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Fr. Sean McFerran, S.D.B.

1918 - 1998

Fr. Sean McFerran died peacefully, on Thursday morning, 12th. November, 1998, at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast. It was a happy release for him as he suffered a lot in the last months of his life.

Reflecting on his life one is struck by the length, variety and intensity of his Salesian Apostolic life. His was a life, lived to the full in great joy. One friend described him as "a man always with a smile and his hand stretched out to greet you with a warm shake-hands".

Fr. Sean was born in 142, Cavendish Street, Belfast, on 13th. January, 1918. His parents were John McFerran and Catherine McFerran (nee Dowling). He attended St. Pauls Primary School, Belfast and in 1932 he went to Shrigley Secondary School, Cheshire, England. He entered the Salesian Novitiate in Cowley, Oxford, in 1935 and made his first Profession there on 5th. September, 1936. Immediately afterwards he went to his beloved India to study and work. He was ordained in Bombay in 1946 and worked there in a variety of capacities until 1972. He served as Rector, School Principal, Parish Priest, Sportsmaster, fundraiser for Church and School Construction, and in a variety of other capacities. He was very involved in sports during his 36 years in India and he guided the careers of many top national sportspeople – a fact that was highlighted in the wonderful tributes which were paid to him in many Indian National Newspapers on hearing of his death in Ireland.

When he returned to Ireland in 1972, Fr. Sean became chaplain in Shanganagh Castle, caring for young offenders. In 1978 he was Rector in Gardener Street Boys Home, and he and his staff pioneered the Salesian work for homeless boys that has since blossomed into five centres. During that time he founded AFRI which has developed into a respected organisation with a powerful voice for the poor, both nationally and internationally. In 1982 he became chaplain at St. Laurences, in Finglas.

In the meantime the Salesians had grown in numbers in India and were now in a position to found a mission at Nairobi in Kenya. They asked Fr. Sean to join them and guide their early missionary steps. This he did with great joy and enthusiasm in 1984, when he was already 66 years of age, when most people are retired. He remained there for four years where he founded a huge technical facility for training young people at Karen, Nairobi, with training branches in economically deprived townships of the city. Returning to Ireland in 1988, he served in his native Diocese of Down and Connor and together with his brothers Dan and Archie and his friend Malachy Turley, he founded the "We Care" organisation, a missionary aid organisation which is today flourishing. His last years were spent as chaplain to St. Columbanes Nursing Home, Helens Bay, Bangor.

There was a funeral Mass at St. Pauls Church, Belfast, attended by a huge crowd from his home area. The Mass was Celebrated by Fr. John Horan, Provincial and the two Auxillary Bishops of Down and Connor Concelebrated. His remains were then taken to Warrenstown College where the funeral Mass was held the following day. It was a joy to see how well Fr. Sean was loved and appreciated, by his brothers Dan and Archie, his sister Maureen, and his nieces and nephews and all his many friends who attended the funeral Masses.

Fr. Sean was a member of this Community, and we always looked forward to his frequent visits to us. Those visits were usually short, but ever so pleasant. We miss him.

He was a missionary and a humanitarian to the very end. His years of dedicated service are an inspiration to us all. He was a true pastor, a man of deep spirituality, a good shepherd, and always a friend to all that came in contact with him in his long and active life. He is buried in the Cemetery here at Warrenstown.

May he rest in peace.

Ar dheis De go raibh a anim dilis.

Fr. Joe Harrington, S.D.B.
Salesian College, Warrenstown,
Drumree,
Co. Meath.

Dates for Necrology:

Born: 13th. January, 1918

Ordained: 1946

Died: 12th. November, 1998