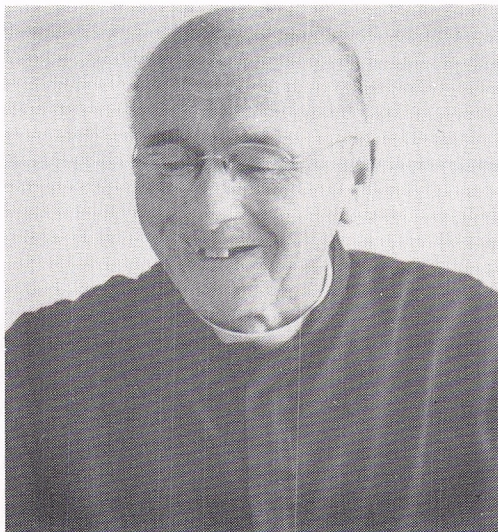


Dominic College  
Tolosa Street  
Glenorchy Tas 7010  
Australia

---



**FATHER EMMANUEL STETTMAYER SDB**  
**(1898 - 1988)**

*Remembered as a visiting angel whose presence always pointed beyond the immediate to a "GREAT ONE" whose purpose he faithfully served, Fr. Emmanuel Stettmayer was ever a quiet channel of grace through whom thousands of youngsters learned respect for the Creator, OUR FATHER. He epitomised the fatherly spirit that Don Bosco encouraged in his priests and was to all who came in contact with him a revered priest whose life was a daily proclamation of St. Paul's "Not I, but Christ".*

Fr. Emmanuel Stettmayer left his homeland in Bavaria, Germany soon after joining the Salesian Congregation, having been invited to follow the path of a Missionary that eventually brought him to Australia. From the day he arrived at Port Melbourne in 1936 to the day he died in Hobart, Tasmania, he never left Australia.

Born in Augusta near Augsburg in Bavaria, Germany, on 14 December 1898, and baptised Gunther Emmanuel Stettmayer, this future Missionary in the Antipodes grew up in a rural community sharing the hardships and learning to stretch meagre means to sustain a life of dignity.

In his formative years he developed an appreciation of the cycles of the seasons and acquired a habit of industriousness and a very deep sense of dependence on God as Creator and Provider. Early in life he had a highly developed devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, for, after serving in the Kaiser's Army and having worked (most likely as a farmhand) for some years, he made a solemn consecration of himself to the Mother of God in 1926. The hardship of his early life, which he bore quietly and bravely, developed a strong internalised discipline.

He was a man very much in command of himself - a man of purpose. Giving his life in military service had certainly not appealed to him but his act of consecration reveals the depth of generosity and readiness to



serve. Possibly because of this very deliberate decision and the sincerity of his act of consecration he spoke little of his early life and family experiences.

His concern was always for spending each moment totally given over to the Lord's service. However, it is quite evident that during those early years his life was enriched by his family and the people he lived with, for the man we knew and lived with had a warm heart, the spirit of hard work, and he was highly intelligent and deeply sincere.

Emmanuel Stettmayer was a young man well established in life when he made the decision to enter the Salesian Society. He did his novitiate in Ens Dorf in 1927/28 and made his first profession on 15 August, 1928. Shortly after this he was chosen to go to the United States to study and to learn English. For a young man in Germany in those times such an opportunity would be seen as very attractive. He journeyed to California where at the Salesian Centre in Richmond he gradually gained mastery of the English language and undertook the first stage of his studies in preparation for Priesthood. From 1930 to 1932 he was posted at the Salesian Centre at Watsonville. It was during this period of active Salesian apostolate that he proved himself a worthy son of Don Bosco and was admitted to final profession on 16 August, 1931.

Half way through 1932 Emmanuel Stettmayer returned to Europe for his theological studies in preparation for the priesthood. He was sent to the Crocetta where he studied from 1932 to 1936. Here he met up again with one of his fellow novices, Alfons (now Cardinal) Stickler. It seems that he enjoyed being identified with the students from the United States as well as making contact again with fellow German students as they all prepared for the priesthood.

Simplicity and detachment characterised his life, this was most clearly evident in the very few possessions he retained, and also rather interestingly in his propensity for secrets. It was only rarely that he shared stories of personal experiences and reflections. The circumstances surrounding his "obedience" to come to Australia and the story of the way in which it was revealed to him is one such rare personal reflection that he did write about some years later in a letter to a regular correspondent, Fr. Anthony Moester, insisting that this whole incident be kept a secret.

"At the beginning of June 1936, the fourth year at the Crocetta, some seventy students were making their retreat before ordination when, towards

the end of it, I received a call to go to the Rector. To be called to the Rector at the Crocetta meant always that there was something serious coming. Although having nothing whatsoever on my conscience I was rather worried. As I went to the Rector I was received most kindly and invited to sit down.

“After a few friendly questions he took a letter from his desk and said: ‘Brother, really I do not know why I should be the one doing this unpleasant affair, but your Provincial, Fr. Rossi, has indicated that instead of going back to California you are to report to Rupertswood, Australia.’ I was so deeply moved that I could hardly finish the retreat. My companions from the States were, to say the least, deeply shocked.”

Sustained by his deep personal strength he did complete the retreat with the rest of his class and on 5 July 1936 was ordained by Cardinal Fossati in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Don Bosco’s Oratory in Turin. After a brief visit to Germany he set sail for Australia. The S.S. Oronsay on which he sailed berthed at Port Melbourne on 5 October 1936, and Fr. Stettmayer stepped ashore in Australia never to leave it again. He went immediately to the only Salesian foundation in Australia at the time, the school in a rural setting on the renowned estate at Sunbury, Victoria - Rupertswood.

The Salesian Community at Rupertswood during these years was very much a multi-cultural one with all the inherent difficulties of forming a community made up of people from different nations that were at the time taking sides in what boiled over to be the Second World War. What a time for a fervent young newly ordained German priest to arrive in Australia!. Circumstances at Rupertswood in those difficult times would have closely paralleled the hardships of his own early life in Germany prior to becoming a Salesian.

In his homily at the Mass of Christian Burial for Fr. Stettmayer the Salesian Provincial, Fr. Julian Fox, himself a past pupil of Fr. Stettmayer, made reference to those early years at Rupertswood. "There were several German, Italian, Spanish, Irish and English Salesians who made up the community there. In 1942 during the War years Smith’s Weekly had a ball over Fr. Stettmayer’s and others’ regular visits outside the gates of Rupertswood each Sunday to unknown destinations, but reportedly to deliver the nation’s secrets to alien agents. His politics were of course none but the Our Father, and Smith’s Weekly’s reporters were hardly the kind



to be found on their knees at the real destination - the Sunday Mass in parishes supplied by Salesians from Rupertswood.”

On a more personal note Fr. Norman Ford, a boarder at Rupertswood in the 1940's has some recollections of Fr. Stettmayer:

“I have very happy memories of Fr. Emmanuel as we used to call him. While most remember him for his strictness, I recall him as a fair person in his dealings with the boys. He had a very keen sense of observation coupled with a good memory. He was very demanding when it came to cleanliness and tidiness. Our handwriting had to be as perfect as the straight lines we formed when lining up in the yard for class or study-hall.

“He used to have us sitting on the edge of our seats during his homilies with his interesting stories. We were so quiet he could whisper during his homilies and ‘Good-nights’. He knew how to create atmosphere. In a way he was an actor and took us all in. When he was Prefect of Studies (Deputy Principal) he used to read out weekly marks for conduct and diligence. Those who received ‘Good, Good’ were allowed to take fourpence worth of lollies from the Mission Shop, i.e. the cupboard of lollies at the back of the Study Hall. Those who got ‘Very Good, Very Good’ were privileged to help themselves to sixpence worth of sweets. When most of the boys had very little by way of pocket money the free weekly distribution of lollies was most welcome in those hard post-war years.

“Fr. Emmanuel was Prefect of Studies (Deputy Principal) when I returned from India to teach Grade 5 at Rupertswood in 1956. He knew I had not done a formal teacher training course so he had me prepared for what was known as Term and Test Registration. Lessons had to be written up, presented to the Headmaster and delivered in the presence of the Government Inspector. Fr. Emmanuel made sure the lessons were written up properly.

“During the term holidays he insisted that the clerics polish their classrooms, dust them and clean the windows to make them look spick-and-span. He was a very private person but his goodwill came across more through his smiles than his sparing words.

“I distinctly remember being taken on a tour of duty early during my practical training at Sunbury to learn what a good cleric had to do to be a good Salesian Assistant. Detailed duties were pointed out in every area including the toilets outside the basement in order to keep moral danger far from the boys.

"Over the years he has often written to me offering prayers for me and enquiring about my brother. This is something I appreciate very much. Those who knew him well knew there was a kindly gentleman and a friend of confreres and boys alike in the person of Fr. Emmanuel."

The Salesian confreres who lived and worked with Fr. Stettmayer in those early days at Rupertswood and later at St. John's Boy's Home, Brooklyn Park, South Australia, found him to be a man who set high standards and was never reluctant to see that a genuine attempt was made to meet his expectations. He was known as a tough task master ("The Baron" as the "Rupertswood" boys dubbed him), but those who worked with him knew only too well that he demanded the same standards of himself and unhesitatingly met them, as exemplified in his willingness to offer Mass for the brothers involved in making an early start in the dairy each day.

In January, 1957, Fr. Stettmayer was appointed to Boys' Town, Glenorchy, Tasmania, where he worked for the last thirty-one years of his priestly life. Fr. Anthony Moester, his long time correspondent, recalls that at the time he wrote: "Fr. Provincial is sending me to Tasmania to take your place, you know". Fr. Moester also mentioned how at the time he asked again and again about the boys, the superiors, their study programmes and their leisure time, etc.

As he settled into community in Tasmania he continued to demand the same high standards and thoroughness of both boys and confreres. As this centre evolved from Boys' Town to Savio College and finally to Dominic College he became more and more identified with the Primary School students.

Over the years he continued his correspondence with Fr. Moester. At the time when Dominic College was being formed he shared his deep concern about the move to co-education in a letter to Fr. Moester, but as always he accepted and supported the decision once made.

As he mellowed he showed great affection for the little Primary School children and won their hearts. Right up to the time of his death he kept up a wide-ranging correspondence with people whom he first met as young children in the school. The voluminous Christmas mail and the gifts he received at that time of the year were a testimony to his warm fatherly spirit that flowed on to the children of his past pupils proudly brought to him for a blessing.



Over the years his correspondence with Fr. Moester revealed his reflection on troubled youth, and especially his anxiety for priests opting out of the ministry and for confreres reluctant to remain faithful to community practices of piety. He was deeply loyal himself and prayed incessantly for those troubled souls. He propagated devotion to the Sacred Heart and the faithful daily recitation of the Rosary as his way of striving to do something for those in trouble. He was undoubtedly a man of deep faith; "The Lord knows; The Lord will provide", he often repeated in the last months of this life.

Probably the lasting memory that most of his past pupils would have is his insistence on supporting the missions. Throughout his life he engendered in young people a spirit of sacrifice and got them to support the missions by contributing to all the different collections and schemes that he had running. Over his long life he would have contributed thousands of dollars through these little schemes to the missionary enterprise of Salesians around the world.

In the final months of his life, while he was in the care of the Sisters of St. Joseph, he endeared himself to those nursing him and to the elderly sisters who help in the Nursing Home. They were touched by his disposition of faith and by his prayerfulness.

As Fr. Julian Fox said in concluding his homily at the Mass of Christian Burial: "Nearly fifty-two years in Australia, thirty-one of which were served in Tasmania; a thread woven into a fabric of the lives of so many. How his Good Lord has pulled that thread to himself; it can only mean that we too have been drawn closer to his Lord, our Lord. For us Salesians this is the loss of the last of the great German pioneers of our Province; like Jesus with the two disciples, they visited us, stayed with us and have now vanished from our sight, but in the breaking of the bread of his life Fr. Stettmayer has opened our eyes to recognise Jesus. Now in reflecting we can know that our hearts burned within us as he joined us on the road."

We, his community, and in a wider sense his family of thirty-one years now farewell our dear and venerable friend and brother. We commend him to the Lord who by his death and resurrection won for us all a place in the Kingdom of Our Father.

Fr. John Papworth, Rector, and Community



## FOR THE NECROLOGY

### **FATHER EMMANUEL STETTMAYER SDB**

Born ..... 14 December 1898  
Professed ..... 15 August 1928  
Ordained ..... 5 July 1936  
Died ..... 27 April 1988