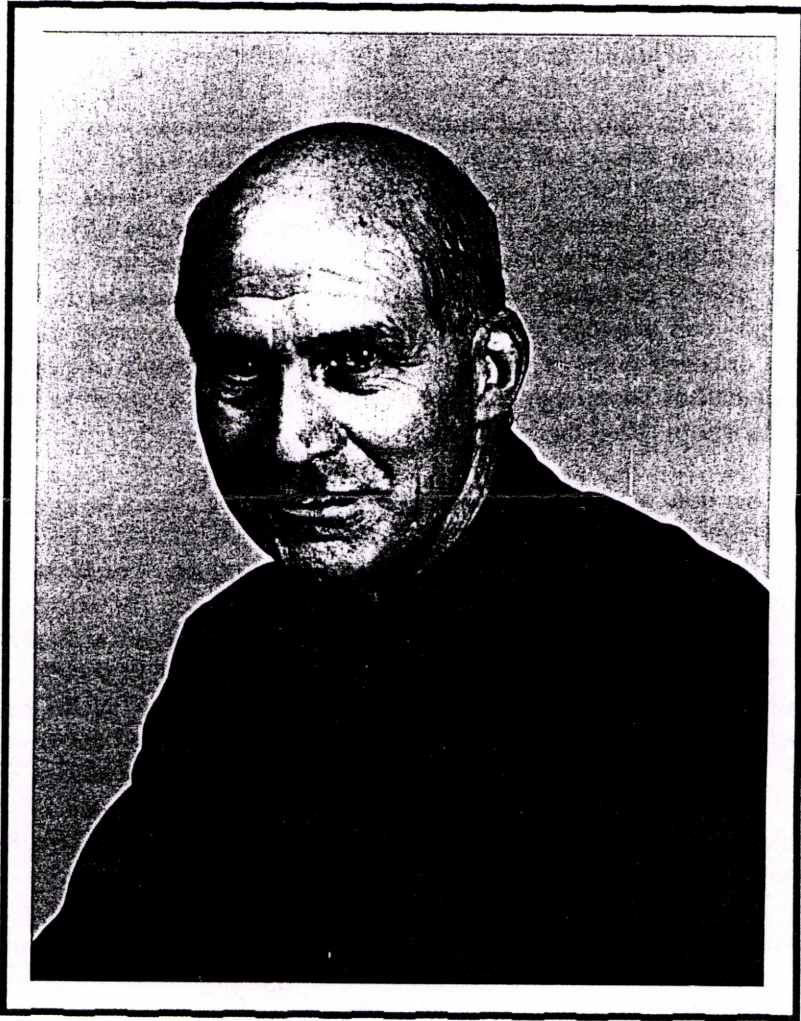


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FATHER JAMES BARRETT, S.D.B.



3rd January, 1920 - 18th October, 1996.

Fr. James Barrett died suddenly and unexpectedly at the Salesian House, Surrey Lane, Battersea, on 18th October, 1996. His untimely death came as a shock to all who knew him. He had returned from a pilgrimage to Fatima only a couple of days earlier and he appeared to be in good health. Little did he or anyone suspect that his life's pilgrimage was all but over.

Fr. Jim lived all his life as a pilgrim. In the beautiful homily he preached at his Requiem Mass, Fr. Eddie O'Shea reminded us that Fr. Jim was born in Belfast, in 1920, into a large family. His father, William, was a Kerryman, and his mother, Mary, was from County Mayo. While still in his mid teens, Jim left Northern Ireland and travelled to the Salesian junior seminary at Shrigley Park in Cheshire. His secondary schooling successfully completed, Jim went to the Salesian noviciate in 1938, and made his first vows on 31st August, 1939. In the ten years that followed, Jim completed his study of philosophy and theology and managed several years of teaching in between. He was ordained priest at Blaisdon in 1949. After a couple of years on the teaching staff of Thornleigh Salesian College, Bolton, Jim moved to Battersea, where he was to spend the next thirty two years.

During his time at the Salesian College, Battersea, Fr. Jim was to exercise a tremendous influence for good. As Fr. O'Shea also reminded us: " in the classroom Fr. Jim was an enthusiastic and skilled teacher, (mathematics was his specialist subject) sympathetic and concerned for the standards and achievements of his pupils. But he was one who did not suffer fools gladly, and the boys quickly came to realise that when he said Yes, he meant Yes, and when he said No, he meant No. For the last ten years or so of his time as a teacher, Fr. Jim was Deputy Head of the College and worked extremely hard in that capacity for both the boys and the staff. He was always a faithful, valued and enthusiastic supporter of the activities of the Salesian Old Boys' Association, and very many of the Old Boys remember him with affection and grateful appreciation for the interest he took in all their activities."

Outside the classroom Fr. Jim devoted a great deal of time and energy to sports and games. He was a keen sportsman himself. There was nothing he liked better than to play a round of golf with a group of friends. He had a passion for football, and by all accounts was a daunting opponent to play against. Nothing brought him greater delight than a Manchester United victory!

On his retirement from teaching Fr. Jim spent a number of months first in the Cowley parish and then in Bootle. Although he enjoyed the work and gave himself wholeheartedly to his new parish ministry, Battersea was Fr. Jim's first love, and he was more than happy to return to the Surrey House community in 1987, where he continued helping out with Sunday Masses in several of the local parishes.

His life-long devotion to Our Blessed Lady soon provided him with a new apostolate. Increasingly, he took on the work of chaplain with groups of people travelling on pilgrimage to marian shrines in Lourdes, Fatima and Medjugorje. And on more than one occasion he made a long journey to the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. The letters received since his death, bear witness to the great work Fr. Jim did caring for both the spiritual and material needs of the pilgrims he accompanied. When he was not away on pilgrimage Fr. Jim devoted a lot of his time to helping the Little Way Association, a Catholic charity that does much valuable work promoting and giving financial assistance to missionary activity in different parts of the world.

Although he spent all his life as a Salesian in England, Fr. Jim always remained a Belfastman at heart and he was very deeply distressed when the Troubles broke out in the North of Ireland in 1969, as the action in Belfast was literally on the doorstep of his home. It is sad that he did not live to see the establishment of a more lasting and just peace settlement.

Speaking of Abraham and those who journeyed with him to a new land, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews comments on the deeper significance of their search: "If they had meant the country they came from, they would have had the opportunity to return to it; but in fact they were longing for a better homeland, their heavenly homeland." We believe that Fr. Jim is now enjoying the peace and happiness of paradise, our heavenly homeland. May his prayers and the prayers of Mary and all the saints strengthen and support us on our pilgrim way.

Francis Preston, S.D.B.
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DATA FOR THE NECROLOGY:

Fr. James Bernard Barrett, born 3rd January, 1920, died Battersea, London, 18th October, 1996, in the 57th year of profession and the 47th year of his priesthood.