

FATHER MICHAEL McGINTY. SDB.

Fr. Michael was the fourth child of a family of nine. He was born at Coalisland, Co. Tyrone, Ireland, on January 26th 1911, and he soon learned in the natural seminary of family life those qualities of obedience, piety, unselfishness, and love of constant hard work which were to govern in a marked degree his subsequent years. He was always most devoted to his parents, esteemed and trusted by his teachers, and popular with his companions. His contemporaries remember him not so much as a scholar, but as a smiling versatile young athlete whose chief delight lay in his swimming, diving, football, cycling and climbing; his prowess in these things is reminiscent of the young Don Bosco, who at the age of 14 was an accomplished athlete and acrobat. It was fitting that the Saint should captivate the heart of such a boy; and when in September 1925, Michael entered the Salesian College of Warrenstown, he was at once at home.

He was introduced to the Salesian life by one of the early members of the Anglo-Irish province, the late Fr. J. J. Mallon, who was the great friend of the McGinty family. One of the Warrenstown community of 1926 wrote this recently: "It speaks volumes for Fr. Mallon's judgement in seeing the makings of a very fine Salesian in a boy who to all appearance was a natural country lad. I can recall Michael as a boy in his teens, with his hair standing on end, never careful in his dress, in fact usually somewhat untidy, although never slovenly. My recollections of him bring back a boy whom I never once saw upset, morose, or sulky, but one who always had a big smile, who took life as it came, ready for any eventuality - with a heart as big and as generous as himself. In the death of Fr. McGinty the Salesians have lost one who, like their Saintly Founder, had a boyish heart that was ever ready to give without counting the cost and that, always with a gaiety that was so characteristic of Don Bosco himself."

From Warrenstown, Michael passed on to Cowley, Oxford, where he completed a further year of his aspirantship, his novitiate and philosophical studies, being professed in September 1930. His first two years of practical triennium were spent at the Salesian College, Pallaskenry, where he found ample scope for his ardent spirit and threw himself wholeheartedly into the Salesian life. He was an efficient teacher, a real stalwart in the playing field, and a magnificent worker. After spending a year in the College at Chertsey, a year which he was wont to describe as one of the happiest of his life, he began his theological studies at Shrigley, then going down to Blaisdon after the completion of the first year's course. As a student of theology he is well remembered as a good religious, hardworking and painstaking in his duties, a friend ever ready to do a good turn, and, as always, a master of mirth.

He had the happiness of receiving his priestly ordination at the hands of His Lordship the Bishop of Clifton, at Blaisdon on the 16th July 1939. After a short peiod in the College at Cowley, interrupted by the outbreak of war, Fr. McGinty was sent to Pallaskenry to take over the Propaganda Office, and this he did with great zeal and efficiency. For nine years his energies were concentrated on the formation of a Central Office for the Cooperators in Ireland. The Irish edition of the "Help of Christians" which came into being at this period, incorporating the Salesian Bulletin, was in great measure due to his zeal and initiative. But it was in his contacts with the Cooperators themselves that his real secret lay. His little way, or as he himself put it, his "wee word" had brought forth marvellous fruit. The nature of Fr. McGinty's work entailed a very large and varied correspondence, and since his death, letters have been written from all parts of the country and from people in all walks of life, testifying to the way in which this young priest had helped them in their troubles and difficulties, spiritual and temporal.

Humanly speaking one could see great things ahead of this young zealous priest. But God in his wisdom willed it otherwise. Towards the close of the year 1947, Fr. McGinty complained of severe pains in the head, which necessitated his going to Dublin for treatment. He appeared to make good progress for some time, but suffered severe attacks during Lent and eventually he was admitted to the Mater Misericordiae Hospital in Dublin, where the specialists diagnosed a tumour on the brain. Two major operations were performed with the greatest skill and care; but it was not possible to remove the tumour, owing to its position on the brain. Fr. McGinty showed throughout the most heroic patience and courage and could even joke on the operating table- but even the finest medical skill could not succeed. At last, surrounded by his confreres, his relatives, friends and nursing Sisters, he gave up his soul to God on Sunday the 18th April at 5. 30. p. m. His was a very calm and peaceful end, comforted by all the consolations of our Holy Mother the Church. He was laid to rest in the new Salesian cemetery at Pallaskenry.

His passing is certainly a great loss to this Province, and particularly for the work in Ireland, which he had so much at heart, and which he had done so much to foster. But we bow our heads in loving obedience to the Holy Will of our Father in Heaven, who knows our sorrows and our needs. He has taken Father McGinty to Himself, but we feel confident it is only that our good confrere may be enabled the more to help us in our work. We earnestly recommend the soul of this young Salesian Priest to the charity of your prayers and suffrages

Fr. R. McElligott. SDB.