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Father Adrian Papworth SDB
(1920-1994)

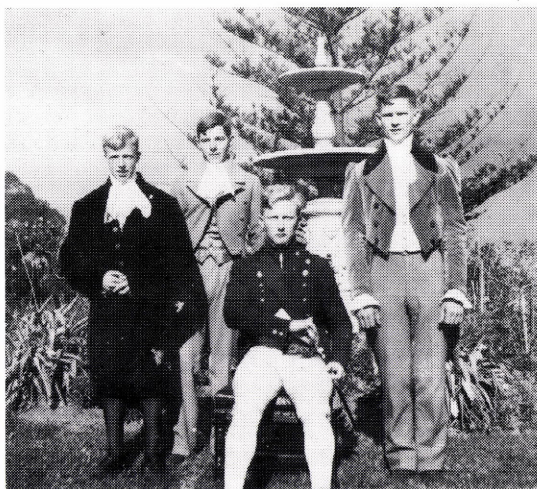
BOYS' TOWN 35A WARATAH ROAD, ENGADINE, NSW, 2233

Father Adrian Papworth SDB collapsed and died at John Paul Village, Heathcote, NSW, on 19 March 1994, just as he was preparing to concelebrate Mass with an assistant Parish Priest and some of the elderly residents of the Village. Born in Yarrawonga, Victoria, on 29 February 1920, his life's journey of 74 years had followed a most interesting course and along the way he was held in warm affection by those with whom he came in contact - young people and adults alike.

At the funeral Mass, before his burial in the Salesian Cemetery at "Rupertswood" Sunbury, the warmth and esteem were evident in the special introduction to the Liturgy. Young men from Boys' Town placed three symbols on the coffin. First, there was Fr Papworth's characteristic straw hat which represented the GOOD MAN - the honest hard worker. Secondly, father's Breviary was brought up and placed on the coffin to symbolise the GOOD PRIEST and his generous priestly ministry over many years. The third item was Fr Adrian's well-fingered copy of the Salesian Constitutions which symbolised the loyal and faithful SALESIAN. In his simple down-to-earth way of life he had always been regarded as a faithful stalwart, yet cheerful 'mate', by his confreres and something of a prophetic man of God by those whom he served in his ministry.

Father Adrian Papworth was the youngest of seven children (five boys and two girls) born to John and Mary Papworth. Soon after his birth, his mother, who had suffered from complications related to a weak heart condition, died at the age of 42 years. Close family friends in Yarrawonga took care of Adrian in his early years and he attended school at the local convent school where he was educated by the Sisters of Mercy. For his secondary schooling Adrian went to St Vincent's Orphanage in South Melbourne and spent his teenage years there in the care of the Christian Brothers. During his secondary schooling Adrian's talent for music flourished and he enjoyed success in a range of youthful activities. He was an able student and happy in his involvement in sport, especially wrestling, as family-held trophies attest.

It was during these years (the early 1930s) that Salesian



Theatricals - Sunbury - 1938

priests regularly visited St Vincent's to say Mass for the brothers and boys there. Adrian came to know the visiting priests and became attracted to the Salesians. After visiting "Rupertswood" he gradually formed his response to a 'call' he felt was drawing him to join the Salesians. Having completed his secondary education at St Vincent's he joined the community at "Rupertswood" in 1937 as an aspirant. After some time he was sent off to England to complete his preparation and to enter the Salesian Novitiate. He made his First



Student in Italy - late 1940s

Profession in England on 31 August 1940 and undertook his philosophical studies before returning to Australia. Fr Adrian spoke very little of those years in England, and we can only guess that it was a difficult time during that period when Europe was in turmoil with the outbreak of war. The trip back to Australia in late 1943 would have appealed to his sense of adventure as he travelled on a ship in a convoy that zig-zagged across the Atlantic in the shadow of a protective naval fleet and eventually left United States' waters on its own via the Panama Canal and the South Pacific to berth in distant peaceful Sydney.

Early in January 1944 the then Br Adrian was asked to join the pioneer Salesian Community of one brother and four clerics together with the founding Rector, Fr John Biloni, who were going to Boys' Town Brooklyn Park in South Australia to take up a new work at the request of the Archbishop of Adelaide. For three years Br Adrian taught in the school all day, took care of a dormitory during the night, looked after many domestic aspects of life at Boys' Town and was always a cheery corner stone of support for the enthusiastic young band of pioneer Salesians.

In his teaching Br Adrian specialised in music. There were about seventy boys at Boys' Town at the time and almost every one of them was taught to play a musical instrument of one kind or another. Br Adrian was extremely patient with his 'students', given his own known musical talent. One memorable occasion when Br Adrian and a couple of his 'musicians' were thumping out a martial tune, as Br Kevin O'Leary's gymnastic squad performed for the Archbishop, the Rector dashed up onto the stage and stopped the musicians as the Archbishop could stand no more! As another of the young Salesians who was present later remarked, quoting an encouraging saying of Fr Fedrigotti

(the first Provincial in Australia), “We must listen with our hearts, not with our ears”.

As part of his domestic responsibilities, Br Adrian was in charge of the laundry and he conducted darning sessions once each week. With expertise, learned no doubt during his days at St Vincent's, Br Adrian had the boys sitting in a circle in the courtyard darning as he organised the wool, the needles, the spools - and patiently helped the boys to attend to their task. (He also had to teach his fellow clerics a trick or two to help them with their darning!)

In 1946 tragedy struck this community. Fr John Biloni, accompanied by Br Papworth and three of the boys, travelled to Melbourne for the ordination to the priesthood of Fathers Alan McDonald, Terence Jennings and Francis Drohan. On the return journey their vehicle overturned near Ballarat. Fr John later died in the Ballarat hospital. Br Adrian, bruised and shaken, had to take over and did so admirably in his typical calm and competent fashion.

After his years of tirocinium at Brooklyn Park, Br Adrian returned to “Rupertswood” in Victoria to begin his theological studies. At Easter time in 1947 the theology students and the aspirants moved to Oakleigh where a new Aspirantate was founded. As a theology student, Adrian fulfilled his duties as an assistant caring for the aspirants by day and attended his theology classes in the evening. Towards the end of that year word came from the motherhouse in Italy that theology students were to be sent to the Crocetta in Turin. So the theology students set off from Australia to travel to England by ship and then by train to Turin.



With family at Golden Jubilee of Profession - Engadine 1990

During his years in Italy, 'Don Adriano' enjoyed the esteem of his fellow students and the professors at the theologate. His colourful and eventful life experience up to this point and his musical talent enabled him to take his place easily in the context of student life and to contribute a spark of liveliness in his own unique way. For example, he soon found that helping the "provveditore" in the theologate produced benefits that he could share with his fellow Australian students, especially when they were off with other English speaking students for a walk in the hills. On occasions, when out on an extended excursion in the Alps during holiday time, 'Don Adriano' proved to be quite a mountaineer. He distinguished himself by his spirit of adventure, his courage and his sheer physical strength. On one occasion when another walker had lost his footing and gone careering down into a dangerous icy ravine, 'Don Adriano' took action that saved a life, although the others were petrified at what had happened.

On 2 July 1950, after a half-hour walk to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Adrian Papworth presented himself, along with the other members of his year, for Ordination to the priesthood by the Cardinal Archbishop of Turin. The walk back to the Crocetta was a joyful one as he savoured this great moment and took its grace into his being. As one of the priests ordained with him said, when asked to comment on his life, "Adrian was always cheerful, humble, prayerful and priestly". The joy and grace of the moment of Ordination was alive in him during his priestly life.

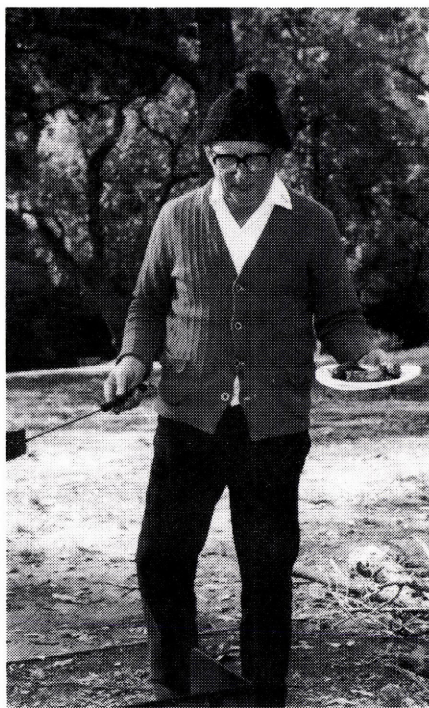
Quite soon after this great day Fr Papworth, together with Fr Wallace Cornell, set sail from Genoa to return to Australia. On arrival in Australia, family and Salesian friends were at the wharf to welcome back the newly ordained priests and continue the celebrations.

Having established his competence at St John's Boys' Town in South Australia during his tirocinium, Fr Adrian's first appointment as a young priest was to the developing Boys' Town in Glenorchy, Tasmania. There he worked with his characteristic patience among the boys sent out from England in the immediate post-war years. In 1955 Fr Adrian was appointed bursar at Boys' Town Engadine, and for five years worked as the right-hand man of Fr Ciantar who was by this time a well-known personality in Sydney as he sought assistance for Boys' Town in all arenas of life. In January 1960, Fr Papworth was appointed Rector of the community at Glenorchy. Being familiar with this centre and the people associated with it, he was quickly into his stride and did much to enrich the community life of Savio College. (Boys' Town had been re-named Savio College as the school expanded to take in day students).

During his period of rectorship at Glenorchy, Fr Papworth purchased a separate allotment of property and established Savio Primary School, and he also



Birthday celebrations at Engadine



Master of the BBQ

searched the east coast of Tasmania for a suitable site for a camp. In this exercise he came to know nearly every property owner between Hobart and Swansea. He eventually settled on an old historical building, Schouten House, located on a few acres by the golf course just south of Swansea. The camp groups developed a great affection for Schouten House and the good times shared there with the Salesians. Fr Adrian quietly delighted in these simple achievements and continued to cultivate the spirit of adventure in the young people of the greater Savio College Community.

After completing his term as Rector in Glenorchy Fr Papworth was appointed parish priest at Brooklyn Park. This was a 'homecoming' in a way, as he had remained 'connected' to this centre since the days of his tirocinium, served in St John's Boys' Town in Brooklyn Park. While the Archbishop had occasion to remark on his tardiness in completing documentation to be returned to the Church Office he had the greatest respect for Fr Adrian's pastoral judgement and assessment of situations and people, finding him to be consistently reliable. Through his dry laconic manner he endeared himself to the people of the parish and was held in high esteem, both by the elderly and the youngsters.

After eight years as parish priest, Fr Papworth was appointed Vice Rector in the theologate at Oakleigh. Though not a systems person or an administrator in the sense of ordering the world around him, he was most regular in community and in his own inimitable way he was able to quietly challenge people who seemed to be drifting from regular community life. It was this gift and his very presence in the formation community that underlined his role as one very well able to share an insight concerning the readiness of a candidate for profession or for advancing to orders. Fr Adrian's presence and opinion were very much appreciated by the rector of the theologate and by others charged with responsibility in the formation of young Salesians.

From 1975 to 1984 Fr Adrian was (in football parlance) a utility player moving around the Province filling in where important positions became vacant. He served as Parish Priest of Yorketown in South Australia for a short period and was bursar in a number of communities including Boys' Town Engadine, the theologate at Oakleigh, Salesian College Chadstone and Don Bosco Youth Centre in Brunswick.

In 1984 the Salesians were asked to take responsibility for the Parish of Victoria Park in Western Australia and Fr Adrian was called on to be the first Salesian Parish Priest there. The people warmed to him quickly and he was highly regarded by the parishioners. Fr Adrian served in this role until Easter in 1988 when he was again appointed to Boys' Town Engadine.

By this stage Fr Adrian's health was beginning to fail. Though he was always in very good spirits, he had developed a rather serious heart condition and his arthritis troubled him considerably. While fulfilling a role as assistant bursar and 'hospitality master', he established rapport with many of the boys and had them work with him on a one-to-one basis as he tended his beloved vegetable garden and compost bins. The boys had a great affection for him and enjoyed his witty, earthy humour. It seems that his own early life experience enabled him to establish a level of understanding with these boys in a way that few others could. The impact of his presence and the influence he had on the lives of these young men were revealed most clearly after his death. The whole of Boys' Town grieved at the sudden absence of "Pappy" and special care had to be taken to assist the boys, some of whom have still to deal with bereavements and losses in their own lives.

In all the communities in which Fr Adrian served he was a significant member; not by his authority or learning or by his organisational expertise, but just simply by his presence. In a simple unique way he was a prophetic figure in that he had a great sense of the presence and providence of God and he shared this readily with others. He was renowned for his sayings, his witty quips, his repartee at table and his disarming sense of timing as illustrated in the way he

would ask the question, "And where will you be next year, Father?"

Fr Adrian Papworth will be remembered for his rich and warm humanity and the humble earthy way he was always able to give his patient attention to marginalised, needy people and at the same time stand tall in the presence of dignitaries. As one of his confreres, who had been a fellow student as a young Salesian in formation, summed him up: "He was genuine; people knew the real person he was and the Fr Adrian whom everyone knew was always cheerful, willing, prayerful and priestly".

The Boys' Town Community



Silver Jubilee of Priesthood - Oakleigh - 1975

Father Adrian Papworth

BORN: 29 February 1920
PROFESSED: 31 August 1940
ORDAINED: 2 July 1950
DIED: 19 March 1994