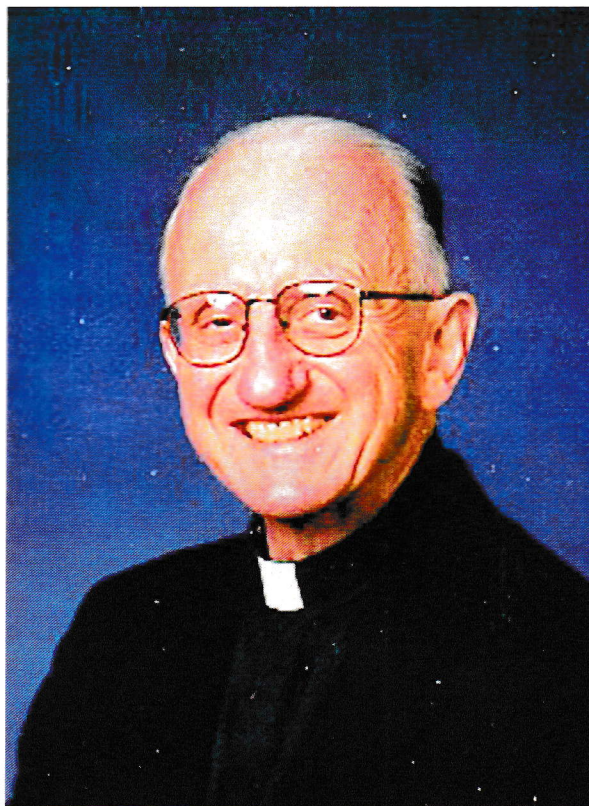


+2013 503298

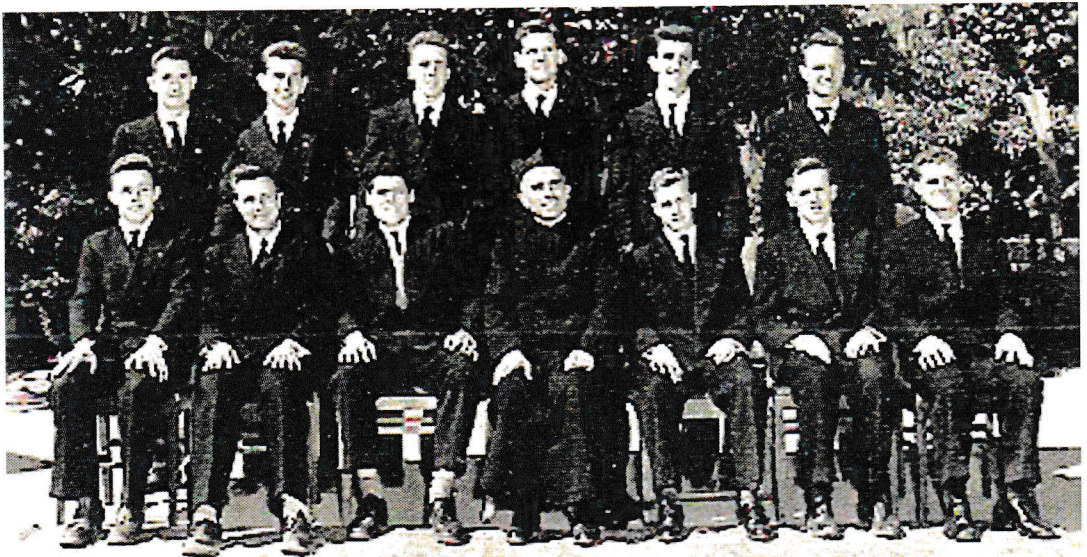


**Fr. William Schafer, SDB**

**October 25, 1931 – February 2, 2013**

## Mortuary Letter – Fr. William Schafer

Towards the end Matthew's gospel we hear the parable of the talents in which the master commends his faithful servant in these words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant... Come share your master's joy" (Matt. 25:21). This passage characterizes the life and ministry of Father William Schafer. Throughout his life he sought to minister God's loving care and concern to all whom he met, especially young people who were in need. His humble and serene temperament coupled to his friendly personality and sincerity won him the admiration and respect of everyone whom he met on his journey of life.



*Fr. Broccardo, center front, and William Schafer, top row, 2nd from right,  
at Richmond House of Studies, 1945.*

William Schafer was born in Berkeley, California, on October 25, 1931. His parents were immigrants from Germany who settled in the Bay Area. A month after his birth he was baptized at Sacred Heart Church in Oakland. Since he preferred not to speak about himself, little is known about his early years. The family lived in St. Jarlath's parish in Oakland, and it is very possible that William Schafer came to know about the Salesians through a mission preached at the parish by one of the Salesians in the Oakland Diocese. The house chronicle of the Salesian House of Studies in Richmond notes that there was a retreat given to sixty boys in June, 1945. It is also possible that William was part of that group who heard about Don Bosco and then decided to join the seminary program in nearby Richmond.



He entered the Salesian House of Studies at Richmond in September, 1945. After four years and towards the end of his senior year he applied for entrance to the novitiate. In his letter requesting admission into the novitiate program, William writes:

***For a very long time I have honestly been planning on becoming a Salesian if it be the will of God. Now that the time has come, I take this step unhesitatingly.***

The Director, Fr. Alfred Broccardo, and the house council approved his application. They noted that William was always ready to offer himself for whatever was needed in the community. He was an excellent student who was in very good health. They simply cautioned that he be circumspect in not taking on too many things at one time due to his enthusiasm. He began his novitiate year on September 7, 1949, in Newton, New Jersey.

As was the custom in those years, William Schafer did his first year of college while a novice in Newton. He was a very good student, and especially excelled in classes involving education and the Salesian preventive system. In August of 1950 William Schafer penned the following in his application for vows in the Salesian Congregation:

***It is my sincere conviction that I am called by God to the Salesian life, and with His help I will zealously strive and constantly work for these three ends which are the principal aims for my entering the Congregation:***

- 1) the Greater Glory of God;***
- 2) the Salvation of my soul;***
- 3) the work for youth.***

***May Mary Help of Christians guide and help me ever!***

In recommending him to first vows the house council in Newton, under the direction of Fr. Angelo Franco, noted that William Schafer was a good worker, an intelligent student, had good piety and good will. William made his first profession of vows on September 8, 1950, at Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey.

The post novitiate years were spent at Don Bosco College. Br. William took the regular program provided there and completed a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Philosophy. He also had minors in Latin and Natural Science. He graduated "Magna Cum Laude" in his class on June 20, 1953. In approving his renewal of vows the house council, composed of Fr. Eneas Tozzi, Director, and Frs. Stella, Mich and Justen, commented that Bill was an excellent student who was faithful, especially in his duties as the assistant to the brothers





*Brother William Schafer, Coach of the Watsonville Saints.*

Br. William Schafer spent three years in practical training. He was first assigned as an assistant and teacher to the school in Watsonville. He assisted in the dormitory for the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students as well as helping them in their studies and teaching mathematics and science to them. Br. William Schafer was also appointed moderator of the Blessed Sacrament Sodality that year, and he also coached the school's basketball team. Completing his first year, he was given the opportunity to attend summer school classes at the Dominican College in San Rafael and continued his study of science. He was then assigned to Richmond where he spent the next two years working with the high school seminarians. Once again he taught science subjects and helped with general assistance in the program.



At the end of the scholastic year, Br. William Schafer applied for perpetual vows in June, 1956. In his application to the house council he wrote:

*During the six years of my temporary profession, I have become thoroughly acquainted with the Salesian life and all it entails. I have tried to the best of my ability to practice the Salesian Constitutions and regulations. I am aware of my many shortcomings. ... It will be my earnest endeavor to overcome my defects and devote the best of which I am capable to the glory of God, the salvation of my soul, and the work of the Salesian congregation.*

In approving the request, Fr. Arthur Grisetti, the community Director, noted that the house council recognized that Br. William was in good health, had strong piety and was very intelligent. They cautioned him not to be too scrupulous in trying to do everything well. He made his perpetual profession on June 30, 1956, in Watsonville, California, in the presence of Fr. Alfred Cogliandro the provincial.

With the conclusion of three years of practical training and having made perpetual vows, Br. Schafer went on to the next step in his Salesian journey. He traveled to Turin, Italy, to begin studies for the priesthood at the Pontificio Ateneo Salesiano (Crocetta). During his first year abroad he studied Italian and was asked to take additional courses in philosophy to prepare for theological studies. From 1957 through 1961 he studied theology, and achieved a Licentiate Degree in Sacred Theology in June, 1961. His diligent work and persevering spirit helped him to achieve this advanced degree.



*Fr. William Schafer's Ordination day at the Crocetta.*

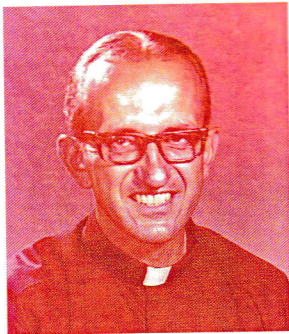
During his final year of theological studies, Br. William applied for ordination to the priesthood. Writing his application letter in Italian, he expressed the following sentiments:

*I am not worthy, but I hope that with the help of divine grace I can do what I can for God in the world. I do so freely, and I*

*recognize the difficulties and the sufferings of a priestly life. I place my hope in God. Even as the priesthood is a mission, I am content and privileged that Jesus has called me to work and suffer together with Him.*

On February 11, 1961, Cardinal Maurilius Fossati, Archbishop of Turin, ordained William Schafer to the priesthood in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. On the card commemorating this joyous event Fr. William chose these words—...*not ourselves, but Jesus Christ* (2 Cor. 4:5).

Returning to the United States in June of 1961, Fr. William Schafer celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at his home parish, St. Jarlath's Church in Oakland, California, on August 27<sup>th</sup>. He then was assigned to St. Francis School in Watsonville as the Prefect of Studies. In this office he guided the curriculum of the school and saw to it that the faculty members were on task with their various assignments and duties.



*Fr. William Schafer,  
Prefect of Studies  
at Don Bosco Tech.*

The following year, Fr. Schafer was assigned to Don Bosco Technical Institute in Rosemead, California. During his first year he taught chemistry and was the Dean of the junior class. The following year he was appointed Vice-principal of the school, a position which he would hold for the next five years. During these years Fr. William took it upon himself to discipline the students in a Salesian manner. He frequently reminded the student body of the school rules, and he was compassionate in applying disciplinary measures when rules were transgressed. He carried with him a clipboard in which he had the name of every student in the school. Whenever infractions occurred he was quick to note it next to the student's name. Meticulous in his approach to disciplining students, he had a list of symbols which coded what specific rule the student had violated. A student knew that he had been caught when Fr. William (Bill) would point his index finger at him, and motion him to come over for a "brief chat." This hook-like motion of the index finger quickly led to Fr. Bill's nickname on the campus, "The Hook." Unknown to the student body was the fact that Fr. Bill also noted positive points and attitudes of the students. He would frequently compliment and thank them for their good work. He always treated the students in a very fair, just and compassionate manner.

Changes in the administration of Salesian High School in Richmond, California, during the summer of 1968 resulted in Fr. William Schafer's move to that school as its Vice-Principal. He began his ministry there in September, 1968, and stayed for four years.



During those years he exercised various responsibilities: mathematics and science teacher, vice principal, and, for one year, principal of the all-boys high school. It was also during these four years that Fr. Bill attended summer sessions at Seattle University. His academic abilities as well as his persevering attitude helped him to earn a Master of Science Degree in Science from that university in 1971.

The beginning of the school year in September, 1972, saw Fr. William Schafer assigned as principal of Don Bosco Technical Institute. In addition he was called upon to be Dean of Student Affairs for the junior college division of the school which had been established during the 1970 school year. Together with Fr. John Malloy, the school's president, Fr. Bill was able to guide the school through those early years in which the high school program was integrated with the college program into a unique five-year process culminating in an Associate of Science Degree in the various technical areas.

Personnel developments in the province during the early part of 1979 and the appointment of a new provincial, Fr. Carmine Vairo, set the stage for Fr. William Schafer to be appointed as President of Don Bosco Technical Institute. For the next six years he directed the school's unique program through a very crucial time. A primary concern was funding, especially because Fr. William believed that the school had to provide a program open to as many students who qualified, including students from families who might not be able to afford the tuition. He strengthened the school's development office and initiated the first annual fundraising campaign. In addition he began personal relationships with various Catholic and non-Catholic foundations in the greater Los Angeles area whose primary concern was the education of the young and their well-being. His enthusiasm to help fund students whose families needed help knew no bounds. At an administrative council meeting called to discuss tuition increases for the 1983-1984 school year, Fr. William agonized over raising the tuition a mere 2%, about \$40 per year, for fear it might mean parents withdrawing their sons because of financial problems.

During his years as President, Fr. Schafer also guided the school's development into the computer age. He procured funding to have the school's computer lab upgraded and the courses in computer programming enhanced. In the spring of 1984 the Metro Section of the Los Angeles Times carried an article on the problems which the school was facing, especially with regard to funding and its image as a trade school. He was instrumental in helping the reporter discover the uniqueness of the school's program, and the benefit the school's technology programs were having to businesses in the Los Angeles basin. Due to Fr. Schafer's insights and optimistic spirit, the school was able to garner support from a variety of non-profit foundations in Los Angeles who recognized the value of its unique

program.

Perhaps the greatest benefit which Fr. Schafer's presidency gave to the school was the "human face" which he placed on it. With Fr. Bill as president, people were drawn to him because of his humble and unassuming manner. He had a very welcoming and supportive personality. In his speech and in his actions one could sense sincerity and commitment. Although it was difficult for him to approach people in asking for donations, Fr. Bill's commitment to the students and families in need helped him to overcome some of his reservations. He was honest and truthful with the faculty and staff as well as cooperative and supportive of the Board of Directors. However, Fr. Bill also needed his "time away" or "space" in order to think things through. When the school received the donation of a sail boat moored at the marina at Huntington Beach Harbor, Fr. Bill decided to keep it for a while before selling it. He used it as an office away from school where he might have the peace and quiet which he needed to think things through. Eventually the sail boat was sold and the money received made its way into the school's tuition assistance fund.



*Fr. Bill at the ISS Program at Berkeley.*

After 19 years of serving the community at Don Bosco Technical Institute, Fr. William Schafer was given the opportunity of a sabbatical year. The school's Board of Trustees organized a celebration to honor his many years of dedicated ministry to the administration, faculty and staff, and especially the students and their families. A special Mass was celebrated on Sunday, June 23, 1985, on the school campus followed by a brunch hosted by the school's Board of Trustees. Mr. Robert P. Strub, Chairman of the Board and also Chairman of the Santa Anita Corporation, honored Fr. Schafer by presenting him with a plaque thanking him for his dedicated commitment to following Don Bosco's call for the students and alumni to be "Good Citizens and Honest Christians."

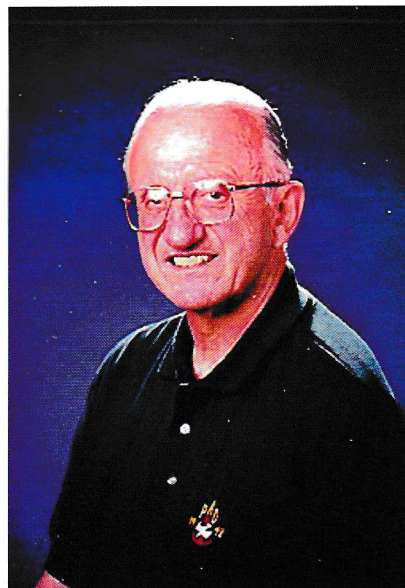
Fr. William Schafer spent his sabbatical year at the Institute of Salesian Studies in Berkeley, California. It was during this time that Fr. Bill began exploring various aspects of youth ministry which he always wanted to pursue. Given the opportunity and the time to expand his horizons, he



became involved in the juvenile correction system of Contra Costa County. He became a volunteer at the juvenile hall in Martinez, California. Each week he would visit the young people detained in the facility and helped to provide whatever support and help the staff needed. He came to see his Salesian ministry focused on ways to prevent young people from getting into trouble. In addition he became more and more interested in the youth clubs operated by the Salesians in the Bay Area. He frequently visited the club at Ss. Peter and Paul in San Francisco as well as the West Contra Costa County Salesian Boys and Girls Club in Richmond. Towards the end of his sabbatical year at Berkeley, Fr. Thomas Prendiville, the provincial, assigned Fr. Bill to the Salesian Boys and Girls Club in Los Angeles as chaplain. The following year he was appointed as Director of the Salesian community at Salesian High School in Los Angeles and maintained his duties at the club. Then in the summer of 1988, Fr. Bill was given the added responsibility of being the Executive Director of the Los Angeles Club, a position he maintained for the next three years.

Throughout his life Fr. Bill Schafer was hard working, dedicated, and committed to whatever God had planned for him. His strong devotion to Mary was evident in his willingness to follow God's will wherever it might lead. In the spring of 1991, God's will was revealed to Fr. Bill Schafer through a call from Fr. Egidio Vigano, Rector Major of the Salesians. Fr. Bill was asked to take on the duties and responsibilities of province leadership. He completed his ministry in the Boyle Heights area of Los Angeles, and he moved to San Francisco. In August, 1991, Fr. Bill Schafer became the provincial of the Salesians in the St. Andrew Province. On September 2, 1991, an installation ceremony was held at St. John Bosco High School in Bellflower. The Very Rev. Martin McPake, the Regional for the English speaking provinces, installed Fr. William Schafer as provincial during a prayer service in the school's chapel.

During his years as provincial, Fr. William Schafer took a personal interest in the mission work begun by his predecessors, Frs. Carmine Vairo and Tom Prendiville, in Sierra Leone, West Africa. According to Fr. Al Mengon, missionary to Sierra Leone from 1996 to 2006, under the direction of Fr. Bill Schafer, the Salesian work in the regions of Lungi and Freetown exploded. The Salesians expanded their ministry from schools in



*Fr. Bill ends his term as provincial and attends PAD 98.*

Lungi to a parish and school in Tintafor and consolidated their work with the “street children” in the capital, Freetown. Of note was the care that Fr. Bill had for the Salesian missionaries. He visited at least four times during his six years as provincial, and he worked to insure that the Salesians were in good health. On two occasions, when Fr. Ed Frizell was suffering from a severe case of malaria and when Br. Bill Regner broke his leg in a fall, he assigned both men to Southern California so that they might receive treatment and have a complete recovery. On one of his visits to the mission, Fr. Schafer noted that the Salesians were in need of a residence. Fr. Al Mengon relates how Fr. Bill Schafer demanded that a residence be built for the Salesians over the objections of some community members. Under the guidance of Fr. Dominic DeBlase, director of the Salesian community in Sierra Leone at the time, Fr. Bill was kept constantly informed of the needs of the Salesians. He insured that proper supplies were sent periodically in shipping containers with the assistance of Br. Mike Herbers. Even after ending his term as provincial, he always had a special place in his heart for the young and the families being served in Sierra Leone in our Salesian mission.

Another important project undertaken during the tenor of Fr. Bill’s duties as provincial was a “mission effectiveness survey.” Calling upon the expertise of a consultant and her company, Fr. Bill commissioned Bacigalupi & Associates to conduct an extensive survey of the province regarding the effectiveness of the Salesian mission in the various works. The survey was meant to facilitate an improved understanding of the “profiles” of different groups of Salesians and to understand generational issues to help plan for the future. The project was conducted over two years, and it focused on four main areas: community, resources, laity, and evangelization. Completed before the 1995 provincial chapter, the report helped to prepare for province planning in the light of the 24<sup>th</sup> General Chapter.

The Salesian presence in the United States began in 1897 with the first foundation in North Beach at the Church of Ss. Peter and Paul. In preparation for the centenary, Fr. Bill Schafer organized a preparatory committee headed by the pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul, Fr. David Purdy, in 1995 to begin the planning of various events, especially the grand celebration of the event calendared for the feast of St. John Bosco in 1997. He worked diligently with a committee of Salesians, cooperators, and Salesian Sisters to help coordinate the events scheduled to initiate the centenary celebration at Ss. Peter and Paul Church. In addition he worked with Fr. Timothy Ploch, provincial of the New Rochelle Province, to insure a year-long celebration which spanned both coasts of the country.

With less than two years left on his term as provincial, Fr. Bill Schafer attended the 24<sup>th</sup>



General Chapter in Rome during the spring of 1996. He was instrumental in the formation of the Inter-America Region during the chapter which separated all the English speaking provinces into a more geographical network. Afterwards in the fall of 1996 he attended the first meeting of the provincials of the “newly” formed region together with Fr. Pascual Chavez, the newly elected regional. It was during that initial meeting that Fr. Bill invited the group to hold the second meeting in the San Francisco province in the fall of 1997. Also during the General Chapter emphasis was placed on working with the laity and their formation. After the chapter, Fr. Bill diligently worked on setting up various programs to help with laity formation to ministry and leadership in the province. Finally, during his final year in office he worked at trying to establish “cluster” communities in which the Salesians would live together and work in various ministries in the local areas.



*Fr. Bill Schafer at the Hilton for fundraiser for the Boys' & Girls' Club.*

Completing his six year term as provincial, Fr. William Schafer was assigned as Executive Director of the Salesian Boys and Girls Club in Los Angeles. In 1995, as provincial, Fr. Bill Schafer had been instrumental in helping to acquire a building on Breed and Fourth Streets, just a block away from St. Mary's Church in Boyle Heights, which became the “Family Youth Center.” The building had been an old factory, and it was remodeled as a youth center for the parish. Upon taking over as Executive Director of the Salesian club, Fr. Bill integrated the “Family Youth Center” into the Salesian Boys and Girls Club. He began an extensive fund-raising campaign to modify the interior and erect a covered gymnasium for the benefit of the young people in the area. For almost three years he worked with the Board of Directors of the Club at raising funds for this project. In addition,

he continued to maintain the annual budget for the club. On July 31, 2000, the expanded Salesian Family Youth Center celebrated its grand opening. On hand were a number of ecclesiastical and civic dignitaries. The \$3 million renovation featured a wide variety of services including a computer room, a large learning and family resource area, a kitchen, a game room with pool tables, an arts and crafts center, offices for staff and volunteers, a fitness area and finally a large naturally-lit gymnasium. The commemorative program noted: “The opening of the elegant 18,000 square-foot building, designed in the new Mexican architectural style by Barrio Planners, is not merely a wonderful aesthetic addition to the community, but also serves a sacred functional purpose—creating an alternative to the streets for the multitude of young people who live nearby. “

Fr. William Schafer remained as Executive Director of the club until 2002. In Janu-



ary of that year he asked that someone younger and with more energy take on the duties of Executive Director. He had seen the renewal project through to its completion, and he wanted to insure that the club would have youthful leadership. He agreed at that time to take on the role of Development Director for the youth centers in Los Angeles. Having a very solid reputation with the various Board leaders and members of a number of Los Angeles foundations, both Catholic and private, Fr. Bill was able to garner funds each year to insure that the club programs would continue.



***Fr. William Schafer in the first row, last on the right, with the Salesian Staff of Don Bosco Tech in 1964.***

In the summer of 2010 nearing the age of 79, Fr. Bill Schafer asked to be assigned to Don Bosco Technical Institute in Rosemead. He believed that he had done as much as possible to help the Salesian Boys and Girls Club, and he wanted to devote the remainder



of his days to helping the financial situation at Don Bosco Tech. He quickly began his work at the Tech by contacting alumni and friends whom he knew would readily help in supporting various projects for financial assistance and program development. Each year he targeted wealthy alumni and asked for substantial contributions to their “alma mater.” In a note written to the provincial, Fr. Timothy Ploch, in June of 2012, Fr. Schafer writes the following:

***I'll see you at the Tech Board meeting. I was a bit instrumental in an alumnus giving a \$100,000 donation to the school. Mainly it was Our Lady's doing!***

Always sincere and humble in his approach, Fr. Bill reflected his devotion to Mary in his pastoral work. Like Don Bosco he always acknowledged her presence in the good being done to the young people whom he served.

In addition, as a member of the Bosco Tech community he continued his daily contact with young people. Each school day one could find Fr. Bill in Tech Hall having lunch with the students and visiting with them. He made himself available for tutoring students who were having difficulties in physics, chemistry or mathematics. His genial manner and friendly smile made the students feel welcome in his presence.

Towards the end of January, 2013, Fr. Bill contracted a severe case of influenza. Although advised to stay in bed, he decided to attend a day of recollection in the Southern California area sponsored by the Tech community. Afterwards he became sick and his condition steadily worsened. His doctor sent him to the San Gabriel Valley Hospital. He died two days later on February 2, 2013, from complications arising from a severe flu condition which affected his lungs. Fr. Bill was unconscious for several hours, and in the presence of his sister, his nephews, and Salesians from the community, God called Fr. Bill to heaven. Fr. Bill was 81 years of age.

In order to accommodate the numbers of people who wanted to pay tribute to Fr. Bill Schafer, a number of services were organized. On February 5<sup>th</sup>, a viewing and rosary service was held at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Boyle Heights. Many of the families grateful to Fr. Bill for the work of the Salesian Boys and Girls Club attended. Then another wake service with rosary was held on the evening of February 6<sup>th</sup> in the Fr. Felix Penna Chapel of Don Bosco Tech. A number of alumni and alumni parents attended this service. The next day, February 7<sup>th</sup>, students, alumni, faculty, family members, Salesian community members and friends gathered in Bosco Tech's hall to celebrate the Mass of Resurrection for Fr. Bill. Hundreds of alumni emailed the school expressing their condolences and shar-

ing their fond memories of their days on campus with Fr. Schafer. Interment took place the next day at the Salesian cemetery in Richmond, California.

Upon learning of his death, Fr. Ubaldino Andrade, a Salesian missionary to Sierra Leone from Venezuela and the Director of the Salesian community in Freetown, sent the following note which was shared at Fr. Bill Schafer's funeral:

*Personally I had the opportunity to live with Fr. Bill in Los Angeles. He was always very close and patient in the days when I was learning English. He looked after me and taught me each day something small but helpful, simple but important. In his presence we all became ill, sick with that disease that attacks all true sons of Don Bosco—LOVE FOR THE YOUTH, for the poor, for the needing (sic)...always with joy. Fr. Bill shared with us his work in the "boys and girls clubs." Thanks Fr. Bill for your presence among us, please remember us in your prayers, talk with Jesus about us...*

In a commemorative book celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Don Bosco Technical Institute, the authors, Richard Demeter and Br. Anthony Freitas, quote a letter written by Fr. Schafer for the special anniversary of the school:

*I was ordained in 1961 and have spent most of my priestly life at Bosco Tech. The years here have been the best of my life, made rich by contact with students, parents, teachers and alumni! I thank God for their having been part of my life. I will miss them, though they will always be in my prayers. I shall always take special pride in our alumni!*

Fr. William Schafer lived his life as a Salesian for the greater glory of God, the salvation of his soul, and commitment to the young whom God entrusted to his care. "Well done, my good and faithful servant...Come share your Master's joy" (Matt. 25:21).

Written by  
Fr. Nicholas Reina



## **Fr. William Schafer, SDB**

Born: Berkeley, California  
October 25, 1931

First Profession: Newton, New Jersey  
September 8, 1950

Ordained: Turin, Italy  
February 11, 1961

Died: San Gabriel, California  
February 2, 2013



***Salesians of Don Bosco***

San Francisco Province  
1100 Franklin Street  
San Francisco, California 94109