

FATHER JAMES SIMONETTI. S. D. B.

The death took place in hospital at Southampton on Tuesday, the 23rd May 1961, after a few days's illness, of Fr. Simonetti, of the Salesian Community at Melchet Court, Romsey, Hants.

The deceased priest, who was in his 82nd year, was born at Polignano, Italy on the 3rd April 1880. He entered the Salesian Congregation in 1897 and did his philosophical studies at Rome, being awarded the Doctorate of Philosophy at the Gregorian University there in 1901, immediately before coming to England. He came to England in 1901 and devoted the rest of his life to the Anglo-Irish Province of the Salesians, and was one of its outstanding members. His theological studies were done in this country and he was ordained priest by Bishop(later Archbishop) Amigo in St. George's Cathedral, Southwark, on the 24th of September 1905.

He was a man of exceptional piety and he was appointed Novice Master at Burwash in 1905, whilst still only a deacon, and he remained in this office for the next 53 years, until his retirement to Melchet Court in 1958. By this quite extraordinary span as Novice Master he set up a record which is probably unique in the history of the Church, at any rate in modern times. At a ceremony held at Burwash on the occasion of his retirement, he was the recipient of a specially-struck gold medal, conferred upon him by the Rector Major, Very Rev. Fr. Zigiotti. SDB, and with an illuminated certificate of recognition of his outstanding service to the Congregation and to the Church.

He saw the novitiate transferred from Burwash to Cowley, Oxford in 1921, to Beckford, Glos in 1935, and finally back to Burwash again. For various periods at all these places he combined the duties of Rector and Novice Master. In 1945 he was commissioned by the Rector Major to undertake duties as Visitor Extraordinary to the Salesian Houses in Holland, and he remained there from October 1945 to April 1946.

A remarkable feature of his life's work was seen in his capacity as a confessor for various congregations of Sisters. The Salesian Sisters had him as their extraordinary confessor for practically the whole of his priestly life, and he also served in that capacity for the Nazareth Sisters, the Sisters of Mercy and the Franciscan Sisters, at different times. At Melchet Court he was confessor for the community of the Salesian International Theologate from 1958 until his death.

He was buried at the Salesian cemetery at Burwash after a Solemn Requiem Mass, which was attended by many Salesians, whom he had guided towards their first religious profession

May this good soul now be enjoying the reward of so many years of faithful service to the Salesians of this Province.