

ALOYSIUS STANISLAUS BERCHMANS SUTHERLAND, S.D.B.

It is my sad duty to record the holy and peaceful death of The Very Rev. Father Aloysius Stanislaus Berchmans Sutherland. The passing to eternal reward of this widely revered and distinguished member of the Anglo-Irish Province took place on the 26th June, 1958 while in the 78th year of his age, the 56th of his Religious Profession and the 51st of his Sacred Priesthood.

Aloysius Sutherland was born in Ireland on 24th December, 1882, at Rosemount, Shanakiel, Co. Cork. He was the seventh son and the fourteenth and youngest child of William and Sarah Sutherland. Many members of this illustrious family rose to distinction in their callings in life.

Aloysius received his early schooling at the Presentation Convent School in his native city.

At ten years of age he was transferred to the Dominican College, Newbridge, Co. Kildare, where to this day there exists the records of his brilliant school course and of his unimpeachable schoolboy conduct. His solid piety, his generosity, his willingness and eagerness to learn were among the qualities that endeared him to his teachers and companions. And it was the fuller and richer flowering of these precious gifts in his maturer years as a Salesian Priest that raised enduring monuments to his memory in Ireland and in England. A few years later Aloysius qualified with distinction for admission to the Royal College of Surgeons in London. About this time he found himself at the great cross-roads of his life. The passionate urge of complete dedication to God had welled up in his heart and he felt it his duty not to resist it. Providentially he had the good fortune of meeting Very Rev. C. B. Macey, the esteemed head of the gallant Salesian pioneers in England. And soon the name of Aloysius Sutherland is found for the first time on the register of the Salesian College, Battersea, London, which was then but in the early days of its foundation. Here the new aspirant manifested his admirable qualities of mind and heart. In 1899 he made his Novitiate under the venerated Fr. Bonavia. He had a brilliant academic career, gaining the B.A. and B.Sc. degrees and the Diploma of Education, and he proved himself to be a teacher of outstanding ability.

Having successfully pursued and completed his ecclesiastical studies his priestly ordination at the hand of the Most Rev. Peter Amigo, D.D., Bishop of Southwark, took place on the Feast of the Seven Dolours of Our Lady, 27th September, 1907. His brother, Right Rev. Mgr. Vincent Sutherland, O.P. Administrator Apostolic of Trinidad, West Indies, preached the Ordination Sermon.

Now it was that his solid manly virtues began to blossom forth — his warm heartedness, his generous loving sympathy for all in distress, his words of wise counsel, his cheerfulness, and his great vision — these were but just some of the qualities that made him a much sought after friend, companion and confidant. Little wonder then that the Venerable Servant of God, Don Michael Rua, St. John Bosco's first successor, perceiving Father Sutherland's abilities appointed him soon after his ordination as Rector and Parish Priest at Burwash. This office of Superior was to be his unrelieved responsibility for almost half a century.

In England following his Rectorship in Burwash he was Rector in Farnborough, Battersea, and Bolton. The part he played in developing these colleges and in securing the recognition of the public Educational Bodies is well known. In Farnborough he was elected to serve the Catholic minority on the Urban Council. That he should have received the support of the non-Catholic voters speaks highly for his standing amongst them. Besides his Council duties he found time, at the request of His Eminence Cardinal Bourne, to serve as Chaplain to H. M. Forces in Aldershot and the many Irish brigades that were stationed there at the time — remember him with reverence and affection.

Fr. Sutherland yearned ardently to see the Salesians established in his native country. Providentially an opportunity to satisfy this longing was to come in 1918 when the Higher Superiors commissioned him to seek a first Salesian Foundation in Ireland. The news of his searching for a suitable house and property reached the Bishop of Limerick, Most Rev. Dr. Hallinan, who as a student in Rome had personally known Don Bosco. The Bishop warmly welcomed the Salesians to his diocese to commence an Agricultural and Technical College at Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick. On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1919, Father Sutherland celebrated the first Mass in the new College. The unhappy aftermath of the first World War, the prevailing economic distress everywhere, and Ireland herself seething with sorrow and unrest were factors that unfortunately aggravated the formidable task of establishing a new foundation. But if so how eloquently they testify to the ability and courage of this man who succeeded in his undertaking and secured for it the recognition of the Government Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.