

FATHER JOHN McTAGUE. S. D. B.

Fr. McTague died at the Salesian College, Farnborough on the 3rd October 1972. May he rest in peace¹

Fr. John was born in Liverpool on the 4th August 1892. He decided at an early age that he would like to become a priest. He had read a life of Don Bosco and he was greatly impressed by what he learned about the man and the apostolic work the Salesians were doing. He contacted the Salesian Provincial at Battersea and he eventually started his novitiate at Burwash when he was just sixteen years old. He successfully completed his novitiate and he was professed as a Salesian religious on the feast of the Immaculate Conception 1909.

He stayed at Burwash, studying Philosophy, for the next two years. He then went to the Salesian College at Farnborough to help as a teacher and assistant with the boys for three years and he enjoyed this experience very much. He was able to start his study of theology at Farnborough in 1914 whilst still helping in the school. He was eventually ordained at Farnborough on the 9th of February 1919.

Fr. McTague remained a member of the Farnborough community after his ordination and until 1921. Then followed a long association with the Battersea community and school from 1921-47, then eight years with the Cowley community and school, and finally, his long association with the Farnborough community and school from 1956 until he died.

Fr. McTague was a rather shy, retiring man – a self-effacing person – but a deeply spiritual man who had a poor opinion of himself and his abilities. He was loathe to admit what qualities he had, even in the musical sphere. He spent some time studying music at Durham University, before going to Battersea to teach music and Latin to the boys there, and to act as choir-master in the Sacred Heart church. In his later years at Farnborough he exercised his apostolate among the boys and confreres as their confessor.

He was a gentle soul, a man of deep piety, who liked to keep in the background. His sense of spiritual values was something which impressed all who came in contact with him. He always had a special welcome for young confreres who were just starting their Salesian apostolate. Like St. Francis of Sales, his patron, he believed with him that kindness and charity draw souls to God and help those in difficulties.

Bread, work and Heaven – as St. John Bosco said, is the basis of religious life for Salesians. Fr. McTague has no longer any need for the first two, he has gone before us to receive the reward promised by Christ to all who try to follow Him and to greet his fellow-Salesians who have gone before him.