began coaching the baseball, basketball, tennis, and track varsity teams.

It's interesting to note that it was at this time Big Al's basketball team gained the name of Ironmen. Don Bosco Prep was scheduled to play two games on the same day, one in the afternoon and the other in the early evening. The first game in Elizabeth and the second in Hawthorne were to be played for two separate championships. The first game was running late. Don Bosco had a comfortable lead. Realizing that the varsity could not make the second game on time, Brother Al sent the "subs" ahead to start the game. The subs lost no time in taking the lead. When the varsity arrived, after winning their game, they took over and delivered a resounding defeat to their opponents. Bob Curley of the *Ridgewood News*, who was covering the two games, wrote in his article that he had never seen such stamina and strength in a high school team. He called the players of Don Bosco Prep "Ironmen." The name stuck!

On November 23, 1972, through the instrumentality of Father Al, a football stadium and track were dedicated on the Don Bosco campus, a gift of the Granatell family and named the Charles L. Granatell Stadium. It marked a turning point in the athletic image of Don Bosco Prep. Big Al's career as a coach spanned a period of 15 years.

Father Al was an exceptional man, remembered over the years not only for his great coaching ability, but also for his many fine qualities associated with his ministry as a teacher and priest. This writer had the good fortune of being present one day when Father Al was in the gymnasium stands surrounded by enthusiastic Bosco boys. Suddenly I heard the booming voice of Big Al leading the fans in a strange but striking Polish cheer:

Ooh! Sa! Sa! Sa! Ooh! Sa! Sa! Sa!  
Hit him in the head with a big kielbasa!

A gym full of highly spirited fans immediately joined him. The reverberations of that cheer shook the rafters and were felt throughout the entire structure of the gym, threatening every living soul who would dare to oppose the fighting Ironmen!

Big Al's energy seemed never to weaken. Another sports writer for the *Ridgewood News*, Ron Rippey, ran a commendation for Father Al that deserves repeating, "His years of work have given Don Bosco Prep's athletic program a wealth that can never be lost!"

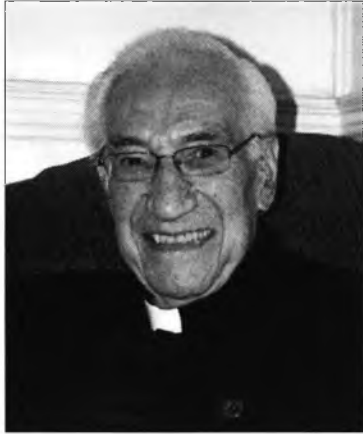
Yes! What Big Al gave Don Bosco's athletic program will never be lost. Unfortunately, we cannot say the same about his worn-out body. Upon reaching his 90th birthday, he began to show what the efforts of time and age can do to one who had given his all for his boys. His legs no longer were able to carry him. Those once powerful hands were now painfully arthritic and not capable of unscrewing the cap off a bottle.

A male nurse, John Clark, was assigned to care for him, help him wash and dress and help in whatever else eventually became too difficult to handle. In spite of the pain he was enduring, Big Al was never heard to complain. He maintained a heroic cheerfulness to the very end. When John Clark was asked how Father Al was doing, the reply was: "In the mornings, when I would go to wake him up, he would greet me with the song 'Oh. How I hate to get up in the morning!'" His outlook on life was now cheerfully spiritual. He constantly clutched the rosary and a holy picture of our Lady and was often heard to recite the Rosary.

"He had the most pleasant disposition I have ever encountered in my seven years as a Nurse" was John Clark's sincere remark.

Father Al went to meet his Savior accompanied by his heavenly Mother, in whom he had a special devotion, on December 19, 2004. We will miss him, but we shall not forget him!

Father Anthony Spano, S.D.B.



**Father Anthony Spano, S.D.B.**

**F**ather Anthony A. Spano, S.D.B., died on the evening of Dec. 18, 2008, at Hackensack University Medical Center in Hackensack, New Jersey, after a short illness. He had been a member of the Salesian religious community of Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, New Jersey, since 2000.

Father Spano had been for several years the senior member of the New Rochelle Province of the Salesians of Don Bosco, in both age (93) and years of membership. On September 1 he celebrated his 75th anniversary of religious profession, and on July 4 his 65th anniversary of priestly ordination.

Father Spano's father Salvatore emigrated from Sicily to New York City at age 16. In New York he married Catherine Maiorano, and the couple raised a family of five children, three boys and two girls. During World War I, Salvatore served his adopted country as a police officer in Manhattan.

Anthony, the fourth Spano child, was born on July 31, 1915. He grew up in the East Village on East 13th Street and was drawn to the church of Mary Help of Christians on East 12th Street, which was staffed by the Salesians, who had founded it for the service of Italian immigrants a few years before Anthony was born. It was there that he was baptized three months after his birth and confirmed when he was nine. He became an altar boy and got involved in the parish activities.

Anthony was attracted to the Salesians because of their youth-oriented work and decided to join them. So in October 1929, at age 14, he entered their brand-new junior seminary in Newton, New Jersey, whence he was admitted to the novitiate, also in Newton, on Aug. 31, 1932. A year later, on Sept. 1, 1933, he pronounced his vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty and became Brother Anthony.

Brother Anthony continued his studies for the priesthood at Don Bosco College in Newton, earning a bachelor's degree in philosophy in 1936. During his seminary years he discovered and fell in love with the dramatic arts, taking parts in seminary theater productions and, later, directing them and organizing dramatic competitions among the various Salesian schools in the New York-New Jersey area. He became a member of the National Catholic Theater in Washington, D.C., and was a member of its board of trustees for five years.

Upon college graduation, Brother Anthony was assigned to the junior seminary teaching staff in Newton. After completing his period of "practical training," he looked forward to studying theology in Europe, according to Salesian custom, and to meeting his relatives in Sicily. World War II interfered, however, and Brother Anthony had to do his theological studies at Don Bosco Seminary in Newton. He was ordained there on July 4, 1943, completing 14 straight years on the same campus.

Following his ordination, Father Spano taught the sciences at Salesian High School in New Rochelle, New York, from 1943 to 1947 while doing graduate work at Fordham University, where he earned an M.S.



in chemistry in 1947.

Master's in hand, Father Spano returned to his alma mater in 1947 and became principal of the junior seminary for several years and biology, chemistry, physics, and dramatics teacher at Don Bosco College. He resumed graduate work at Fordham and earned a doctorate in biology in 1957. He also developed an interest in photography, contributing to the archives of daily life and special events in the seminary. And he became a champion fundraiser for the seminary, founding Our Lady's Auxiliary for that purpose, with several chapters in New York and New Jersey.

Father Spano's writing and photographic skills served him and the Salesian mission up to his last years, when he used them in the development office and for the alumni magazine of Don Bosco Prep.

When Bishop Lawrence Casey of Paterson established a priests' senate for the diocese, Father Spano was elected to serve on it (1971-1976).

In 1976 Father Spano was appointed director of Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, serving until a heart attack in 1981. In addition to his religious, administrative, and public relations responsibilities, he continued to teach a few religion courses.

Father Spano moved to the provincial residence in New Rochelle in 1981, serving as treasurer of the Salesian community until 1996 and as vice director (1981-1985, 1999-2000). When the community moved out of the residence during renovations in 2000, Father Spano returned to Don Bosco Prep to help in the school's development and alumni offices.

Into his 90s, Father Spano continued priestly ministry to a sisters' convent and in local parishes. He was featured in an article in the Catholic Advocate of the archdiocese of Newark on Nov. 19, 2003. As his health failed over the last year, he was hospitalized several times, and he recently became a resident at Allendale Nursing Home.

Father Vincent Zuliani, S.D.B., for many years colleague of Father Spano on the Don Bosco College faculty, recalls him as "a good Salesian and a good priest" and "a great man, outstanding in every sense," who made many friends for the College.

Father Gennaro Sesto, S.D.B., who was Father Spano's director in Newton in the 1960s and knew him for decades, describes him as "a very engaging person who made friends easily, and kept them." He adds that Father Spano "was devoted to Don Bosco and the ideals of our Congregation" and was "a wise counselor." He noted Father Spano's exceptional talents in dramatics for acting, directing, and writing.

Father Steve Shafran, S.D.B., besides having been Father Spano's student in Newton, was his director in Ramsey from 2000 to 2004. Like so many other people, he remembers Father Spano's characteristic graciousness. But what he singles out about Father Spano is his attachment to the Salesian mission to the young: even as an elderly priest he loved to be with the students – at their games and concerts and in the cafeteria for lunch; and when he could not be with the students, inquiring about their activities and the progress of other Salesian apostolates. Father Shafran also called Father Spano a visionary because of how he saw a place for lay people as collaborators in the Salesian mission and how he connected with those people to involve them in the mission.

Father Spano was buried in the Salesian Cemetery in Goshen, New York, on Dec. 22, 2008.

Father Louis J. Molinelli, S.D.B.  
Director, Don Bosco Prep  
Ramsey, New Jersey



**Brother Charles J. Todel, S.D.B.**

When reading the Bible, we find in Revelation 14:13, *“Happy are those who have died in the Lord; let them rest from their labors, for their good deeds go with them.”* There is little doubt that those who have died in the Lord are celebrating now as they welcome into their midst Charles J. Todel

Throughout the Bible we come across some amazing characters. From the Old Testament we know of Moses and the Exodus, Jonah in the belly of the whale, Queen Esther and her influence with the king, and the story of Samson and Delilah. The New Testament also has its share of characters like Mary Magdalene, Zacchaeus, and St. Paul. Brother Charles Todel was likewise a character of biblical proportions.

To describe this character we go back to the Bronx, New York, a place where many characters are born. Carlo Giuseppe was born on June 1, 1922, the son of Italian immigrants Adolph and Cecilia Todel. He was baptized at St. Dominic’s Church in the Bronx. Charles was of Jewish ancestry on his father’s side, his father being a convert. Some find it significant that Brother Charles died on Passover.

His parents wanted young Charles to be with his brothers and to receive a distinctly Italian cultural formation. They sent him to Novara, Italy, where he grew up with his grandmother on his mother’s side of the family. There he attended the Salesian Oratory of San Lorenzo. During his stay there he acquired two traits that would stick with him all his life: the spirit of the Oratory and a desire for sanctity.

During his days at the oratory young Charles became severely ill with pneumonia. Throughout his illness a certain Salesian brother would always be at his bedside, caring for him and praying for his recovery. After one very long night during which he was near death, Charles woke up to find this Salesian still at his bedside. From that moment he realized that the Salesians were his true family, and he would do anything to remain with them.

Charles eventually returned to the States and entered the Salesian novitiate in Newton, New Jersey, in September 1942. During his novitiate, Charles was notable among his fellow novices. One of his novitiate companions says, “He was very rigid with himself and often attempted to correct the others in many details, so much so that they dubbed him ‘O.P.’ – of the Order of Preachers.”

Although he had an Italian accent, a bit of the Bronx would show itself in his speech. One story goes that while reading a text in the refectory during dinner, he came out with the phrase “bed wetter.” The master of novices interrupted, “Bed wetter. What’s that?” A look at the text revealed the phrase “bad weather.” Charles grew red and humbly repeated the correct version. Even in recent years we often heard him speak about his devotion to “Da Blessed Mutta.”

He made his first profession of vows on September 8, 1943, at Don Bosco Seminary in Newton, N.J.. His motto was “Totus.” He wrote it on his letters and in his notebooks. It was his daily greeting to his friends. In total giving of himself to God, he took to heart those words of the gospel, “Whenever you did it

for the least of my brothers, you did it for me” (Matt. 25:40). Whenever he prayed and whenever he worked, he gave it his best effort.

Brother Charles began studies for the priesthood, but through a series of events which led to a breakdown of his health, he eventually discerned a call by God to be a Salesian brother instead. In order to help him build up his strength, Father Ambrose Rossi, provincial from 1933 to 1941, assigned Brother Charles to work on the farm. He learned how to milk cows, slop the pigs, and do other chores. Brother Charles said he hated the idea, but obediently he put on his jeans and went to work. A year later his health had improved so much that he became a robust Salesian, ready for any task.

Brother Charles certainly has been the exemplification of the Salesian brother, as described in the Salesian Constitutions, art. 45: “The Salesian brother brings to every field of education and pastoral charity the specific qualities of his lay status, which make him in a particular way a witness to God’s Kingdom in the world, close as he is to the young and to the realities of working life.”

A talented craftsman, Brother Charles spent the first part of his teaching career in the cabinetmaking shops of Salesian trade schools in Marrero, Louisiana (1944-1959); Paterson, New Jersey (1959-1963); and Tampa, Florida (1963-1965). At Don Bosco Tech in Boston (1965-1975), he developed a building technology program that combined woodworking skills with architecture and other aspects of home construction. He returned to Tampa, where he continued this program (1975-1984). Brother Charles also coached several sports at these locations.

But his most notable efforts were recognized during the years that followed. After a brief assignment as financial administrator in Columbus, Ohio, in 1984-1985, Brother Charles went to Birmingham, Ala. It was there that his skills of financial administration, cabinetmaking, and building technology were synthesized into a new program that he named “Be an Apostle of Christ.” This job training program for minority young adults involved parishioners, lay missionaries, and volunteers. The outreach into the community included a food pantry, medical clinic, and other services to help the poorest of the poor. The work was featured in newspapers and on television. It was described in a soft-cover book entitled *Be an Apostle of Christ* by Father Peter Lappin, S.D.B..

His award-winning programs served hundreds. From the very start he invited the Salesian Cooperators and the Volunteers of Don Bosco to play a vital role in directing the work. Even after he left Birmingham, having served there from 1985 to 2001, the spirit of the Oratory continued in the lay Salesians who have maintained the operations there to this day. He established a similar program in Chicago, where he lived from 2001 to 2005.

Brother Charles possessed a great sense of humor. While he was a young brother on the farm in Newton he would wage friendly attacks on the seminarians. He would appear with a basket of fresh eggs – only they were not eggs... rather, carefully fashioned snowballs!

While in Alabama in 1995, when “Be An Apostle for Christ” was nearing its peak, he asked a visiting priest if he would lead a holy hour for the staff and volunteers at one of the chapels. In the chapel, the young priest walked up to the tabernacle to place the Blessed Sacrament into the monstrance for adoration. As he inserted the pyx in its proper place, the priest noticed that there was something lodged behind the sacred host. He left it alone, but at the end of Benediction he went back to the tabernacle to investigate. Apparently the pyx was too big for the host, and lacking anything better to keep the host in position, somebody had placed a relic of St. Mary Mazzarello into the pyx behind the host. Later that evening, when asked about the situation, Brother Charles chuckled that he wasn’t sure how the relic of St. Mary Mazzarello got into the pyx. Then he quipped, “Well they say, ‘To Jesus through Mary.’”

Failing health brought Brother Charles to the oratory at Mary Help of Christians in Tampa in 2005, to live at the St. Philip Residence, where several of the senior Salesians of the province reside. Even there, he had to be with youth and to continue as an educator. He spent his time giving art lessons to the children at the oratory. Teaching them to draw, paint, and construct miniature houses, he was very proud when one of his students won first place for her artwork at the Florida State Fair. He continued to be a source of guidance and encouragement for the Salesian Cooperators of the Tampa Bay region.

His desire for sanctity was remarkable. Brother Charles displayed a genuine reverence for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, fidelity to the community practices of piety, and great devotion to Don Bosco and Mary Help

of Christians. He had a way of detecting when people needed counseling, guiding them to the sacraments and back to the Church.

But he could play the martyr at times. Two summers ago the confreres were loading the car to make their way to Jacksonville for the annual Salesian retreat. Brother Charles always preferred the front seat, but this time someone else had taken that position. So Brother Charles graciously offered to sit in the back seat. All the way to Jacksonville he could be heard saying, "I'm happy to sit back here, even though it's uncomfortable for me. But that's okay, I'll offer up the pain in my legs as a sacrifice to the Lord. I don't mind being back here. 'Blessed are the lowly.' Do you think it's bad that my back is getting numb?" And this theme continued for a few hours, until the carload of passengers got to Jacksonville, relieved that the trip had finally ended. It may be that Brother Charles worked hard to be a saint, but he often forced those who lived with him to become saints as well.

Although he came across to some as willful and aggressive, Brother Charles was a humble man. He often said that he was only as good as the people working with him. He relied heavily on his staff, volunteers, and friends to help him wherever he was.

During his brief assignment as financial administrator at the Salesian Center in Columbus in 1984-1985, Brother Charles had difficulty getting along with the accountant, who was his assistant. She had worked there for many years. Being of German descent, she was known for her neatness, followed a timely schedule, and carried out her daily tasks with precision. It was difficult for her to comply with the wishes of this new financial administrator, who was of Italian background – spontaneous, demanding, and somewhat aggressive. The two didn't hit it off very well.

Many years later, this good lady came to visit the Salesians at St. Philip's Residence. Brother Charles was among them. As soon as she passed through the front door, Brother Charles was the first to greet her. He held her hand, looked at her sincerely, and said, "Leah, I am so very sorry. You were a wonderful worker and deserved much better treatment from me." She was quite moved. From that moment they became good friends.

In the fall of 2007 it became clear that Brother Charles's health was declining. He learned from his doctor that the cause was an advanced liver ailment for which there was no cure. He took the news seriously, asking to be left alone – no visitors, no television. He wanted only to think and pray.

A short time later, Brother made an announcement for everyone to hear. He discerned that God had given him his last assignment: to die with dignity and to set an example of what it means for a Christian to be ready for death. He called for everyone to visit him and pray with him. He was courageous about his dying to the very last day.

Even as he neared the end of his life, Brother Charles continued to show the traits he had acquired as a young man: the spirit of the Oratory and a desire for sanctity. He spent his last few weeks at a Catholic nursing home in St. Petersburg, Florida.

One day a social worker, interviewing Brother Charles to compile a medical history, asked about his heart. Another visitor who was spending time with Brother Charles told the social worker, "Brother Charles has an Oratorian heart." The social worker replied, "Oh my, I've never heard of that ailment. Is it painful?" Brother Charles jumped at the opportunity to talk about Don Bosco and the Oratory, the home that welcomes, the school that teaches the lessons of life, the playground where friends come to meet friends, and the church where all are welcome to pray and meet the Lord.

A few days before his passing, Brother Charles offered a few final words to be given to his friends and fellow Salesians. He said: "Tell everyone that God is here for me. I woke up with a lot of joy this morning, and all of a sudden I realized the Holy Spirit was with me. I didn't have that much connection with the Holy Spirit before, but now I do. I hope that my fellow Salesians will have the same blessings that I have: peace, joy, and hope. I have all of that! The Lord gave it to me. Don Bosco said Mary was in the house. He said bread, work, and paradise. It's very true, very true. I'm looking forward to the final step. It's closer now. I'm not anxious to stay long. I want to go and meet Jesus."

Brother Charles Todel passed away on April 20, 2008, at the nursing home in St. Petersburg. Just as a Salesian brother stood vigil at Charles's bedside during his childhood days at the oratory when he was near death once before, another Salesian brother, David Iovacchini, was at his bedside during his final hour.

A funeral Mass was offered at Mary Help of Christians Church in Tampa on April 23 and again at Corpus Christi Church in Port Chester, New York, on April 24. A memorial Mass was also offered for him in Birmingham, Alabama. He was laid to rest in the Salesian Cemetery in Goshen, New York, on April 25, 2008.

In Matthew 11:25 we read, "Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom." Charles Todel started with a dream that would have led him to the priesthood. But frail health led him down a different path, one which some might say was more humble.

It is often said, we will not be judged by how much we know, or whom we know, or how much money we have, or how famous we may be. We will be judged by how much we have loved God and humbly loved our neighbor. There is no doubt that Brother Charles has done this well, and it has truly made him a giant among men.

Father Dennis Donovan, S.D.B., Director  
Mary Help of Christians Center  
Tampa, Fla.



**Father Lucien Trudel, S.D.B.**

**T**he long and fruitful life of Father Lucien Trudel came to a peaceful end on Sunday, August 17, 2003, at 11:20 a.m. at Hotel-Dieu of Sherbrooke, Quebec, at the time when usually, these past years, he would start celebrating his Sunday Mass. He was almost 98 years old and had been a Salesian for 71 years and a priest for 64 years.

Father Trudel had been admitted to the hospital on July 20 for a major surgery which he successfully underwent ten days later, but which left him weakened. His death was caused by bronchitis. In spite of his will to live, accepting that he be operated on for a tumor, he had the intuition of the approaching end. Before being hospitalized, he left his office of the archives in perfect order, each object in its proper place. Near his computer, he had left in plain sight on a bookstand the list of the deceased confreres of the province, the most recent page in view. Often at the hospital, he would say to those visiting him who would wish him a prompt recovery: "What matters is to do the will of the Good Lord." He never forgot thanking those who visited him and who brought him sweets or other things he needed, not taking any service rendered for granted.

He was very conscious that on his bed of suffering, he was reliving Christ's holy sacrifice of the Cross.

A rather worn-out holy image found in his breviary without doubt often brought it to his mind. On one side of the picture, a phrase of John XXIII: "The holiness of the priest consists in offering himself as an immaculate victim to complete the work of Christ." And on the other side, he had written by his own hand, "All those who wish to be pleasing to God will encounter suffering." And a third phrase copied from the Book of Tobit: "Because you were pleasing to the Lord, it was necessary that you be tested by trial." Those trials – he had known them!

I believe that, feeling his strength diminishing, he had asked Mary to come to take him on the day of the Assumption. But on that day, a Salesian confrere, surrounded by almost all the Salesians of Canada since they were on spiritual retreat in Sherbrooke, was being ordained a priest near the hospital, and the following day was celebrating his first Mass. In his way of thinking, this would have upset the festivities. The spontaneous reaction of the confreres upon the announcement of his death the day following the first Mass was that he wanted it to happen after the ordination feast was over. A gentleman, and discreet, until the very end!

He mentioned on some occasions that he would probably live to be 100, but the reason given is not one that we would expect. He thought that the Blessed Virgin would grant it so that he could continue celebrating Holy Mass.

Lucien was born in Sturgeon Falls, Ontario, on November 19, 1905. He was the son of Albert Trudel, a blacksmith originally from St. Narcisse de Champlain, Quebec, and Anita Lauzon. He was baptized the next day at Sacred Heart Parish. He sometimes discreetly mentioned that he would prefer to be feasted on November 20, because the day of his Baptism was that of his real birth. His sisters and brothers preceded him into eternity: Thérèse and Simone, Raymond and Georges. He liked to recall that when the Titanic sank in the Atlantic, he was 7 years old, and that gave him a good head start over us in life.

As a child, he had contracted polio, which left him handicapped in one leg. Here are a few lines which he himself wrote toward the end of his life; it shows how he saw life with the eyes of faith: "In my life, an event that was as providential as it was damaging took place. I was affected by it physically as well as intellectually when I was not yet two years old. My older sister did not suffer from it. As is usually the case, my right leg as well as the foot did not develop normally. That made me limp all my life and was the cause of numerous falls. When I was about nine years old, my mother, in her great faith in good St. Ann, took me to Beupré and washed me in the fountain in front of the old sanctuary. However, Divine Providence had other designs for me. I am convinced that, had it not been for that paralysis, I would not be a priest today. The Lord knows how to make use of the handicapped and the weak, of those who are less endowed to make His Kingdom come. At the beginning of the century, there was an epidemic of this kind that was then called child paralysis or polio...."

Lucien did his primary and secondary schooling at St. Joseph School in Sturgeon Falls, and his college and philosophy studies at College Sacré-Coeur in Sudbury. He was already in theology at Scarborough major seminary when Father Richard Pittini, S.D.B., then provincial of the Salesian province of New Rochelle – he later became archbishop of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic – visited there and gave a conference on Don Bosco that made him opt for Salesian life. He expatriated himself to the USA to continue his studies and also later, for part of his priestly ministry, since there was no Salesian house of formation in Canada. "Don Bosco conquered my heart at the very moment of that encounter," he often said. A few years later, as a newly ordained priest, he would be the Lord's instrument for the Salesian vocations of Father Ronald Quenneville and Brother Gerard Poirier, the families being acquainted with one another. Father Trudel took pride in being the first Canadian Salesian.

Thus after a year of theology at the diocesan seminary, he decided to pursue his ideal with the Salesians in the USA and entered the novitiate. His master of novices was Father Joseph Costanzo, and among his classmates we read names like Mark Ferrito, Angelo Bongiorno, William Kelley, Adam Saluppo, et al. It was during his novitiate that he consecrated himself to Mary according to the teaching of Saint Louis M. Grignon de Montfort, as exposed in *The Treatise on True Devotion to Mary*. In his autobiographical notes – written at the beginning of 2003 and not destined for publication, the writing having been recommended

to him by his superior (most quotations of this letter are taken from that source) – he writes that each morning, upon rising, he renewed that consecration.

Brother Lucien made his first profession on October 30, 1932. He did his practical training in Tampa, Florida. (1933-1936), till the time of his theology. He was then sent to the International Studentate of Theology, the Crocetta, in Turin, Italy, for his theology. He was very conscientious about his studies, all the more since the year he had done in Toronto was credited. He always considered the years spent in the city where the Salesian work took root as being a special grace of God. He was ordained a priest on July 2, 1939, at that time the feast of the Visitation of Mary, in the basilica of Valdocco by Cardinal Maurizio Fossati. He kept in his room near him the list of the 36 confreres ordained with him. Among them we find names like Fathers Victor Andrisani (USA); Giovanni De Maria (Italy, teacher at the UPS); François Festoc, Maxime Guillerm and Adolphe Le Boulch (France); Edmundo Szeliga (Poland and Peru).

At the celebration of his golden jubilee of ordination at St. Benedict in Toronto, he told the guests that on his ordination day he made a visit to the basilica of our Lady in Valdocco and asked Mary to give him 25 years of priesthood. That would suffice to make her loved and to spread devotion to her under the title of Help of Christians – the title so dear to Don Bosco. And he concluded saying how she had been generous. She did not grant him 25 years, but double, and he envisaged more (in fact, he would live 14 more years!). One of his theology professors for whom he had a great esteem and affection was Father Eusebio Vismara, renowned liturgist of the Congregation. I wonder why, but on several pages of his breviary where the phrase Light, born of Light appears, he writes next to the phrase: Don Vismara. At the Crocetta Institute, he lived with or got to know great Salesians like Brother Scarzanella and Father Grosso, well-known musicians, Father Augustin Auffray, the writer and biographer of Don Bosco, Father Mezzacasa, Father Gennaro, et al. He mentions also that Father Ricaldone would often come to the Crocetta to give conferences. Those three years “filled him with joy and delight,” he writes. He mentions having spent marvelous summers in the Alps at Oulx during the summer vacations. So as to be better acquainted with the Salesian places, he asked and obtained, for his last summer in Italy, to spend it in Valdocco in the office of the Bulletin Salésien, where Father Auffray and a coadjutor named Villeneuve worked.

Brother Trudel was chosen to represent his class at the beatification of Mother Mazzarello on November 20, 1938. About this event, he writes: “The day before [the beatification], the Sovereign Pontiff Pius XI addressed the Salesians on the virtues of Mother Mazzarello. I took down handwritten notes. The beatification ceremony took place in a great climate of joy. Don Lupo [the future secretary general of the Congregation] guided me as well as the two other representatives and made us visit churches and places like the basilicas of St. Paul Outside the Walls, St. Mary Major, St. John Lateran, the Catacombs of St. Callistus, the Via Appia, etc. A beautiful and interesting pilgrimage by train!”

Before departing Italy at the end of his studies, he went to Valdocco to greet the superiors – the Generalate at that time was still in Turin – and to pray once more in the basilica and at the tomb of Don Bosco. “After my last exam taken with Don Vismara, he said to me: ‘Caro figlio, sta in pace e ringrazia il Signore.’” After his ordination, with the Second World War imminent, he embarked almost immediately by ship to return to America.

During the next 23 years, he received several obediences: he worked in Tampa, New Rochelle, Goshen, Suffern, Port Chester, 12th Street in New York City, Marrero, Louisiana, and Paterson. Thirteen of those years were spent in Corpus Christi Parish, Port Chester, New York. When he left that parish, the parishioners expressed to him their affection and appreciation. He writes about it in these terms: “When I left for Montreal where obedience called me as assistant at St. Claire Parish, the Holy Name Society, together with other parishioners, organized a feast in the gymnasium and presented me a gift as a sign of their gratitude: a Pontiac (model Tempest). The Laymen’s Retreat League joined the group in presenting me a magnificent chalice with a solid silver cup. I make daily use of that chalice... Thirteen years of ministry in a parish that I loved!”

He made sure to keep the remembrance of the persons dear to him, first and foremost the deceased members of his own family and his friends, as also anniversaries, writing in his breviary on given days,



names of persons and events. On the page of the Nativity of the BVM, he had written by his own hand: "My perpetual profession on Sept. 8, 1936 in Tampa, Florida, in the hands of Ambrose Rossi." For him it was a reminder for thanking the Lord for the graces given him in abundance and an occasion for praying for his dear deceased ones.

The holy images he kept in his breviary had a special meaning. On one of those images he had written a phrase of St. Joseph Cafasso, Don Bosco's spiritual director, copied from the biography of Father Vismara by Father Eugenio Valentini: "A third of the virtues necessary for priestly ministry would suffice for people to think that he is a saint, but he cannot be one in the eyes of God who sees in the intimacy of the heart." On his ordination picture, found also in his breviary: "In remembrance of the day when Christ made me His priest." Another way he had of remembering words was underlining them. Thus on the feast of St. Anthony Mary Claret, October 24, in the Office of Readings, he underlines: "If someone has no zeal, it is a sign that love and charity are extinguished in his heart." Another phrase, taken from St. Alphonsus de' Liguori, written by his own hand: "Perfection consists in love, and true love consists in doing and accepting the Holy Will of God." Do not such words, that he kept in his sight almost daily, reveal to us something of the man of God, of the good priest that he strove to be?

He often expressed, while in the USA, the desire to come to work in Canada. His wish was finally granted in 1962, when he was asked to go as assistant to St. Claire Parish in Montreal, and after that, when asked to take charge of St. Gabriel Parish in Jacquet River, N.B (1965-1975). His sister Simone, a retired nurse, left her quiet retreat in Ontario to be of service in cooking and housekeeping, refusing all those years the least remuneration. He gave a lot of himself during those years, as much on the material as the spiritual level. The fact of being knowledgeable in many trades, e.g. electricity, did much to improve the facilities of the church, rectory, and parish hall.

He spent the following years, 1975-1987, in Sherbrooke. In collaboration with the New Rochelle office then managed by Father Joseph Perozzi, he established Don Bosco Audio-Visuals. He put much effort into distributing, by means of audio-visual aids, material for evangelization and catechesis. He became an apostle of the Holy Shroud. When he came to Sherbrooke, considered as semi-retired – in fact he never retired! – he took on some ministry and looked for opportunities at being useful. "I looked for ways of occupying my time and do some work because an idle Salesian has no place here," he writes. "No TV or rocking chair for me/ I took on the work of translating into French Father Peter Rinaldi's little volume *I Saw the Holy Shroud*. I entitled it *Le Saint Suaire du Crucifié*. I had it printed by a company in Magog. I also took the liberty of translating the booklet on the shroud of Jesus by the Spanish confrere, José Luis Carreño, an eminent sindonologist: 'It is the Lord.'" Through Don Bosco Audio-Visuals, he distributed some 35,000 copies of an icon of the Holy Face in two dimensions, a plastic production. It was a replica of the face of Jesus, as it appears on the Shroud, superimposed on the natural face of Jesus as depicted by the Armenian artist Aggemian, but without the wounds, the deformations, the blood, etc.

As long as he could, he did Sunday ministry in the Sherbrooke region (Sherbrooke, Omerville, Magog, etc.). From 1984 to 1986, although residing at the Seminaire, he was administrator of the Kingscroft church. In the course of his priestly life, he was chaplain of several Catholic associations: Knights of Columbus, Newman Alumni Club, Holy Name Society, as also of religious communities.

Desiring a more active priestly ministry, he asked and was granted permission to join the St. Benedict community in Toronto as associate pastor. He was there 3 years, and then came back to Sherbrooke where he spent the last 13 years of his life.

Upon his return, the superior asked him to take charge of and organize the provincial archives. He was then 85 years old. He took his assignment very seriously and really accomplished "a monk's task." His work was constant, conscientious, and meticulous, working from six to eight hours a day, often in the evening hours, until he was hospitalized. He had learned the use of the computer past his mid 80s, as Cato had learned Greek in his old age; he understood after a couple of years that he had to use that technology to be efficient. He put himself to learning it very assiduously.

He writes about his experience in this way: Being a member of the Seminaire community once again



in 1990, a different kind of work was entrusted to me: the archives of the Salesian Canadian province dedicated to St. Joseph, the first patron of the country. [After a description of his office] this work occupies a lot of my time. Except for the daily celebration of Holy Mass, I have practically no occasion for priestly ministry. As for the rest of my time and leisure time, I spend it praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament, meditating or contemplating the wonders of God “to the praise of His glory.”

In January 2001, a Sherbrooke journalist, Claude Plante, interviewed him and later published an article in *La Tribune* (Saturday, January 13) entitled, “Father Lucien Trudel: memory of the Salesians.” It is worth quoting a few lines from the article: “Father Lucien Trudel is in some way the memory of the Salesians of Sherbrooke and of all Canada. At 95, the venerable religious is the dean of his community in Sherbrooke, but also the guardian of the historical heritage of the Congregation. Thanks, among other things, to his computer and to his own memory, he has the responsibility of the archives.... Each day, he tells me, I enter the information that concerns the provincial level. I followed a few courses, but I also learned a lot by myself: I had an idea of what a computer was, but I did not know how it worked.... I learned. I created my own system.” The journalist continues: “While discussing with him, I cannot help but remark his great facility at refreshing the past: dates, places, names of persons he met. And yet, the venerable old man considers that he does not have a good memory. ‘I lost much of it, he deplores.’”

He was very faithful in celebrating his daily Mass, and only a hospitalization would prevent him from doing so. And not to celebrate at the hospital was certainly his greatest sacrifice. He accepted without complaining the sufferings due to his condition in a spirit of oblation, offering them for the spiritual intentions he bore in his heart. And some of these, the community was well aware of, since he often mentioned them in the intercessions at the Divine Office: the Holy Father, China, unity of Christians, conversion of sinners, etc.

Father Trudel practiced an austere and exemplary poverty. The strictly necessary sufficed. On a few occasions, when I was his superior, he would bring to my attention the title of a book and asked without insisting if it would be a good thing to have it in the house. Here are the titles of three books (in French) that I bought, to his great joy. Do we not say, “Tell me what you read and I will tell you who you are”?

- *The Trinity, Mystery and Light*, by Rene Laurentinn, 1999. A volume of more than 600 pages. Read and abundantly underlined.

- *My Vocation, Gift and Mystery*, by John Paul II, 1996. When I went through this little volume after he read it, I believe that in those pages he tried to find his own priestly spirituality. I quote two short passages that he highlighted with a yellow marker. “Yes, Mary brings us closer to Christ, leads us to Him, on the condition that we live our own mystery in Christ” (p. 42). “Prayer makes the priest and the priest is made by prayer” (p.102).

- *The Burning Issues of the Church – in the evening of the life of John Paul II*, by Gerard Leclerc, 2002. Of this 291-page volume, it seems that he still had about 50 pages to read.

During these last years, much of his time went to translating from Italian and English into French articles that he thought others would profit from. He translated entire books: *The Holiness of Don Bosco*, by Luigi Castano, *Do This in Memory of Me*, by Armando Cuva, a liturgy teacher at the UPS, and, as mentioned above, *I Saw the Holy Shroud*, by Peter Rinaldi, his good friend and a holy priest. With a clear mind until the very end, he liked being well informed, especially in what concerned the life of the Church. The weeklies *L'Osservatore Romano* and *The Catholic Register* were the main sources of this aggiornamento. He was also a daily listener of Vatican Radio.

He was a man of community, and there was a reason for concern when he was absent from community practices or for meals. In a spirit of oblation and reparation, he would get up, these past years, in the middle of the night for an hour of adoration in the chapel close to his room.

Let me gather a few ideas about his great devotions:

*The Eucharist.* The center of his day: the celebration of Holy Mass and numerous and prolonged visits to the Blessed Sacrament. He was convinced that the Blessed Mother accompanied him at the altar when celebrating Mass; that was part of his spirituality. Let me add also his devotion to the Holy Trinity.

*Mary Help of Christians.* Devotion to Mary went back to his family. He writes of his mother Anita: "She was for me a model of Marian piety." As a Salesian, he was devoted to Mary under the title dear to Don Bosco. He was a great devotee of the blessing of Mary Help of Christians and of the Angelus. The animators and the young of Bosco Bicycle recall the blessing he would give them upon departing for their expedition on Sunday evening in the courtyard of the Seminaire, vested in alb and stole. He writes that since his consecration to Mary (signed in his own blood), the heading of his letters always bore the initials N.D.A. (Notre Dame Auxiliatrice). He kept on his desk a small statue of her. He writes: "The first thing I did in my office as prefect [in Tampa as a young priest] was to find a convenient place for the statue of the 'Ausiliatrice' that I had bought at the SEI in Turin. I relied on Mary for fulfilling my responsibilities. I must sincerely say that she never refused me her help. Thank you, Mary." Already at the age of 15, he had been admitted, on December 8, 1921, into the Congregation of the Most Holy Virgin, and until his death his certificate hung in his room.

*The Holy Father.* Toward the Pope, an absolute loyalty, expressed among others things, by the reading and meditation of his discourses and writings.

*The Holy Shroud.* Member and animator of the Friends of the Holy Face, he had a profoundly scientific and historical knowledge of that relic. He had written a booklet on the subject and preciousely kept in his room a full-sized reproduction of it. He had lived many years in Port Chester, New York, with Father Rinaldi, a renowned authority on the Shroud. In that parish the priest had built a small shrine to honor and make known the famed relic. the Shroud was for Father Trudel, as it was for Paul VI, not simply a scientific phenomenon but a vital link with the person of Christ, and he would speak of the mysterious face that contained such a mystery. One of the great consolations of his life was a pilgrimage to Turin on the occasion of a public exposition of the venerated relic.

Allow me to end these biographical notes and this incomplete profile with a testimony received a few days after his death from one of his past parishioners in Jacquet River, where he had been pastor for ten years. "On the occasion of the recent passing of a very dear and wonderful friend of our family, former pastor of St. Gabriel's, Father Trudel, we extend our condolences to the Salesian Family. Looking back over 40 years, I was truly blessed to have known him. I had great love and respect for him. He helped our parish grow in love and faith and to carry on as Christ would want us to. He took a firm stand and rarely let his guard down. As time went on, I could understand much better why this had to be.... At his last visit to Jacquet River many years ago [for the centennial of the parish], our goodbye was one of a bright smile.... He was very kind to my aging maternal grandparents...."

Thank you, Father Lucien, for an authentic witnessing of Salesian and priestly life. May your testimony of loyalty to Christ, to Mary Help of Christians and to Don Bosco be an inspiration for the Salesians of Canada and an abundant source of vocations so that the Church in this country, and particularly the young, may benefit from the Salesian charism.

Romeo Trottier, S.D.B.  
July 2, 2008



**Father Joseph Tyminski, S.D.B.**

Some called him the Polish Prince, others the Silver Fox. Everyone knew him as Father Tym. And while these names were usually uttered behind his back, they were mostly terms of endearment that referred to the man who had a strong influence on the formation of over fifty Salesian priests in the New Rochelle Province.

One of the cardinal sins is pride. Father Tyminski was certainly guilty of that, but not in a sinful way. Rather, his was the type of pride that goes back to the Latin and French roots of the word, meaning “valiant.” It is described by Aristotle as a virtue, “the crown of the virtues; for it makes all other virtues greater, and it is not found without them.” Father Tym was proud of his Polish roots, proud of his Salesian roots, and proud of his call to the priesthood. It showed itself through his daily praise of God and a life of service in a pastoral, practical, and truly Catholic way.

Joseph Aloysius Tyminski was born in Orange, New Jersey, in 1919, the son of Polish immigrants Joseph Tyminski, Sr. and Mary Bukowska. That northeast part of New Jersey has a large number of Polish immigrants and institutions. His father was a hatter, employed at the Connett Hat factory in Newark, New Jersey. Father Joseph had a younger brother named Leonard.

Joseph and his brother were baptized and later confirmed at St. Valentine’s Church, a Polish national parish in Bloomfield, where they were educated by the Felician Sisters.

Joseph came to the Salesians in 1933 when he enrolled in Don Bosco Preparatory High School in Ramsey, New Jersey, a boarding school founded by Salesians from Poland. It was during his time in Ramsey that Don Bosco was canonized, on Easter Sunday 1934. By the time he graduated in 1937, Joseph had made the decision to become a Salesian. He made his first vows in Newton, New Jersey, on September 8, 1939. He continued his studies there at Don Bosco College, earning a bachelor’s degree in philosophy in 1942.

During his years of practical training from 1942 to 1945, Brother Joseph served as a teacher at the Salesian School in Goshen, New York, and at his alma mater, Don Bosco Prep. This experience led the way for his theological studies, first at Don Bosco College for three years, and then at the Salesian College in Aptos, California. He was ordained at Don Bosco College in Newton on June 29, 1949, by Bishop Louis LaRavoire Morrow, S.D.B..

Father Joseph Tyminski’s ministry as a Salesian priest was a diversified mix of experiences. He spent his early years of priesthood (1945-1969) in a high school setting working as a teacher, catechist, and prefect of studies in New Rochelle, New York, and Paterson, New Jersey. In Paterson he was director of the Salesian community and school in 1959-1962.

He became director of his alma mater, Don Bosco Prep, in 1962. He supported the Salesian and Polish

traditions of the school. He was progressive in providing a high quality education. During the seven years he served as director at Don Bosco Prep, he facilitated the school's expansion with the building of DeSales Hall, a classroom and administrative building that also includes science labs and a large auditorium. It was also the beginning of a Catholic high school dynasty which today boasts notable alumni, such as jazz guitarist John Pizzarelli, Pulitzer Prize winner Don Van Natta, Jr. of *The New York Times*, John P. Wallace, president of NBC, and lists notable benefactors like Liza Minelli.

Father Tym's ministry changed in 1969 when he was assigned to Corpus Christi Parish in Port Chester, New York. There he served as director of the Salesian community and as assistant pastor until 1974. He labored alongside the parish's beloved pastor, Father Peter Rinaldi. He was esteemed for his fatherly approach, his devotion to Mary Help of Christians, and his love of the liturgy.

To this day many people of Corpus Christi Parish think of Father Tyminski as the ideal representation of Don Bosco, the perfect priest. He was always faithful to praying the Divine Office – all of it, not just Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer when it was convenient. And he “prayed” the Office, as opposed to those who just “say” the office. He was in direct communication with God using the words of the psalms and canticles.

His priesthood went beyond prayers and sacraments. He stayed abreast with the latest developments in the world. His favorite publications were *L'Osservatore Romano*, *Inside the Vatican*, *Homiletic & Pastoral Review*, and *Today's Liturgy*. Father Tyminski exemplified the priesthood described by Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York, who wrote: “The priesthood is a call, not a career; a redefinition of self, not just a new ministry; a permanent lifelong commitment, not a temporary style of service; an identity, not just a role.”

Again his ministry changed dramatically when he was assigned to the Salesian Center in Columbus, Ohio, in 1974. Father Tym served as director of the theology program for Salesians in their final formation before ordination. The location included a residence for Salesian seminarians attending theological courses at the Pontifical College Josephinum. There were also a few Salesian brothers studying at local colleges and Salesians staffing the Salesian Boys Club – all told, a community of some fifty confreres each year, a youth apostolate reaching several hundred children and staff, and an extensive apostolic program in parishes, hospitals, and the local juvenile detention center.

Father Tym had a great appreciation for the liturgy. He wanted the prayers, the music, and the actions at the altar done not just well, but with excellence. He told the deacons and priests that to preach the Word of God they had to bring to their preaching a well prepared and thorough study of the Scriptures. He demanded excellence, and nothing short of perfect would be tolerated. If someone slipped up, you would hear Father Tym from his seat at the back of chapel, clearing his throat! And nothing made him prouder to be of Polish descent than the selection of Cardinal Karol Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II in 1978.

He had a reputation for being a fatherly spiritual director, but when it came to one's conduct during the liturgy and observance of the vows he gave no slack. Every Saturday morning started with a perfectly executed liturgy – the Mass of the Blessed Mother when it was permitted by the calendar. Marian feasts and solemnities were of special observance. And the Christmas and Easter liturgies were better than those at the Vatican. Of course, Father Tyminski also directed the ceremonies that occurred each year as new Salesian priests were ordained. During his six years as director (1974-1980), Father Tym guided forty-two men to ordination to the priesthood, and of course he also influenced strongly those who were ordained in the next three years (the underclassmen of 1979-1980).

Father Tyminski was held in high regard throughout the province. He was elected as the province's delegate to three Salesian general chapters: in 1965, 1971, and 1978. He served on the provincial council for a cumulative total of fourteen years.

When his term in Columbus ended in 1980, Father Tyminski worked with the retreat staff at the Don Bosco Retreat Center in Stony Point, New York, for one year. In 1981 he became the dean of the prenovitiate program at Don Bosco College in Newton, and then director of the college in 1982-1985. From there he became the director of the provincial house community in New Rochelle, where he remained until 1988.

On January 5, 1988, Father Tyminski's brother Leonard died of heart failure. It was a difficult time for him and his brother's family. Leonard had served in World War II, was awarded the Purple Heart twice for wounds received in action, and had had a thirty-year career in the local utility business. But most impressive was that he

and his wife Helen took in over 220 foster children, in addition to four of their own. Father Joseph stayed close to his family for his whole life.

In late 1988 he returned as pastor of Corpus Christi until 1991; then he was back in New Rochelle for a year, and then pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Mahwah, New Jersey (another parish of Polish origin), for seven years ending in 1999.

Through the last decade of his life, physical ailments slowed Father Tyminski down a bit but never dampened his resolve. He worked for a few years in South Orange, New Jersey, Port Chester, and Columbus, until he moved in 2008 into the St. Philip the Apostle Residence, a retirement community for Salesians at Mary Help of Christians Center in Tampa. He offered daily Mass and remained faithful to his daily prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours, Rosary, and other devotions.

During the early part of 2009 Father Tyminski was hospitalized several times with pneumonia. It was discovered that his throat muscles had lost the ability to swallow properly. Some of what he ate and drank ended up in his lungs. He was placed in Bon Secours-Maria Manor, a nursing home in St. Petersburg, Florida. There he attended daily Mass and had a steady regimen of therapy, which he endured bravely, but not without exhibiting some of that “Polish determination” to do it his way!

On October 13, 2009, several of his Salesian confreres gathered at the nursing home to celebrate three major events of that year: his sixtieth anniversary of ordination (June 29, 2009), his seventieth anniversary of profession (September 8, 2009), and his approaching ninetieth birthday (November 3, 2009). Father James McKenna, S.D.B., flew in from the Salesian community in Marrero, Louisiana, to be the preacher. Although Father Joseph prepared for it with great expectation, he suffered some lung congestion the night before and was unable to attend. Everyone went to see him in his room, however. It was a bittersweet reunion for everyone. Father Tym died peacefully two days later, on October 15, 2009.

News of his death spread like wildfire among Salesians and alumni nationwide. Notes appeared on internet blogs and e-mails.

Two funerals were held, one at Mary Help of Christians Church in Tampa on October 18, and the other at his beloved Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey on October 20. The services at Don Bosco were quite regal, with a viewing at which over 900 students and alumni passed his coffin, and a funeral that was very well attended.

Father Thomas Dunne, S.D.B., provincial of the Eastern USA province, presided at the funeral in Ramsey. The homily was given by Father McKenna, who only days before had visited Father Tym at the nursing home. Father McKenna identified a number of Salesians who credit Father Tym with their training. These included Father Timothy Ploch, provincial of the Western USA province, and Father Louis Molinelli, the director of Don Bosco Prep.

In his homily, Father McKenna spoke about one of Father Tym’s favorite hymns, “Lift High the Cross.” About its meaning he said, “It was the true ministry of why Jesus came into the world, to be obedient to the Father, to extend himself onto the Cross of Salvation, to be lifted on high, to die, to be buried, and to proclaim victory over death in His resurrected glory on Easter Sunday.”

Father McKenna described Father Tyminski’s life as having had silver, golden, and diamond periods. “The silver years (the first 25 years) saw Father Joe as a director three times – in Paterson, Ramsey, and Columbus. He worked two general chapters. He served local communities with an acute awareness of pastoral zeal and service, was a father, a friend, and one who had a lot to give. He studied so that he could implement Vatican II especially in his love for liturgy. He was at the service of the province in studying Congregational documents and movements so he could bring Don Bosco alive to all” the confreres.

The golden period, the years after his twenty-fifth anniversary of ordination, was a period when Father Joseph allowed the Holy Spirit to take hold of his life. It was during this time that he was greatly encouraged as Pope John Paul II, of Polish birth, became the leader of Christ’s Church on earth. This event sparked an interest in Father Joseph for anything happening at the Vatican.

The diamond period followed 1999, when Father Joseph celebrated his fiftieth anniversary of ordination. The homily at that celebration was preached by Father Molinelli. Some say this period of his life was one of diminishment as the typical consequences of a long and busy life plagued him.

At the end of the funeral Mass, before the final blessing, a letter written by Father Timothy Ploch was read aloud. Father Ploch was out of the country, unable to attend the funeral. Father Tyminski was quite proud of Father Ploch, one of his students who went on to become provincial of the Eastern USA Province and, in 2009, of the Western Province. What follows is his reflection on the life of Father Tyminski.

*In my life I have lost three fathers. My biological father, Ed Ploch, passed away in 1986. Long before that, I had a first encounter with a Salesian "father," Bernard Justen, my "father" director in the four years of my high school aspirantate. Then at the other end of my initial formation, just before being ordained a priest, I was blessed with another example of a father like Don Bosco, Joseph Tyminski. Now all three are gone.*

*If I love the priesthood, and I do, it's because Father Tym instilled in me a deep and profound respect for this inestimable gift. He would cut right through the hypothetical arguments we used to have about whether being a Salesian or being a priest was the more fundamental part of our vocation. He taught me that being a priest is not an accident or a part-time job. Salesian priest is who I was to be. Salesian priest is who I try to be. If Don Bosco always signed his letters with "John Bosco, Priest," Joe Tyminski signed the letter of his life that way. No accident that he dies in the Year of the Priest. When I myself became director of those preparing for Salesian priesthood in Columbus, I took him consciously as my model, not very successfully, to imitate.*

*If I love the liturgy, and I do, it's because of Joe Tyminski. Unlike some of my companions, I never got a hand slap at the altar for trying to be too trendy and thereby forgetting that the Mass is not about me the presider but about Christ the High Priest. I did however receive a few less than discreet liturgical coughs. I wrote my Master's thesis on how the act of liturgical preaching produced its effect in the congregation in a way analogous to the way the sacraments worked. He inspired me to write it, and to live it.*

*When I was asked to take on the role of provincial in our Eastern Province, he was one of the first ones I informed. He encouraged me all along, and corrected me often, saying: "Dear Father, I've been to three chapters. Now listen to me." I know I was the beneficiary of his experience, wisdom, spirituality, and culinary skills on the provincial council in those years. And I know that the whole province was too.*

*Father Joe Tyminski was for me a walking example of Don Bosco's advice to Michael Rua, and through him, to all of us: Make yourself loved. He could be fierce in his opinions, but he made you, he made me, love him. If we asked him to go out for a drink or something at night in Columbus, he would bark: "Stay home and read a spiritual book." But still he had that something that Don Bosco tells us all: "It's not enough to love. They must know they are loved." Father Joe made us know that he loved us.*

*Rest in peace, dear Father! There in the heavenly liturgy, there are no more liturgical coughs, no more arrogant theology students, only the Jesus whom you served as his priest for more than 60 years. There you are with Don Bosco, whom you imitated as a Salesian for more than 70 years. Pray for us there. Pray especially that both U.S. provinces be gifted with sterling Salesian vocations like yours. Thank you for everything. To your face we never called you "the Polish Prince." But now we say, "Rest in peace, sweet Prince, dear Father."*

On the following morning, October 21, there was a brief service in the chapel at Don Bosco Prep. Then Father Tyminski's body was taken to the Salesian Cemetery in Goshen, New York, for burial. There he rests, along with his fellow Salesian priests and brothers, awaiting the day of resurrection with all who labored so generously to bring the Gospel to the world.

Father Dennis Donovan, S.D.B., Director

#### **Data for Necrology:**

Tyminski, Joseph Aloysius. Born in Orange, New Jersey, November 3, 1919; died in St. Petersburg, Florida, October 15, 2009, age 89, professed 70 years and ordained 60 years



**Brother John Versaggi, S.D.B.**

**T**he last year of Brother John Versaggi's life was a painful and difficult one for him and for those who loved him. It was marked by increasing pain and discomfort, loss of mobility and the need to make many difficult decisions concerning his care.

I got to know Brother John on our retreat together in 2003 at the San Pedro Center. He was most anxious to meet his new director and "set him straight" on a few issues. It became clear to me then that he was having difficulty getting around, and that loss of independence was going to be an issue for him. I returned to Tampa to begin my new assignment at the end of the month, and he shared that, yes, this was a cross that he was going to have to carry. He was having difficulty in sleeping – but not in front of the television or his computer screen! Our relationship really began to "gel" when he caught me sleeping in front of my computer several times late at night.

At the end of July I returned from a two-week absence to find out that Brother John was in St. Joseph Hospital with symptoms of cardiac failure. He was retaining fluid, and it was becoming impossible for him to move. After a few days' stay in the hospital and numerous adjustments to his medication, Brother returned home. Father Ken Shaw, who was newly arrived in Tampa to oversee the finishing touches on the St. Philip Residence, lavished care upon him, but nonetheless it was becoming increasingly apparent that we could not properly care for him. Visiting nurses were called in, and an endless stream of physical therapists, occupational therapists and social workers began. Gradually, the social worker got him to face the inevitable question: "What if your brothers are no longer able to give you proper care? What if you are no longer safe here?"

The question became somewhat academic as Brother's condition worsened. It took two of us over an hour to get him ready for bed at night. What if he fell? The visiting nurse was called in and immediately ordered him to be taken back to the hospital. At this point Brother John left Mary Help of Christians School for good.

After a brief stay in the hospital, there was a frantic search for a bed for him in one of the local nursing homes. Brother John was made comfortable and was responding well to his regimen of physical therapy, but you could tell that what he missed was his daily Mass and communion. Even here he was a positive influence on all.

September found him failing again, and he had to return to the hospital. His specialist insisted that implanting a pacemaker was the only way to improve his condition. But Brother John was adamant. "There are too many things that can go wrong with that procedure!" he insisted. Apparently he had done all the research!

On one of my late evening visits to him, I talked with a staff nurse who had a particularly good



relationship with him. She tolerated no nonsense. I asked her to do what she could to convince him of the need for a pacemaker. When I entered his hospital room burdened with the thought of whether I should make this whole thing an issue of obedience, Brother greeted me warmly and said, "You just missed my cousin. We've decided that the best thing for me would be to get a pacemaker!" When I teased him about his proverbial hard-headedness, he responded, "You have to remember, on my coat of arms, the main symbol is ... a COCONUT! Haw, haw haw!" I immediately alerted the nurse, and he was scheduled for the procedure.

Brother John came through the procedure without complications, and he reported almost immediately feeling an improvement. During this time Father Ken Shaw and I had visited Bon Secours Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in St. Petersburg. Our first visit convinced us that this was the place Brother needed to be, and we started the ball rolling.

Brother John loved his new home. The distance from his community was more than made up for by the fact that he could attend daily Mass in the nursing home chapel, and even occasionally read the Scriptures. His was always the strongest singing voice.

Brother John always had a steady stream of visitors, even if he was physically separated from his community. The Salesians at St. Petersburg Catholic High School, the Salesian Sisters, his cousins and most especially his dear Salesian Cooperators made sure that he was receiving the best of care. I noticed on my visits to him that one had to do very little talking. Brother John always entertained his visitors with his usual round of commentary, observations, reminiscences and sermonettes!

During this period of his life he was struggling with letting go. One minute he would emphasize with me that "the Cooperators have got to learn to be on their own! They have to take charge of their own affairs now. They can't always be relying on me. I won't always be around to help them." And not two minutes later, when the conversation switched to the upcoming spaghetti dinner, he would pick up his pad of paper and give me detailed instructions about who was allowed to make adjustments to the spaghetti sauce and who should be dishing out the portions! Well, there was no doubt who would be in control of what.

Towards the end of his stay at Bon Secours, I received a call from the pastoral affairs coordinator, Sister Gloria. She wanted to know whether it was okay for Brother John to participate in a program they offered called "Angels Passing By." It was a specialized ministry where certain of the residents who were in better health would watch and pray with the terminally ill residents so that they might not die alone. Everyone agreed that this would be an excellent "career move" for Brother John.

We tried to keep Brother John connected by picking him up and bringing him home for school and parish events, Cooperators meetings, etc. Ironically, it was just because of this desire to keep him "in the loop" that his final journey was set in motion. After enjoying the annual international dinner at Good Shepherd Parish Center on Sunday, March 7, 2004, Brother John was involved in a very serious automobile accident less than half a mile from the parish hall.

When I finally got to the accident scene, I saw that Brother was still trapped in the front seat of the car. I asked him how he was doing, and he replied that he was "finding it a bit hard to breathe." Those were the last words I heard him speak. Within a short time he would lapse into unconsciousness, never to reawaken.

During the two weeks he was in intensive care he was prayed over time and time again. He was anointed with the Sacrament of the Sick. On the feast of Blessed Artemides Zatti, he was given a special blessing with the relic of the Blessed. The doctors tried to be hopeful, but they said the end could come at any time. They were frankly amazed that an 86-year-old man could survive that long with the massive internal injuries that he had.

The end came peacefully on the morning of March 24, 2004, a day on which Salesians all over the world commemorate Mary Help of Christians. The significance of the date was not lost on anyone. Brother John was just a little over one month shy of his 87th birthday.

### Biography

John Domenic Versaggi was born on May 2, 1917, to Antonio Versaggi and Concetta Maria Patti at



Fernandina, Florida, not too far from St. Augustine, the fifth of six children. His sisters were Emanuella “Nellie” (Burns), Raffaella, who was known in religious life as Sister Louis Gonzaga, and Gemma “Jennie” (DiFranco). He had an older brother, Frank, and a younger brother, Henry. The Versaggis had several other children who died in infancy.

On November 22, 1918, tragedy struck the family. Concetta Versaggi died of influenza, leaving six children. The extended families cared for the children until grandmother Raffaella and Aunt Frances Patti could arrive from New York. Without the presence of their mother, the boys became rascals. They were literally out of control. Brother John tells the story: “They would climb up on the roof and challenge their father, ‘You can’t catch us, you’re too fat!’ Calmly, Antonio Versaggi would wait until the boys were in bed and then introduce them to his razor strap!” Another time John and Henry were playing with matches and their mattress caught fire. They grabbed milk bottles, ran to the water pump in the yard, running back and forth with water trying to put out the fire. Finally, they ran into each other and the bottles broke, cutting their hands severely.

Tony Versaggi and Grandma were at odds because of the discipline situation, so she took the boys with her to New York. As Brother John puts it, “Things did not improve, but at least Dad did not have to see it every day.” In 1924 Grandma suffered a heart attack with consequent paralysis. Tony Versaggi went to New York in order to help care for her children as well as his own. Apparently, having the kids away from him for a time had caused him to become careless. The boys got hold of a fishing knife, which he had “hidden” – apparently not too well – in a drawer. The girls all ran to their grandmother yelling, “The boys have a knife; take it before they hurt someone.” The boys ran out of the house with Grandma in hot pursuit. The excitement proved too much for her, and she fell to the ground, dead.

Tony was now forced to place his children in orphanages. The boys were packed off to Father Baker’s Home in Lackawanna, New York, while the girls went to St. Mary’s Orphanage in Jacksonville. Eight years later, John and Henry would find themselves at Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa.

Upon graduation from Mary Help of Christians School, John joined the Salesian formation program in Newton, New Jersey. A religious vocation had blossomed during his time with the Salesians in Florida, and he had designs of becoming a priest. His superiors felt that the studies would be too hard for him, and they also noticed his extremely strong physique. They convinced him that he had a distinct role to play in helping to feed the growing seminary community. And so John learned to help run the farm and to put food on the table for his brothers. This was a habit that he would never lose: making sure that Salesians and guests were well fed!

Brother John recalled with me an anecdote from that period. One of the brothers with whom he was assigned to work complained to his superiors that John was too slow. The superior gently chided him. “You are like a race horse. You are fast, but you can’t endure the long haul. Brother John is like a draft horse. He can work and work and never wear out. Perhaps you should learn from him.” Shortly thereafter, the other Salesian had to be taken out of farm work because he ran out of energy!

In a letter that he sent me shortly after Brother John’s death, Father Harry Rasmussen describes his first meeting with him in Newton. “He was always a cheerful, hardworking Salesian. We loved to hear him sing for entertainments. He had a tremolo which was fascinating!

“He was also a wonderful community man. One could easily tell that the practices of piety were very important to John. He was always there. He would often get sleepy during meditation, and we would smile when we noticed him nodding off. He was a man of prayer.

“He served the Lord and the province well. May the reward of the good and faithful servant be his, and may he intercede for us that we, his Salesian brothers, may persevere as he did.”

Brother John continued to serve wherever he was called by obedience. After a 17-year stint at Newton caring for the farm, Brother John spent the greater part of the 1950’s taking care of our farms at Goshen, West Haverstraw, Huttonsville (West Virginia) and Tampa. Generally he served by using his legendary strength and practical good sense.

During the 1960’s, while he was assigned to the provincial residence, he obtained a real estate license

in order to help the provincial economer manage the properties of the province. Several of our properties were in litigation, and Brother John's expertise in real estate and surveying were called upon numerous times. As he matured, he continued to serve in various capacities in Boston, West Haverstraw and New Rochelle.

In 1981 he returned to Tampa to finish his years. During this period of his life he applied his surveying skills to help make maps of the numerous water, sewer and drainage lines that crisscrossed the property at Mary Help of Christians. Recently we re-discovered some of these drawings, and they proved very helpful in settling arguments about which pipes ran where and the really important issue of "where's the valve to shut off this line?"

### **Wake, Funeral and Burial**

Brother John's body was received in the chapel of Mary Help of Christians shortly after dinner on Friday, March 26. Father Director gathered the community around the casket, a brief service of welcoming was celebrated, and the community had its private time of prayer while crowds gathered outside. Many of Brother John's relatives from the Tampa area and his nephew from Long Island were present, along with Salesians from all over the state, Salesian Sisters and a fine representation of Cooperators.

Father Bill Keane, vice provincial, represented Father Provincial, who could not be present. Father Bill Ferruzzi spoke briefly about Brother John's struggle with acceptance of his limitations and his desire to do only what God wanted him to do.

The following morning at ten o'clock the procession into the chapel began, and the funeral liturgy was celebrated. Relatives, friends, caregivers, alumni and confreres gathered to celebrate the Eucharist and commend Brother John's soul to God. Father Keane shared some of his reminiscences of his six years with Brother John at Mary Help, lifting the spirits of all present. At the end of the Mass, Brother John's body was given a final sprinkling with holy water and placed in the hearse to begin the final journey to his resting place in Goshen. In keeping with the way Brother would want things to go, the worshippers then gathered in the Mary Help of Christians cafeteria for a delicious lunch.

On the afternoon of Monday, March 29, the confreres of the New York/New Jersey area gathered in the chapel of Salesian High School in New Rochelle to pay their respects. Brother John's body was welcomed again. Prayers were said and stories were told. After dinner we gathered to begin the funeral Mass for the second time, with Father Jim Heuser presiding and Father Bill Keane once again recalling the life of Brother John, challenging all of us to be faithful servants of the Lord.

Tuesday dawned cold, gray and bleak. A small contingent of Salesians made the 90-minute journey to Goshen, New York, where Brother John would be laid to rest. A brief graveside service followed, led by Father Jim Heuser and Father Bill Ferruzzi, Brother John's director. It was over in about ten minutes, but everyone stayed until his body was lowered into the earth and the burial vault sealed.

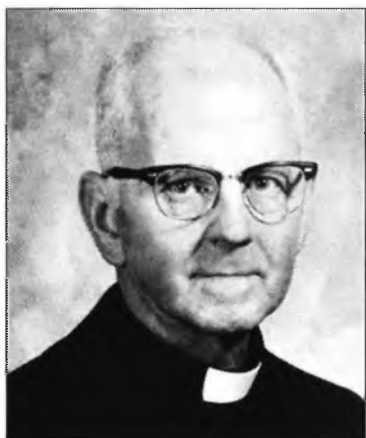
Then, as usually happens at Salesian funerals, the prayerful group wandered about recalling previous burials, renewing, in a sense, friendships with those with whom we had lived and worked. Here the earthly journey of Brother John Versaggi ends. His body lies in peace, awaiting, along with his brothers in the Salesian Society, the resurrection of the dead.

Please pray for the happy repose of this good and dedicated son of Don Bosco. Pray for his community, who miss him. Pray for his dear Cooperators, who loved him so much. And pray that other young men may hear the call to follow the Lord faithfully and joyfully as Salesian coadjutors, content only with doing what God wants them to do.

### ***Data for the Necrology:***

Versaggi, Brother John Domenic; born at Fernandina, Florida, on May 2, 1917. Professed, September 8, 1936; died at Tampa, Florida, March 24, 2004, at age 86 in the 68th year of his profession.

Father William Ferruzzi, S.D.B.  
Director, Mary Help of Christians School, Tampa



**Father Constantine “Gavino”  
Villademoros, S.D.B.**

Constantine “Gavino” Villademoros was born in Key West, Florida, on March 3, 1914. He was given the name of Constantine Arthur, names which he never used in daily life. Instead he always used the name “Gavino.” It is not known where or how that name originated. Perhaps it was the name of one of his parental forebears, or perhaps it was a kind of nickname which friends and relatives in his early life called him. It is important to remember that all his records – birth, baptismal, confirmation, and boyhood school record, all of his applications for novitiate, vows, and holy orders – all have the name and signature Constantine Villademoros.

In 1921 his parents, Constantine Villademoros and Amelia (Collins) Villademoros, moved the family to Ybor City, an ethnic neighborhood of Tampa. There he was baptized in the church of Our Lady of Mercy, on May 16, 1921. Young Constantine was confirmed in the same church by Bishop Patrick Barry of St. Augustine, on March 18, 1923.

The high school department of the Jesuits’ Sacred Heart College in Tampa, Florida, was the scene of Constantine’s first two years of high school. At the end of his first high school year, June 1930, he had received first honors with a general average of 95%. At the end of his second year of high school, his general average was 94%. His Jesuit teachers were pleased with Constantine and invited him to enter their seminary.

Meanwhile, the Salesians had been given the charge of Our Lady of Mercy Church in Ybor City in August 1926 by Bishop Barry. Thus young Constantine had been in touch with the Salesians since 1926. Therefore when the Jesuits suggested to him that he become a Jesuit, he had already made up his mind to join the Salesians at Don Bosco Seminary in Newton, New Jersey.

And so in September 1931, Constantine was in Newton continuing his high school education. He was an excellent student, for after only three years of high school, Constantine was admitted to the novitiate in Newton in September 1932. First profession followed on September 21, 1933. Now he was Brother Constantine Villademoros.

During his college years in Newton from 1933 to 1936, Brother Constantine showed himself to be gifted with a superior intellect and an exceptional memory. He was at the top of the class. When the class was in doubt or in search of the correct answer to a question posed by the teacher, all eyes turned toward Brother Constantine, and he never failed to give the right answer. His forte was languages, especially Latin and Greek.

Brother Constantine graduated from Don Bosco College in June 1936, but the College was not yet empowered to give bachelor degrees. The approval of Don Bosco’s program of studies by the Department

of Higher Education of the State of New Jersey came in March 1938. Those who graduated in 1938 and those who had graduated previously were granted the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy. Thus, Brother Constantine Villademoros obtained his bachelor's degree in philosophy.

On September 8, 1936, Brother Villademoros professed his second triennial vows. He was assigned to be a teacher and assistant of the aspirants there in Newton. He taught English, ancient history, American history, Latin and Greek. It was during his three years of practical training that Brother's health began to give him trouble, and a New York City stomach specialist prescribed a little hydrochloric acid in a glass of water for his digestion.

Brother Constantine professed perpetual vows on September 8, 1939. He and three classmates were ready with passports and luggage to embark for the Salesian International Theologate in Turin, Italy. But it was not to be. The Second World War broke out in Europe, and therefore Father Ambrose Rossi, the provincial, decided to have the four disappointed clerics study theology in Newton.

During his four years of theological studies, Brother Constantine's health suffered more under the strain of preparing for priestly ordination. On one occasion he fainted during the noonday meal. But, at last his desire for the priesthood was realized on July 4, 1943. The ordaining bishop was William O'Shea, M.M.

After ordination, Father Villademoros was assigned to Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa, in the capacity of financial administrator. His stay in his hometown was only one year, and then he was asked to be the assistant pastor of Holy Rosary Parish in Port Chester, New York. Through the years Father Villademoros filled various assignments. He taught Latin, English and Greek at Don Bosco College during 1945-1946. He was in East Boston, Massachusetts, the following year at Don Bosco Trade School as confessor and teacher. During the next two years he was at Salesian High School in New Rochelle, New York, serving as catechist (director of religious activities) and teacher. For the following three years (1949-1952) Father Villademoros served as catechist at Salesian Grammar School in Goshen, New York. Don Bosco Technical School in Boston enjoyed his teaching abilities and services as catechist and photographer for the next 17 years. Father's last assignment was at the Don Bosco Technical High School in Paterson, New Jersey. There he taught English and religion, and served as confessor and photographer.

It is interesting to observe that we often identify a person by one or more outstanding traits, attractive or otherwise, unfortunately, generally the latter. Like every human being, Father Villademoros had his characteristic traits by which he was summarily recognized. He was not easy to get along with. Nor was he gifted with a socially attractive personality. He bristled when he talked, but never talked with a "forked tongue." He called a spade a spade, as he saw it, no matter the circumstances. But at the same time he was a person of compassion, of sincerity, and of truth, and he had a gifted intellect.

Young Constantine was a very fast runner, but he often fell flat on his face. With some training by one of his classmates, he was able to keep his head up, so that his head would outdistance his feet. Only one young fellow could beat him in running, and that was an aspirant who came from Salesian High School in New Rochelle and could run a 100-yard dash in ten seconds flat.

As a clerical student in Newton, Brother Constantine was interested in photography. The same classmate who coached him in running also taught him how to take photographs and to develop them. As this classmate relates, his protégé absorbed in a short time what it had taken himself several years to learn. Soon Brother Constantine was on his own at photographing and developing. He began to specialize in portraiture. Since in those days color photography was in its infancy and color film was either too expensive or not readily available, he learned how to hand-color his photos.

What his classmates admired most in Father Villademoros was his hidden humility. It was hardly recognizable because of his brusque exterior, often mistaken for pride. In 1993, his only surviving classmate invited him to celebrate their 50th anniversary of priesthood together, but he refused. He did not believe in any fanfare, no matter what the occasion. Moreover, he didn't take kindly to those who attempted to flatter him. He knew his capabilities, as well as his shortcomings, and he would

not give anyone a chance to put him on a pedestal.

Father Villademoros was not a well man. He suffered for many years from an abdominal ailment. Apparently he lacked sufficient acid for proper digestion, and so the hydrochloric acid which the doctor had prescribed slowly destroyed his teeth. During the last ten or more years of his life, he developed severe ulcerations on his legs and feet. He walked with great difficulty, but he did not complain. In 1992, because of the deteriorated condition of his health, Father Villademoros was asked whether he would care to go to "Blue Gate." He accepted.

When his classmate visited him at Blue Gate, the year before Father Villademoros died, he expressed concern over the difficulty Father had walking. But Father Villademoros made light of it and denied that there was anything wrong. His classmate asked him bluntly whether he was experiencing any pain, and he tried to assure him that he had none, but the classmate sensed differently.

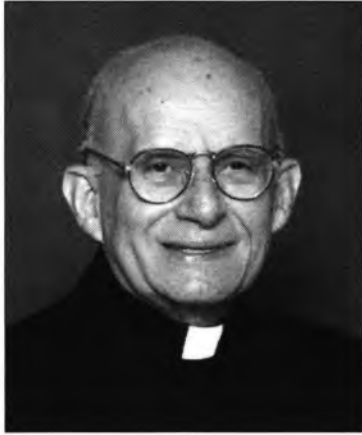
The death of a confrere gives us an opportunity of honoring one who in life did not know how to accept kudos gracefully. How unfortunate that we have to wait until after the person is no longer with us to pay him the respects he deserved. Now we can let it be known that Father Villademoros was indeed a good Salesian, one who faithfully followed the rules of our Society and reflected the spirit of a true son of Don Bosco.

On March 15, 1995, Father Villademoros was taken to Good Samaritan Hospital in Suffern, New York, because of a bacterial infection. He received the sacraments of the Church, and he died in the hospital on March 16, 1995, at 1:50 p.m. The cause of his death as given on the certificate of death was cardiopulmonary arrest and generalized sepsis, i.e., the spread of bacterial infection.

The famous Helen Keller, who was born deaf and blind, speaking of her own death in her old age stated: "There is so much I'd like to see, so much to learn. And death is just around the corner. Not that it worries me. On the contrary, it is no more than passing from one room to another.... But there is a difference with me. You know, in that other room, I shall be able to see!" Yes, in that other room, the next life, we shall be able to see with better than a 20/20 vision. We shall see things as that really are. From a time phase, we shall move into a timeless eternity, where there is no aging, no deterioration, no illness, no suffering – only joy forever! This is the lot of the just. This is the lot, we believe, that is enjoyed by our beloved confrere, Father Constantine "Gavino" Villademoros.

Father Villademoros was interred in the Salesian cemetery in Goshen, New York. He was 81 years old, 62 years a Salesian, and 52 years a priest.

(See obituary letter for Father Constantine "Gavino" Villademoros, S.D.B., by Father Anthony Spano, S.D.B.)



**Father Vicente Tomas Villar, S.D.B.**

Vicente Tomas Villar was born on April 1, 1922, in Havana, Cuba. He was the first of five children – two brothers and three sisters. His father, Vicente Villar, was a merchant, his mother, Rita Iber Villar, was a housewife. His early education was in Havana.

As a young boy of 12, Vicente entered the Salesian aspirantate at Guanabocoa, Cuba. After a year of novitiate he made his first vows as a Salesian at the age of 18 on August 16, 1940. After studying theology at San Salvador and Antigua, Guatemala, he was ordained a priest on October 30, 1955.

Father Vicente's early years of priestly ministry were spent in his beloved Cuba, teaching in various Salesian schools. As many priests were, Father was forced to leave Cuba in 1961. Thus he began a new Salesian ministry. At first Father spent some time teaching at Petionville, Haiti (1960-1962), and then in North America, first in Canada and afterwards in the United States.

In Canada, he taught at the Salesian school in St. Louis de Kent, New Brunswick, from 1962 to 1965, and in Sherbrooke, Quebec, at the Seminaire Salesien, from 1965 to 1967. Father Vicente had now to teach and preach in French and in English, though his native language was Spanish. He was also fluent in Italian.

Father Vicente's first assignment in the United States was to teach Spanish to the Salesian seminarians at Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey. After several years at Don Bosco College, he was sent to New York City to minister at Mary Help of Christians and St. Jude parishes, and at the same time Father took care of one of his ailing sisters.

Father's next assignment was at St. Philip Benizi Church in Belle Glade, Florida. There he began a ministry to migrant workers. In 1984, Father Vicente was assigned to St. Kieran's Parish in Miami, Florida. This was destined to be his last assignment. One of his first ministries at St. Kieran's was as chaplain at Mercy Hospital adjacent to the church. When that came to an end, he continued his ministry to the sick – bringing them communion, hearing their confessions, and bringing comfort even when he himself was sick. He did this with a smile and with his sense of humor even in his last months when he was often sick and nauseous from chemotherapy.

At St. Kieran's Father Vicente became well known for his ministry with Cursillo and the Catholic Family Movement. He had a practical manner of preaching that touched all the pertinent points of the readings; and at the same time he stressed family values. He would listen to the Spanish radio stations and then be sure to mention in his homily anything that misrepresented church teachings. He was always careful to preserve church doctrine and support the Holy Father. He was especially vehement against Communism, and he tried to point out how Communism was destroying the faith in Cuba by educating

children in an atheistic way and by silencing the Catholic Church and a free press.

Father Vicente became a United States citizen, loved the United States, and always wanted to integrate himself and his family into the American culture. At the same time Father was staunchly Cuban and loved his native country. However, he always encouraged people to learn English. He used to say that in the parish we need to offer the people more things in English because our parishioners need to be integrated into the American way of life. They must love and treasure their own heritage, but they must become an integral part of American society.

Father Vicente was loved by the people because he cared for them in a very personal way and served his flock like a good shepherd. He was always a priest and always available and willing to do pastoral service especially to the sick, the lonely, the needy, the discouraged, the homeless and the unloved. Many times he begged to give a few extra dollars to someone who could not pay for medicine or rent or food.

One of Father Vicente's greatest hopes was to make a journey to the Holy Land and to Rome. He attempted this pilgrimage in 1998 but had to cancel to undergo bypass surgery. His wish was realized during the millennium year. Through the generosity of friends, he was able to join members of the Christian Family Movement on a tour of the Holy Land, Italy and Spain. He completed the tour of the Holy Land and Rome, but his health and a state of mental confusion forced him to cancel the remainder of the tour before it headed for Spain, where he had intended to visit his nephew Eric Villar and other relatives.

Father returned home to St. Kieran's on an emergency flight in a critical state of health. The pastor and two parishioners who were members of the Christian Family Movement met him at the Miami airport. Even in his confusion he recognized us with a big smile, glad to be home. He was clinging to a bag of religious gifts blessed by the Pope. These he wanted to give to members of his family. They were distributed to his family on the day of his funeral in Miami.

Father Vicente was admitted to Mercy Hospital. He was known and loved by so many people in the parish and beyond. A sign of this love and respect was the large number of people who visited him. In a minute of consciousness on the day before he died, he raised his hand in blessing them. They were with him when he fell into unconsciousness again, and also on the next day, August 2, at 10:00 p.m. when he breathed his last. Father Vicente Tomas Villar had died from cancer. Father was 78 years old, 60 years a Salesian and 45 years a priest.

A Mass of Christian Burial for Father Villar was celebrated at St. Kieran's on August 5, at 5:00 p.m. in English at which the pastor, Father Donald Zarkoski, preached, and another Mass was offered at 7:00 p.m. in Spanish at which Father Albino Simonetti preached. The church was filled to capacity at both Masses.

Archbishop John Favalora of Miami was one of the visitors and expressed his sympathy to the parish and to the Salesian community. Bishop Augustin Roman, Auxiliary Bishop of Miami and the vicar for religious, assisted at the 5:00 p.m. Mass and expressed condolences on behalf of the archdiocese.

On August 7th, funeral services for Father Villar were held at 11:00 A.M., at the Marian Shrine in Stony Point, New York. Then at 2:00 P.M., Father was buried at the Salesian cemetery in Goshen, New York. His relatives from New York and New Jersey were in attendance along with many Salesians.

Surviving Father Villar are a brother in Cuba, a sister in Cooper City with her son, Juan Carlos, and his wife, Pilar, and other relatives in New York and New Jersey. Father had several relatives in Cuba whom he visited in 1998, plus a nephew, Eric Villar, and other relatives in Spain.

May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace! Amen.

(See the obituary letter for Father Vicente Tomas Vilar, S.D.B., by Father Donald Zarkoski, S.D.B.)





**Father Louis Vyoral, S.D.B.**

Louis Vyoral was born on April 21, 1920, to Ludvik Vyoral and Frances Zelikova in Kamarov, Napajedia, Czechoslovakia. He was the fourth of their seven children. Kamarov was an agricultural town of about 600 inhabitants. After finishing elementary and secondary studies in the local public schools, Louis entered the Salesian aspirantate at Frystak in 1937. He professed first vows in the Salesian Society on August 16, 1941, at Orechov. Perpetual profession followed on August 16, 1944, at Pardubice. Brother Louis taught in Salesian schools in Czechoslovakia from 1944 to 1946. He then went to Turin, Italy, for his four years of theological studies. Father Louis received priestly ordination on July 2, 1950.

By the time Louis was ordained a priest, the Communists had taken control of his homeland, and all religious schools in Czechoslovakia were closed. For the next 48 years Father Louis exercised his apostolate in Mexico and the United States.

In Mexico he acquired a fluent knowledge of Spanish. He held administrative positions at Salesian schools in Guadalajara (1950-1953), Tlaquepaque (1953-1955), Puebla (1955-1956), and Mexico City (1956-1962). For the next three years (1962-1965) he served as director and pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Raymondville, Texas, which, although within the United States, was under the jurisdiction of the Salesian province of Guadalajara. For the next year (1965-1966) Father Louis was back in Mexico on the staff of the Salesian parish at Saltillo.

Throughout his life Father Louis retained fond memories of his 16 years in Mexico. A great amount of love remained in Mexico for Father Louis, especially in Guadalajara, until his dying day. During the last several years of his life, he occasionally visited Mexico and Guadalajara, particularly when he felt he needed some rest. Father Frank Lynch, who delivered the homily at the funeral Mass of Father Louis said: "Only God knows the great amount of good Father Louis accomplished in his life. He had been a good shepherd to his people. I had the privilege and joy of spending two weeks' vacation with him two years ago in Guadalajara, Mexico. I was astonished by the depth of affection people showed him. It was a mutual admiration society. Tony Bennett may have left his heart in San Francisco, but it is quite clear that Father Louis had left his heart in Guadalajara."

Obedience called Father Louis in 1966 to the province of New Rochelle, New York. For the rest of his life he remained in the provincial house in New Rochelle. His first assignment here was as an assistant to the procurator of the Missions Office, from 1966 to 1968. Next he became the financial administrator of the Salesian community of the provincial house until 1971. At that point his life took another turn.

The Catholic Czech population in the New York City area needed a priest. Father Louis willingly



and happily filled the bill. The scene for this apostolate was Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the borough of Queens, though the provincial house remained as his residence. Father Louis carried out this ministry faithfully and diligently for more than 25 years.

He presided at regularly scheduled Sunday and holy day Masses, celebrated the feast days, gave religious instruction, conferred the sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony, joined in and encouraged numerous celebrations of Czech music and heritage, and spread the word of God by means of his monthly newsletter, ZVON. This newsletter he himself typed, photocopied, collated and distributed. In all of this he worked with zeal, enthusiasm and dedication. As Father Lynch remarked in his homily, "Father Louis knew what he was, and he knew what God called him to be. He was a great priest first, last and always. That was his mission, his calling, his vocation."

For a number of years Father Louis suffered from heart and circulation problems and more recently from diabetes. Because of these problems he was frequently hospitalized, but it was during the last two years of his life that his health deteriorated considerably.

On January 19, 1998, Father Louis was rushed to the Sound Shore Hospital in New Rochelle because of a bad fall at the provincial house. In the evening of the 21st his condition worsened, and he was transferred to the intensive care unit. Father Patrick Angelucci, the Provincial, administered the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, assisted by Father James Heuser, the vice-provincial, and by Father David Moreno, the director of the provincial house.

Soon Father Louis lapsed into unconsciousness while in intensive care and never regained consciousness. Prayers were offered for Father Louis, and confreres paid visits to his bedside. Daily the physicians gave updates regarding his condition. It became apparent that despite all the care there was little hope for a recovery for Father Louis. Word was conveyed to Father's cousins in Texas and to the Czech Catholic community at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Astoria, Queens.

At 6:30 in the evening on Tuesday, January 25, 1998, Father Louis went into cardiac arrest and could not be revived. Father Louis had returned to his Maker, whom he had served so faithfully for fully 47 years of priestly work.

Funeral arrangements were handled by the George T. Davis Funeral Home of New Rochelle where viewing of Father Vyoral's earthly remains began on the evening of the solemnity of St. John Bosco, January 31.

On the following afternoon, about 75 Czech men and women from New York and New Jersey, under the leadership of Father Henry Kotvrada, the successor of Father Louis as director of the Czech apostolate, gathered around Father Louis' body to pay tribute to the priest who had so faithfully ministered to their religious needs for 25 years. Countless stories of baptisms and weddings performed by Father Louis and timely advice given by him were lovingly recalled in both Czech and English, interspersed with prayers and hymns.

In the afternoon on Monday, February 2, the body of Father Louis was brought to the Salesian High School chapel in New Rochelle. That evening, at 7:30, Father Provincial presided at the Mass of Christian Burial. In attendance were five of Father Louis' cousins from Texas, a large representation from the Czech Catholic community, and dozens of Salesians. Father Frank Lynch, the pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, was the homilist. On the following day, February 3, the body of Father Louis was interred in the Salesian cemetery in Goshen, New York.

Father Louis Vyoral was 77 years old, 57 years a Salesian, and 47 years a priest.

(See obituary letter for Rev. Louis Vyoral, S.D.B. by Rev. David G. Moreno, S.D.B., Director, March 31, 1998.)



**Father Eugene H. Walter, S.D.B.**

**O**n Sunday, February 15, 2004, our brother, Father Eugene H. Walter was suddenly and without warning called home to meet his God, while preparing to celebrate the 12:30 p.m. Sunday Mass at the Marian Shrine pavilion chapel.

As a part of our Salesian tradition we have always prayed for a quiet and peaceful death. God must have heard Father Gene's prayers. Could there have been a better setting to meet God than at his altar, surrounded by brother Salesians and the people he so lovingly served and ministered to for the last ten years of his life?

"He was a great guy, and just so human," said Denis Cahill of Thiells, who with his wife Jeanie worked with Father Gene at pre-Cana marriage preparation conferences at the Shrine.

In so many ways, he had a powerful impact on the lives of those he ministered to and with. His cheerful demeanor, in spite of the burdens of his blindness and diabetes, his love for the young and for teaching, his love for the retreat apostolate with the young and with women religious, and his fidelity to his vocation, remain an inspiration to us all who seek to serve God with our whole mind, heart, soul and strength.

Gene was born in St. Albans, Queens, New York on July 23, 1952, son of Eugene and Helen Sullivan Walter. He was baptized on August 3, 1952, and received the sacrament of Confirmation on May 5, 1963, at St. Killian Church in Farmingdale, New York, where he was taught by the Amityville Dominicans. He developed a great affection for them and took the name Dominic at his first profession in honor of them. While at St. Killian's he joined the boys' choir under the direction of the Benedictines who staffed his parish. He was proud of the training and opportunities that they gave him.

A brief conversation with Father Joseph Stella, S.D.B., at the Marian Shrine in Stony Point, New York, where his family visited while waiting for their car to be fixed after a break down on a Sunday trip from Long Island, led to a prophetic invitation and declaration that "Mary Help of Christians had led him to the Salesians and she wanted him to join our family." This chance meeting proved to be the spark that ignited the fire of Salesian vocation in Eugene Harry Walter.

Gene began his pre-novitiate in Newton, New Jersey, on September 1, 1971. His novitiate year began in Ipswich, Massachusetts, on September 1, 1972. He formally entered the Salesian Society and made his first religious profession on September 1, 1973, back in Newton. Ordination to the priesthood came on May 21, 1983, in Columbus, Ohio.

From his first encounter, Gene had developed a real devotion and love for St. John Bosco and the mission and apostolate of the Salesians. He felt drawn to the education and guidance of young people,

especially those most in need. A graduate of Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey, and later the Pontifical College Josephinum in Worthington, Ohio, from which he received a Masters in Divinity, Father Gene was well prepared for the educational ministry in which he engaged in Salesian high schools in Indiana, Massachusetts, and New York.

Gene was a teacher and youth minister at St. Dominic Savio High School in East Boston, Massachusetts, from 1983-1986, and served at Salesian High School in New Rochelle, New York, from 1986-1990. An excellent teacher of English, history and theology, he was beloved by his students and so welcomed his assignments to teach at Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, New Jersey in the fall of 1990.

It was here that he would experience a rapid and serious deterioration in vision brought on by his diabetes which would ultimately result in total blindness. His health situation made it necessary for Gene to leave his place of service at Don Bosco Prep and move on to a new assignment at the Marian Shrine in Stony Point, New York in 1993.

When Gene came to Stony Point he was still going through a series of surgeries that he was told would either prolong his sight or cause him to lose whatever sight he had. Two of these surgeries seemed to prolong his vision. The third one left him totally blind. This surgery took place January 25, the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, when Paul lost his sight that he might see Christ.

Thanks to the constant support and prodding of his brothers in the community as well as the ongoing encouragement of former students, family and friends, Gene's story does not end here. While this was not an easy time for Gene, or at times for his community members (all that he cherished and worked for had seemingly been taken from him), it proved to be a time that demanded much reflection and renewal. His whole approach to ministry and life itself had to be completely reformulated. Though challenging to others at times, he showed that he was ultimately ready and open to be challenged himself. One of the sisters from Dominican College said that "it was at this time that Gene took as his own, John Milton's words – "They also serve who only stand and wait."

The waiting period was followed by intense rehabilitation at the Carroll Institute in Newton, Massachusetts, where after four months of re-learning and new learning, Gene returned to the Marian Shrine community.

A story from Gene's time at the Carroll Center: One of his instructors took him to a mall to help him develop his sense of smell as a tool for mobility. As they walked through the mall, Gene could distinguish by smell a shop that sold leather coats, a shop that sold candy, and a store that sold athletic shoes. As they walked, Gene asked whether they were in front of a video store. The instructor was surprised and said yes. She asked Gene how he knew. Gene told her that he could smell the covers of the videos! The instructor was shocked.

Armed with a new type of vision, he enthusiastically engaged in retreat work, pre-Cana conferences, youth and parish ministry.

With listening ears and a responsive heart, grateful to all who assisted him, Gene became a source of hope to the many he considered himself blessed to serve. A former student would say, "You no longer can see, but how well you see into our hearts."

Less than one year into my new assignment at the Marian Shrine, Gene's second brother died suddenly of heart attack. The wake service was out in Garden City, Long Island, from 4:00 – 9:00 p.m. We thought that leaving at 4:00 P.M. would give us a safe cushion of time. Traffic conditions decided otherwise. Four hours and fifty minutes later we arrived. The funeral home decided to keep the place open for another hour or so, for Gene's sake. On the way, Gene, who was my co-pilot, kept telling me which exit to look for and what street to take... usually, just when we were coming up to that particular sign or intersection. It was quite spooky. Actually, it was quite amazing.

One special gift – that seems so obvious to all, but appears to be such a challenge to put into practice by many – was his unique ability of making contacts with young people on their level and in their world by truly listening to them. What was important to young people was important to Gene.

He really seemed to be able to reach the hearts of so many of the people he ministered to because he showed genuine interest in their joy, their hopes, their concerns, their hurts and their problems. The fact that his eyes did not confuse things by getting caught up in extraneous and superficial issues enabled him to focus one hundred percent on the individual before him.

Father Rich Alejunas, S.D.B., spoke at Gene's wake service: "Even though Gene could recite the dialogue from *The Bells of St. Mary* from memory, or recall his memories of the arrival of the Beatles in New York forty years ago – he was there – these things, and Dracula and the Yankees are not what drew us close to him and close to each other... We gather around Gene tonight because of his great heart and love."

Our motto of "*Da Mihi Animas... Cetera Tolle*" was exemplified in his personal style of ministry. They used to say of Don Bosco that every person whom he came in contact with felt special and their lives were better off for having met him. The tremendous outpouring of affection and loss expressed at his Mass of Christin Burial, especially by the great number of young people from several states whom he ministered to over the years, was proof positive of the success of Gene's approach.

Father Jay Horan, S.D.B., Gene's good friend, classmate and funeral homilist, shares this recollection. "While Gene was at the retreat center, he often led guided meditations. I never ceased to be amazed how day after day, and year after year, he was able to draw deep reflection in the various ages of young people that came through the retreat programs. I witnessed young people skip lunch in order to stand in line to celebrate Reconciliation with him."

Father Jay continued by offering this reflection from 1 Samuel 16:7: "Not as man sees does God see, because man sees appearance but the Lord looks into the heart. Gene's blessing was that we did not have to worry about our appearance, for Gene could only see into the heart, and that is what made him a blessing for us."

Adults also were affected in a positive way by his spirituality. The late Betty Thacke, the long-time secretary of Salesian High School, once remarked after a retreat, "He is not blind; he just sees differently from the rest of us"

In the advance directives called "Five Wishes" that we use in our community, Gene wrote under Wish 5 (What I Want My Love Ones To Know), if anyone asked how I want to be remembered, please say the following about me: "That I was a kind and caring person who tried to help others; who sought to use his handicaps to reach out to others and give them hope."

Priests pray the Breviary several times during the day. Though Gene could not pray the Divine Office with the community, his constant companion became a truly essential Salesian tool, his rosary. Always present, it became singularly associated with him. He always had time to say a Hail Mary or two for someone in need.

As we pray for the repose of Gene's soul, I think it's safe to say that those words will certainly be his legacy to us. Remembering his sister and other family members and friends who suffer the loss, let's also pray for the countless others, both young and not so young, who will miss his positive and hopeful approach to ministry and to life.

Our Salesian family has not only lost the presence and services of a faithful priest and loving brother. We have also gained another powerful ally and member in the Salesian Garden in heaven.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon him! May he rest in peace! Amen.

Father Steve Dumais, S.D.B.  
Director, Marian Shrine

### *Reflections on Gene*

Lois Milanese, Gene's sister, shares these remembrances: "*I was a teenager when Gene was born, and I loved pushing his carriage on long walks and feeding and playing with him. I was the official babysitter for him and our younger brother Tom, who arrived two years later. When they were a little older we often went to the movies together. Gene always liked the scary ones.*"

*"Two teachers from his elementary school years, Sr. Ellen and Sr. Helen Edward, had a profound effect on him and remained friends throughout his life. They must have been responsible in some way for his decision to enter the priesthood. However, the thought must have already been in his head since upon meeting the nuns on his first day of school, he informed them that someday he would like to be the Pope.*

*"Gene loved baseball. His favorite team, as everyone knows, was the New York Yankees. I don't know how this came about since the rest of us were Giants fans. He passed this enthusiasm for the Yankees along to his nephews. Baseball was usually the topic of most conversations when he called them. They also shared a love for music. In 1963 when the world was caught up in Beatlemania, he was preparing his room with their images and even convinced my mother to spend hours at the airport to greet them when they came to the U.S.*

*"He loved sweets and even as a toddler had a sweet tooth. On one occasion, with the relatives gathered and the grown-ups busy in conversation, he proceeded to eat most of the cake that was to be dessert for everyone.*

*"During his early years as a Salesian, we spent many good times at Newton. His nieces and nephews have fond memories of these Sundays together. Always close to them, as years went by, he enjoyed vacations with all of us in Florida. Disney was a favorite for him. In later years, when his sight failed and it was difficult to walk, he still enjoyed the rides in his wheelchair, the Haunted Mansion, and the souvenirs which we described to him in detail.*

*"I remember sadly, the deaths of our parents and brother and how difficult it was for him to officiate.*

*"I remember all these things, but mostly I just remember a loving and fun-loving brother."*

Father Edward J. Weber, the pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church in West Nyack, New York, and the dean of the vicariate of Rockland County, graciously shared these few thoughts about Gene:

*"Father Gene Walter came to St. Francis in 1995. At first he was part of a rotation team but gradually St. Francis was the parish that proved best suited for him because of our few steps and the presence of our deacon, who could become his 'eyes' and guide during the Mass. Father Gene was quickly adopted by the people of St. Francis. His homilies were always inspiring but also reflected his humor and caring spirit. He was also able to weave into the celebration more mundane subjects like the New York Yankees. When the seminary assigned seminarians to have a pastoral experience at St. Francis, they became for him, as he did for them, a help and guidance for their future ministry.*

*"When Father Gene's health began to deteriorate, many of the parishioners reached out to him as he did to them in their needs. The great relationship that began when Father Gene arrived continued to grow. The parish was very responsive to helping to transport him back and forth from the Shrine to the parish. The giving and receiving relationship continued long after Father Gene's health forced him no longer to be the permanent weekend assistant. To this day he is spoken of and remembered by the entire parish community, especially the youth group that he also worked with very closely."*



**Father Donald Zarkoski, S.D.B.**

When I drove Father Don Zarkoski to St. Joseph's Hospital early on the morning of May 23, 2005, he was a bit more talkative than usual. He was scheduled for a long and delicate surgery to remove a tumor on the pituitary gland that was pressing on the optic nerve, causing him to lose his vision. All of his paperwork was in order, and I had a number to call if anything went wrong – we did not suspect it would. He knew the risks that were involved, but felt quite sure that things would go well. I told him that I would drop him off and return home to celebrate Mass for him, which he appreciated. Then I would return later in the morning to see how things were going.

I returned to the hospital around mid-morning and, as usual in hospitals, could get no information on how things were going. I camped out in the waiting room, spent the whole day there, but got no news. Finally, about 6:00 p.m., I “demanded” some information. I was told that Father Don was out of surgery, that he was in the recovery room, and, “No, you may not see him now.” I learned only that he had been in surgery for about nine hours.

The next day, after celebrating the feast of Mary Help of Christians with the school community, I returned to St. Joseph's, and after the customary run-around, I found out that he had just been sent to ICU. I found him conscious but understandably quite heavily sedated.

During the coming weeks he made good progress and was eventually discharged from ICU. He was alert, talkative, and insisted on being allowed to get up and walk, which set off every alarm imaginable. The only thing we were concerned about was his inability to speak clearly. One minute he would say something unintelligible, and after a few moments of thought he would say clearly, “That's not what I meant to say at all!” The doctors and nurses were sure that this was a temporary condition.

The following week he began to have seizures and lost consciousness. A series of procedures was performed to relieve the pressure that had built up in the brain. Father Don did not regain consciousness for several weeks, and when he finally did, he was not the same. For the next seven months, he was never able to leave his hospital or nursing home bed and was barely able to communicate. He suffered intensely during this period, as did those who loved him.

Good Shepherd Parish struggled along without him as the one-month absence of his leadership turned into two, then three. Gradually it became apparent to all that he would probably never return to ministry. Indeed, he might never leave the nursing home.

In desperate attempts to “snap him out of it,” the school and parish secretaries brought his beloved dog Chico to his sickbed and helped him to pet him. Neither of them made progress, however. Father Don remained confined to bed, and Chico grew increasingly more unmanageable without his master, until

eventually he had to be taken to live with a good friend of Father Don in Miami.

A large poster of Father Don and Chico was placed by his bed to help him recover. When he had a television in his room, it was kept tuned to the channel that displayed the tabernacle in the hospital chapel.

We were not sure what he could see or understand. Then, one day, I brought a picture of his dad from his room to see whether he could identify it. I asked him, "Don, who is this in the picture?" He paused for a moment and then mouthed the words, "My father." We then knew for sure that he was fully aware of what was going on.

After a series of moves into and out of emergency rooms and nursing homes, he became stable enough to move to Bon Secours-Maria Manor Nursing Care Center at the beginning of November 2005. He was frequently visited and attended to by his confrere Father Serges Lamaute, who also resided at Bon Secours. Could this be the beginning of a real recovery, we wondered.

The Lord had other plans. Late in the evening of February 4, 2006, I received an urgent call from the staff at Bon Secours. Father Don had taken a turn for the worse, and, in their opinion, would not make it through the night.

I rushed to his bedside and found him well attended by nursing staff and members of the pastoral care department. There were always at least two people by his bedside. As soon as I finished anointing him, in response to my questions, the nurse told me, "He has two minutes left!" And sure enough, while I was reading the gospel passage of the crucifixion, he gave a couple of quick breaths and left this world. The zealous, lovable priest had gone to answer the call of Christ the High Priest.

Word spread quickly through the parish at each of the Sunday Masses that their shepherd was now at peace. The chapel at Mary Help of Christians School, which served as the worship space for Good Shepherd Parish, was filled with mourners. The now-famous poster of Father Don and Chico greeted everyone and lifted their spirits.

Deacon Edmund Anctil, Father Don's pastoral associate, who had shouldered the burdens of parish administration the previous eight months, preached a very moving homily. The Very Rev. James Heuser, provincial, presided at the liturgy and spoke at the end of it.

The celebration was repeated on Wednesday evening, February 8, in the chapel of Salesian High School in New Rochelle, where many confreres from the New York/New Jersey area attended, as well as Father Don's sister Joan and her son. Father Dominic DeBlase preached the homily and shared his thoughts about Father Don. And finally, the next day, clear but bitterly cold, Father Don was laid to rest, assisted by his provincial and his director, a group of Salesians, and members of his family, some of who had come from central Pennsylvania.

## Biography

Donald Anthony Zarkoski was born in Kulpmont, a small town in Northumberland County, in the diocese of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on January 22, 1931. He was baptized and confirmed in the Polish parish church, St. Casimir, where the remains of his parents, Anthony and Estelle Dombroski Zarkoski, lie in the family cemetery plot.

Don attended the parochial school for eight years and the public high school for four years, graduating in 1948. After two years in the U.S. Navy, he entered Mount St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg, Maryland. In the middle of his second year at Mount St. Mary's, he applied to enter the Salesian seminary at Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey, and was accepted in February 1952. At that time, Mount St. Mary's president recommended Donald as "an excellent student [whose] attention to his religious duties was exemplary." His pastor at St. Casimir described him as "a fine Catholic young man, of good moral character, devout in the practice of his faith, a good worker, honest, serious and quiet," adding that Don had been considering the religious life for at least two years and would be happy as a religious.

And so Don enrolled at Don Bosco in February, and that September he began his novitiate. He made his first profession of vows on September 8, 1953, and his perpetual profession five years later. Following graduation from Don Bosco College in June 1955, Brother Don did three years of practical training at



Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, New Jersey. In the fall of 1958 he began his theological studies at the Salesian seminary in Aptos, California. When that school closed two years later, he transferred to the Salesian theological school at Melchet Court in Sherfield English (Hants), England. He was ordained at Melchet Court on March 17, 1962.

Father Don Zarkoski filled priestly assignments in a dozen posts around the New Rochelle Province between 1962 and 2006: teacher at Salesian High School, New Rochelle, New York (1962-1963); prefect of studies at Salesian Junior Seminary, Goshen, New York (1963-1965) and then at Sacred Heart Juniorate, Ipswich, Massachusetts (1965-1966); director of religious activities at Don Bosco Tech, Boston (1966-1970); teacher at Don Bosco Tech, Paterson, New Jersey (1970-1973); principal at St. Dominic Savio High School, East Boston (1973-1981); director at Don Bosco Tech, Paterson (1981-1987) and the Salesian provincial residence, New Rochelle (1988-1996); superintendent of schools for the New Rochelle Province (1987-1996); provincial councilor (1988-1991); pastor of St. Kieran Church, Miami (1996-2003) and Good Shepherd, Tampa (2003-2006).

In 1970 Father Don completed a master's degree in education from Boston College. He specialized in math and was highly regarded as a teacher. One of his former students at Goshen wrote, "'The Don' was a character in his own right. I learned more math from him than from any other teacher. He would take ANYTHING on, whether he knew a lot about it or not. Although I probably didn't recognize it at the time (I was too busy trying NOT to have his undivided attention!), I think he was a good man, a good priest and someone genuinely interested in making us into the best person we could be.... While many of my memories of Father Don include wide eyes and a red face at our failure to grasp mathematical concepts beyond simple addition, I can even more readily see his open, friendly smile for 'his boys.'"

During Father Don's eight-year principalship at Dom Savio in East Boston, the school flourished. He earned a nickname from the students – "the Hammer" – because of his no-nonsense manner. But he also earned their lasting respect, and many kept in touch with him over the years. Despite the nickname and the public persona, he was a gentle man, very patient and understanding with students, parishioners, and penitents in the confessional. He had a warm faith, which he readily shared from his heart, especially in his homilies.

My first chance to live and work with Father Don came when I was assigned to Savio High School in 1979. During that time, as director of guidance, I got to work closely with him and appreciate his skill in administration. Father Don was the only principal I know who could close the school year on June 15, have all the report cards mailed out five days later, and have the teaching schedules for the following year done by June 30! So what did he do the rest of the summer? After cleaning up his office, he would head for the Bahamas to relieve some of our confreres there who needed to make their retreats and get a little break. His philosophy was, "If you can do the job in ten months, why take twelve?"

Father Don could be a great tease and possessed a wry sense of humor. After it was announced that he was about to leave Savio to become director of Don Bosco Tech in Paterson, we had a discussion on what changes his successor might want. In the middle of that conversation, he let out a name and then quickly covered his mouth and chuckled. I lost no time in notifying the director, Father Earl Bissonnette (who apparently did not know who would succeed Father Don), that Father Don had slipped and divulged "the secret." I also let him know that I would not betray Father Don... my lips were sealed! Father Earl chased me through the school building trying to get the information, much to the amusement of Father Don. I then realized that Father Don had not slipped at all... he set the whole thing up!

And how many times did I notice him reading a sign which said, "Do not touch" or "Do not remove." You could be quite certain that, within 24 hours, Father Don would be the first to remove or touch the designated object! When interrogated, he just smiled!

Occasionally Father Director would busy himself with enforcing the school dress code. Sure enough, the next morning Father Don would appear dressed in an old Navy jacket with a watch cap on his head – and that smile!

He had a caring, fatherly side that was not always in evidence because of his role. He would often seek out the most socially awkward students, those who had few friends or were constantly picked on, and ask if they



would like to be his guest at a football game later that day. The others who had the grades, the personalities, and the friends, he felt could take care of themselves. He wanted to be a friend to those who had none.

He was well known also for his love for animals, particularly dogs. When the *Florida Catholic* ran an article on him on August 5, 2005, it was titled “A lot of God, a little dog” and was as much about Father Don’s mixed-breed pet Chico as about him; it included a large picture of both priest and pet. He would take Chico with him when he went to hear the children’s confessions at Villa Madonna School, and some of the children would tell their teachers that they wanted to go to confession to “the priest with the dog.”

One day, a few months before the surgery, I found him sitting on the front steps with Chico. He looked rather depressed. He said to me, “I just told the provincial that I would like to continue as pastor, but I’m not so sure I can make it.” He may have then had an inkling that this decision would soon be taken out of his hands. I promised him the support of his Salesian community, and he was deeply appreciative of that.

Father Don’s death has left an empty space in the hearts of many. While we commend him to your prayers, we ask that you also remember to pray for priestly vocations and for the people of Good Shepherd Parish, the most recent beneficiaries of his pastoral zeal.

***Data for the Necrology:***

Zarkoski, Rev. Donald Anthony; born January 22, 1931, at Kulpmont, Pa. Professed, September 8, 1953. Ordained, March 17, 1962. Died, February 4, 2006, at St. Petersburg, Florida, at age 75, in the 53rd year of religious profession and 44th year of priesthood.

Father William Ferruzzi, S.D.B.  
Director, Mary Help of Christians School, Tampa

