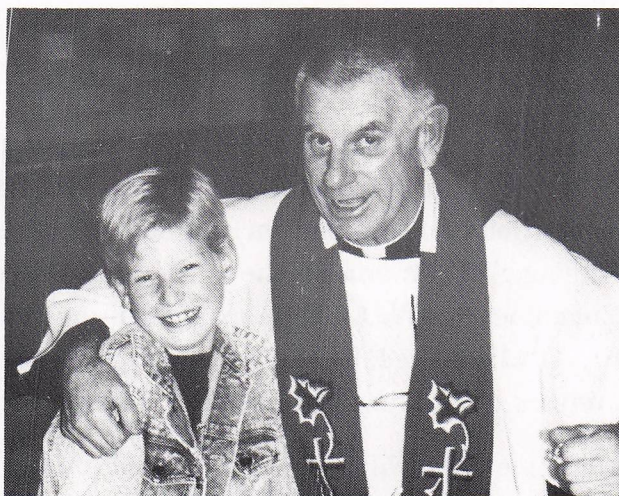

St. John Bosco Presbytery
50 Waratah Road
Engadine NSW 2233
Australia



FATHER KEVIN JAMES O'MARA SDB
(1927 - 1989)

".... given an opportunity to open my mouth and speak without fear and give out the mystery of the gospel of which I am an ambassador..."

(Eph: 6.19)

"....and in my speeches and sermons that I gave, there was none of the arguments that belong to philosophy; only a demonstration of the power of the Spirit. And I did this so that your faith should not depend on human Philosophy, but on the power of God."

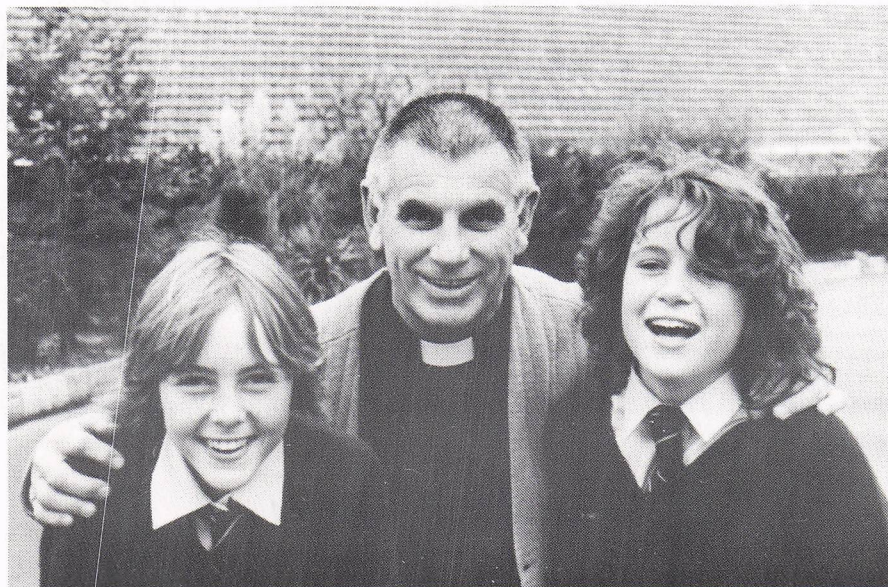
(1Cor: 2.4)

FATHER KEVIN JAMES O'MARA SDB

On Saturday 9 December 1989 Fr. Kevin James O'Mara concelebrated at Mass at the ordination of one of our parishioners, Fr. Greg Hughes SVD, in our Shrine of St. John Bosco, Engadine, N.S.W. At 4.30p.m. of that same day Fr. O'Mara died in the surgery, within ten minutes of walking in to see the doctor.

After a lifetime of teaching, Fr. O'Mara had to have both hips replaced, and he was appointed to his first parish in January 1989. He arrived here in May, and, by the time he went to have his second hip replaced in October, he had endeared himself to young and old. He returned to us briefly at the end of November after a successful operation, but ultimately his heart gave out and he passed to his reward.

Kevin O'Mara, the youngest of the four sons of Patrick and Vida O'Mara, was born at Brunswick on 19 April 1927, and is survived by his brother Tony. Amongst his earliest influences was Sr. Mary Josephine in the Parish Primary School whom he always



DATES OF NECROLOGY

Born: 19 April 1927

Professed: 31 January 1947

Ordained: 22 July 1956

Died: 9 December 1989

The Church and the Salesian Society can ill afford to lose men of the calibre of Fr. O'Mara. The witness of the last few months of his life left a lasting impression in various ways but especially:

- i) by his dedication to the apostolate in spite of his physical handicaps, and
- ii) by his resignation to God's will

We are sure that this has helped many to rethink their relationship to God, their own dedication to their duties and their acceptance of all that come their way.

Fr. Ayers, a fellow novice of Fr. O'Mara, sums up the passing of this colourful character from our midst by quoting W.B. Yeats and applying it to him:

*“Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
it's with O'Mara in the grave.”*

Finally, we ask you to spare a prayer for this community that Fr. O'Mara's example in the parish may entice some other young men and women to follow his footsteps into the religious life, with the same zest and enthusiasm that remains our lasting experience of Fr. K. O'Mara.

MAY HE REST IN PEACE

John R. Briffa, Rector and Community

Fr. Julian Fox, provincial, preached the homily at Glenorchy (Tasmania), Engadine (N.S.W.) and at Sunbury (Victoria), drawing a picture of Fr. O'Mara, the child, the sage and the clown.

“The child” – his childlikeness was his most lovable characteristic.

“The sage” – the sage who could offer advice and keep a secret, the sage who was sought out as a confessor and who was given many responsible tasks in the province: teacher, deputy principal, principal, religious co-ordinator, prefect, rector, and ultimately parish assistant.

“The clown” – who, like Don Bosco, could use any means however mundane to draw people to himself.



He could be stern with the wayward but in such a way that they bore no grudge and still remained friendly with him. He is one of the few Prefects of Studies who could berate a lad most severely for some misdemeanour and at the end of it the same boy could be seen kneeling down by Father's desk in this office making his confession. He was a good mixer, with a cheerful disposition and an infectious laugh, and was equally at home with boys and girls, men and women, young and old.

Fr. O'Mara's unexpected death left many people stunned in many States of the Commonwealth. Requiem masses saw churches in places of his previous appointments filled to capacity, both in Glenorchy Tasmania and in Ferntree Gully Victoria. The Church at Engadine (where he had made such an impression after only six months) was also full to overflowing for his Requiem Mass.

The body was transferred by air to Melbourne for an evening mass in his home parish of Fawkner. The funeral mass and interment took place in Sunbury; again in a packed Chapel. At Sunbury Fr. O'Mara had started his religious life and this is where he was buried with the other Salesians who had predeceased him. A large contingent of pupils came from Ferntree Fully and across the water from Tasmania to pay their last respects at Sunbury, together with family, friends and representatives from the parish in Engadine.

He studied theology in the Salesian studentate of Aptos California U.S.A. and returned to Melbourne for his ordination on 22 July, 1956. In Aptos he was the life and soul of the students. Talented and versatile, he would willingly type essays for other students, darn socks, iron shirts, look after the bees, make honey, look after the Church and cook meals in an emergency. Even after 38 years he was fondly remembered by the Salesians and Jesuits in the U.S.A. who had been his contemporaries in the years leading to his ordination.

Father Kevin was very attached to his family. On his father's side he had Irish ancestry which may have accounted for his love for life and for people - wild, woolly, outrageous and affectionate. On his mother's side he had a German ancestry accounting for his orderliness, obsessive neatness, cleanliness and methodical preparation even for the smallest occasion.

Due largely to lack of personnel in the province, Father O'Mara was not able to pursue the academic qualifications of which he would certainly have been capable. He was already fifty years of age before he could be released to study for a Masters Degree in Religious Education at Fordham University, New York.

One of his great characteristics was that once he got his teeth into a problem, like a good cattle dog he would not let go till he achieved the result that he desired. This tenacity came to the fore, when he was Rector at Ferntree Gully, in his dealings with educational authorities for the betterment of school facilities when the school was still in its embryonic stage.

He was a great letter writer, never forgetting his pupils' birthdays. As a teacher, Fr. O'Mara had the ability to enthuse his students, to love them and to make himself loved and respected by them in return.

held in high regard. Another experience that had a profound effect on Kevin was the death of his brother in action in the war in North Africa. His secondary education was at the Christian Brothers College in North Melbourne. He excelled in public speaking and won several competitions in this field.

His early Salesian influence was in the newly-opened Salesian House (Oratory) in Brunswick, where he had contact with great men of the Province like Fr. Joseph Ciantar, Fr. John Cerruti and Fr. John Biloni, and by the age of 14 he was already speaking of becoming a Salesian. His friends soon recognised his special penchant for those who were in trouble. Visits to the Salesian College in Sunbury gave him further contact with various aspects of Salesian life. This was the home of the aspirantate and the Novitiate and it was also a good place for a holiday. Prospective aspirants could even help with the harvest during school holidays, a great novelty for a young lad coming from the inner suburbs of a large city.

He went to Sunbury for a year of aspirantate and then entered the Novitiate. During his early training Kevin always remained his natural self. He was able to speak frankly and liked startling people with his unorthodox expressions. In fact, during the period of formation in the novitiate and philosophy some of his superiors found it hard to accept and manage his exuberant spirit. He delighted in unorthodox speech, haircuts and footwear. Brother O'Mara blossomed in his tirocinium where he found scope to carry out diverse apostolates as well as his duties as a full time teacher and assistant; he excelled in sport and on the stage, devising his own plays and acting in them.
