

FATHER FRANCIS JOSEPH RODGERS. S. D. B.

It was at the Salesian School, Blaisdon, Glos, that Fr. Francis breathed his last on Christmas Eve 1959, and it may be said that the house was privileged to be the witness of this young priest's going to God. Young he was, for he was born at Salford on the 7th March 1920 and so he was only thirty-nine years old at the time of his death. His mother is the sister of another well-known member of the province – Fr. Payne, who is himself ill in hospital at the moment. To him and to his sister and other relatives our prayerful sympathy goes out. Frank entered the novitiate, then at Beckford, in 1939. He made his first profession the following year, and was perpetually professed at Shrigley in 1946. His Salesian career was divided between Shrigley and Blaisdon. It was at Shrigley that, from 1940 onwards, he did his philosophical studies and his practical triennium. There too, he did the first year of his theological course. In 1947 he transferred to Blaisdon and it was there that he was ordained in 1950. A year previous to that, he had gained the musical qualification of L. R. A. M. The first year after his ordination he spent at Beckford, but for the rest of his life he remained at Blaisdon.

The story of his heroic and cheerful struggle against illness deserves surely to be numbered among the epics of the province. Several times during the past few years he came perilously close to death and was, indeed, given up by the doctors who attended him in hospital and at Blaisdon. Prayers would be said for him and, it seemed miraculously, more than once, he suddenly recovered and got back to work once more. Not once during all his heavy trials did his faith and cheerfulness desert him. He was the model of resignation and, whenever the chance came, he was back to work with enthusiasm and a smile. Told finally that he had but two or three months to live, he worked away happily to the end, carrying out all his ordinary duties and not a few "extras", edifying confreres, parishoners and boys with his courage and regularity.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception drew near and he told Fr. Provincial that it was his hope and prayer that Our Lady would call for him as near the feast as possible. He made a grand final effort with the preparation of the concert for the boys for the feast. He saw it through with characteristic energy and zeal, and then took to bed to await the end. It came on Christmas Eve and we can believe that one who was always so happy and near to God in life was very well fitted to spend Christmas in heaven. He was laid to rest in the lovely little cemetery at Beckford

Where Frank Rodgers was, there was happiness and harmony. He is surely enjoying it now in Heaven. It is our christian duty still to remember him in our prayers, whilst we also ask him to pray for – and remember this Province.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE.