



Salesians of St. John Bosco



SALESIAN HOUSE,  
SURREY LANE,  
BATTERSEA,  
LONDON SW11 3PB

March 1989.

Dear Confrères,

On the afternoon of Wednesday, 22nd February 1989,

FATHER JOHN MAGUIRE SDB

died peacefully, in the Nazareth House, Hammersmith London, aged 72, in the presence of Fr. Maurice Gordon SDB and Fr. Killian Bohen the Chaplain, and a number of the nursing staff.

John was blessed with good health for most of his life, and was full of energy and drive — but cracks began to show in his stocky robust frame about 4 years ago, and he was given the nursing care by the Nazareth Sisters, to whom we are deeply indebted, not only for their care, but for their hospitality to the scores of visitors who came to visit him.

He was born in Glasgow on the feast of St John the Baptist, after whom his parents named him, on 24th June 1916. They came to Clydeside, at the turn of the century, like so many of those Donegal and Fermanagh immigrants with the Lough Derg faith which they passed on to John and his sister Margaret. John needed that faith to call upon, when his father died 11 years later, just as John won a scholarship to St. Mungo's Academy. On starting school, he tried to bridge the financial gap, by doing a milk round each morning from 5.30 – 7.30 am — then his breakfast and off to school, earning 3/6 per week. Saturdays brought an increments he was out from 8am – 9pm delivering groceries.

School leaving age was 14 — so after 3 years at Grammar School, John was on the Labour market — behind the counter in a Pawnbroker's shop, where he learnt a lot of social lessons early in life.

Then, the great Maltese Priest, Fr Joe Ciantar SDB came to Glasgow looking for vocations, and John was introduced to him by one of his former school mates. So at 17, John made his way to Shrigley — then Oxford — where he was professed at the age of 20, as a Salesian.

He had an insatiable love of languages, and he took the first of his two BA degrees in his stride by private study. During his philosophy, the world of Plato and Aristotle, sharpened him up for Canon Law and St Thomas Aquinas; so that on ordination day 14th July 1946, he was well equipped for a life of varied challenges.

John was always grateful for his three years practical training in Bolton. He tackled everything — inside and outside the classroom — languages, P.E., R.E. and Swimming. The war years toughened everyone, especially John, as his home was destroyed in an air raid on Glasgow. Thankfully his mother and sister were uninjured, but 20 personal friends were killed in that raid.

Chertsey was the first school John taught in after his ordination. It was in this period that he joined Cardinal Heenan, in his travelling mission during his summer holidays. He spent 9 years in Chertsey, 5 of them as headmaster, before moving to Oxford for 6 years, first as headmaster and then as Rector.

When Cardinal Heenan approached Fr. Provincial for a Chaplain to the University of Kampala, Uganda, John's name came to the fore. He spent 7 very rewarding years there; and on returning to Britain, he was approached to take on the Chaplaincy in the University of Reading. He built up an amazing rapport with the students, by his open door approach policy over 12 years — making him so accessible to them.

On reaching 65, John knew it was time to hand over the students to a younger chaplain, but he also realised he had a few good years left in him, as the parishioners in Netley and Hamble near Southampton can testify during his 3 years there. He brought the wealth of his experience to them; he knew how to delegate, and he helped the parishioners to know one another better. But the pace of his apostolic life was halted by the first of 3 strokes, and John went to the care of the Nazareth Sisters in Hammersmith in December 1985.

During the first of his 3 years there, he had a lot to contribute, and all enjoyed his Mass and sermons. But nature was slowing him down, yet he was in good enough form to celebrate the 40th anniversary of his ordination in 1986.

John's remains rested in the Community Chapel on Battersea on Wednesday 1st March — and moved to the Sacred Heart Church for the final requiem mass on Thursday 2nd March, followed by interment in the Salesian plot at Morden. May he rest in peace.

Fr. J. Walsh SDB