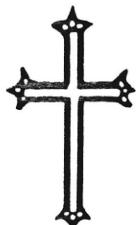




Salesians of St. John Bosco



Salesian House,
Surrey Lane,
Battersea,
London SW11 3PB

April 1988

Dear Confrères and Friends,

About 5.30 a.m. on Palm Sunday, 27th March, 1988

FATHER RUDOLPH JOSEPH JOHN PERLA, S.D.B.

died in Guy's Hospital, London. He had been suffering from an increasingly deteriorating heart condition for a few years and the possibility of a heart-transplant operation was being considered up to a few days before he died.

Rudolph was born on the 16th March, 1924, in Blackfriars, Southwark and baptised in St. George's Cathedral, Southwark. He attended St. Anne's Primary School, Vauxhall and then started his secondary education at St. Michael's, Bermondsey, before transferring after one year to the Salesian College, Battersea in 1937. Rudolph stayed with the school when it was evacuated to Oxford and he and another Battersea boy lodged with a family living near the school. Rudolph then attended Oxford University and obtained a science degree. During his time at Salesian College and the University, Rudolph had made every effort to attend Mass daily and his thoughts now turned towards the possibility of becoming a priest. He set about his decision-making in a very methodical way by writing to Religious Congregations and Diocesan Seminaries in order to acquaint himself with their ideals and way of life. Eventually he decided to apply for admission to the Salesians and, his application being accepted, he went to the novitiate at Beckford in 1947 and he made his first profession on the 8th September, 1948.

Rudolph was then asked to go to the Salesian House of Studies in Turin in order to study Philosophy and obtain his Licentiate in Philosophy. He then returned to England for three years practical experience, then back to Turin in order to study for his Licentiate in Theology. He was ordained as a priest on the 1st July, 1958, in the Basilica of Mary, Help of Christians in Turin. Rudolph's seven years spent near the places which witnessed the early history of the Congregation fired his enthusiasm for the study and appreciation of Don Bosco and all things Salesian.

On returning to England, Rudolph taught at Shrigley and Chertsey. He was a very good and thorough teacher as well as being particularly interested in classical music, chess, tennis, and cricket – interests which he shared with the boys. Rudolph was headmaster at Shrigley for three years and Rector at Bolton for three years before finally going to Battersea as assistant priest on the parish. This apostolic work appealed to him and he was particularly pleased to visit and care for the needs of the sick and the elderly in the parish.

During this time he was asked by Archbishop Michael Bowen to take on the role of Area Vicar for Religious and – as the Archbishop wrote on hearing of his death – "During the years he spent working for the Religious Sisters of the diocese, we were all indebted to him for the role he played, and I think the Sisters will particularly remember his great kindness, understanding and patience. I am sure he is well supported by their prayers now, and I shall say Mass for him, keeping him in my prayers too. I am grateful to the Salesians for giving us such a fine priest. Please pass on my sympathy and appreciation to all the Salesian Family, and to Father Perla's own friends and family."

Rudolph's health gave cause for concern during the last few years and he had to give up his work for the Sisters and eventually his work for the parish. When the Presentation Sisters in Guernsey asked Father Provincial if he could send them a chaplain, he thought that such an appointment might be suitable for Rudolph and that the Guernsey climate might help his heart condition. Rudolph was very happy there during his short stay with the Sisters but he had to be admitted to hospital after a few months and eventually he was flown back to London under medical supervision and immediately admitted to Guy's hospital. His two sisters, Marie and Adelina, who live in London, were able to visit him daily and the Battersea confrères were regular visitors. Rudolph received the Last Sacraments and said the Rosary with his sisters a few hours before he died.

We thank God for Rudolph's life and earnestly recommend his soul to the charity of your prayers.

Yours sincerely in Don Bosco,
Bernard Higgins, S.D.B. (Rector)

Date for Necrology: Father Rudolph Perla born on the 16th March, 1924, in Southwark, London. Died in London on the 27th March, 1988, at the age of 64 years after 39 years of Religious profession and 29 years of priesthood.

R.I.P.