



Rev. George M. Salbeck, S.D.B.

Corpus Christi Church

62 Santa Rosa Avenue
San Francisco, California 94112

Dear Confreres:

It is with deep regret that I inform you of the death of Father George M. Salbeck, Pastor emeritus of this parish. He passed away on June 17, 1971 at St. Mary's Hospital in this city.

For the past eleven years, Father George was in a precarious state of health. Yet, despite the continual bouts of illness that sent him to the hospital for weeks at a time, he continued carrying out his duties as a zealous pastor. Although he was very often in pain no words of complaint escaped his lips. In fact those who lived with him felt that he had made his own, the saying of St. Paul: "Gladly do I accept physical suffering in order to complete what is lacking in Christ's sufferings on behalf of his body, which is the Church."

Father George was born on April 23, 1902 at Schwandord, Bavaria, Germany. His parents Anthony Salbeck and Theres Frey, were Catholic to the deep heart's core. He was baptized on the following day, April 24, and named George because he was born on that saint's feastday. Bereft of his father in his youth, he went to work after he completed elementary school. He found employment as a bookbinder at the famous publishing house of Pustet & Co. in nearby Regensburg. At this time he came in contact with the Salesians and felt attracted to their way of life. So he decided to become a priest under the banner of Don Bosco. Since he was now 19 years of age, he was accepted as a Son of Mary at Fulpmes, Innsbruck, Tyrol, Austria. After he had completed his classical studies, he was admitted to the novitiate at Endsdorf, Bavaria in 1926. He made his first profession on August 15, 1927. Later that year, he

and 3 companions came to California to form the first class of students of philosophy in this province, which was canonically erected in 1926. His first assignment as a cleric was to our school in Watsonville, as assistant, teacher and infirmarian. In caring for the sick he showed that sense of duty and leadership which were to characterize the rest of his Salesian life. He took a fatherly interest in the orphans and homeless boys who formed the majority of the students at that school. On August 16, 1930, he took his perpetual vows at Watsonville. The following year he began to study theology. One year of his theological studies was spent in Santa Tecla, El Salvador, C.A. This gave him the opportunity to study Spanish which enabled him later to perform his pastoral work with greater efficiency among Mexican-Americans. On his return to U.S.A., he completed his theological studies at Watsonville. He was ordained to the priesthood at Santa Clara, Calif. on June 21, 1935. His first assignment as a priest was assistant and teacher of the aspirants at Richmond. After one year he was appointed assistant pastor at SS. Peter and Paul's Church, San Francisco. Since his work now was among Italian emigrants and their children, he felt the need of becoming fluent in the Italian language. For the next four years, he labored zealously among the young people of the parish.

The superiors now thought him mature and ready for greater responsibility, so he was assigned to the pastorship of St. Patrick's in Los Angeles. Here he found ample scope for his zeal among the poor and underprivileged, for the parishioners were mostly Black and Mexican-Americans. But once again the superiors felt the need of using his talent of leadership, so he was appointed director of St. Francis School, Watsonville. Back among boys who were morally and economically poor, he strove to improve the religious formation and the living conditions of this less fortunate sector of youth. It was while he was director of this school that he had his first serious attack of illness. So at the expiration of his term of office, he was assigned once more to parish work. He became assistant pastor of this parish for four years. When he was physically built up he was called by obedience to return to Watsonville as director. During his tenure of office, he helped to improve the scholastic standing of the high school department.

In 1954 the Archdiocese of Los Angeles asked the Salesians to start a new parish

in Bellflower. Father George was called upon to blaze the trail and become the first pastor of St. Dominic Savio parish. The greatest tribute to his leadership and apostolic zeal was the way he organized this new parish. He built a church and parochial school, and invited the Salesian Sisters to run the school. Thus, the new parish became a truly Salesian one.

Around this time the neighboring school of St. John Bosco was beginning to have growing pains, so Father George was called upon to direct and stabilize the new development. In the third year of office he was stricken with ulcers. He had to have emergency surgery, followed by a slow convalescence. The doctors ordered that he should have a complete year of rest. But Father George always showed remarkable resilience when it came to illness. In a short time, he had recuperated and was ready for another assignment of responsibility. He was then appointed pastor of this church. For 10 years he fulfilled his task with true apostolic zeal and dedication, despite the fact that he had to undergo 3 major operations. Last year he felt it was time for a younger man to take over the onerous task of pastor. He willingly stepped down and accepted a minor role of assistant pastor. Now death has taken him from us, but his memory will live on in the hearts of the countless souls he ministered to.

It would be hard to do justice to the sterling character of this good confrere. Suffice it to write that he was a Salesian of deep spiritual convictions, and an example in living up to the rule. He recited his breviary and his rosary in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Skilled with his hands, he spent any time left over from his pastoral duties in maintaining and repairing anything that needed fixing in the church, school and rectory. One of the most outstanding things in his life was his love of the liturgy, and he was considered the leading liturgist in this province. But among the thousands he worked for he will best be remembered for his kindness to the poor, the needy and the spiritually forlorn.

Remember him in your prayers. Pray also, that the work that he so ably initiated in this parish may continue to develop for the greater glory of God and the good of souls.

Yours in Christ,
Armand Oliveri
Pastor

