

SALESIANS OF ST. JOHN BOSCO
Provincial Office
Commercial Center, P.O. Box 1467
Makati, Metro Manila

BRO. NICOLINO TAMBASCIA



November 18, 1979

My dear Confreres,

Our good **BROTHER NICOLINO TAMBASCIA, S.D.B.** breathed his last at 10:30 in the evening, November 13, 1979 at the Perpetual Help Hospital in Cebu City. He was 63 years old, 42 years in religious life.

As he could no longer bear the severe pain of acute arthritis in the left leg, he had to be rushed to the hospital. But the findings of the doctors revealed other serious complications.



Until that day of his departure to the other life, Bro. Nicolino was on his feet carrying out his tasks in the community with his usual tempo of regularity. The evident marks of the pains he suffered for years—perhaps all his life—always borne with silent resignation to God's will, never posed any obstacle to his untiring work and round-the-clock participation in community acts, especially that of reciting the Holy Rosary with Confreres and boys along the corridors of Cebu Boy's Town.

The doctors decided to operate on him to relieve him of enormous pain, but blood-poisoning and a heart failure snuffed out his life. His death paralleled his life. It was so serene and calm. Serenity and calmness always ruled his life as he carried out his humble tasks as a Salesian Brother.

Bro. Tambascia was born in Castelvetero Valfortore in Benevento, Italy on February 14, 1916. At a very tender age, he gave his YES to God's call. He entered the Salesian Junior Seminary in Gaeta in 1932. That was the era of missionary expansion for the Salesian Congregation. The young Nicolino felt that he could serve God better as a missionary. He was sent to Hong Kong and there he spent a year of Novitiate. On December 8, 1937 he made his first religious profession. Three years later obedience sent him to Shanghai where he ably worked in Yanze-Pu (1940-43) and Nantao (1943-1952). In Nantao he made his perpetual profession on August 16, 1943.

Bro. Tambascia performed the only jobs he knew—as a cook, farm expert and house maintainer. Salesians who lived with him—especially during the difficult moments of the Communist take-over of Shanghai, remember him as a very humble confrere, a man of sacrifice and strict observance of the rule. To make both ends meet, we can say that Bro. Nicolino almost made miracles to feed the students of theology in Shanghai. In those dire moments, he kept his shining good humor and his contagious joy. Those trying months culminated with the expulsion of Salesians from mainland China.

Brother was then offered a chance to return to his native Italy. After a brief vacation, however, as he still felt strong and able, he asked the superiors to send him with the first batch of Salesians to the Philippines. He came in 1954.

He stayed for some time in Victorias, Makati and Mandaluyong until he was assigned permanently to the Novitiate House in Muntinlupa. It was the very beginning of Don Bosco's work in the islands. There was practically nothing to begin with. They were years of extreme poverty, want and sacrifice. It was in this climate that Bro. Nicolino—a veteran in the art as he was—managed to feed both confreres and novices with his frugality and industry. His life was characterized by a proverbial cheer and optimism. He enchanted everyone—especially in community programs—with his ingenuous rendition of Neopolitan songs, the immortal *Santa Lucia* in particular.



We have reason to believe that the first to feel "Salesianly joyful" was Bro. Nicolino himself, even as he injected a sparkle of cheer to everyone. Never was it known that anyone had a grudge against him. We will always remember him as he was—a simple brother, affable and gifted with a generous heart, perpetually in good humor, extremely popular among Salesians and boys. He never talked ill of anyone; he was loved by all. He had no pretensions. He never complained of anything.

Though he shouldered big responsibilities, he always made it a point to live with his Brothers in common. This radiant example was best seen by the confreres and boys of Cebu Boys Town, where Brother spent the last 13 years of his life. This example will always serve as an inspiration to the young candidates to the Salesian Brotherhood in the same school.

Whenever Bro. Tambascia walked the corridors and courts of the school during recreation time, boys used to frolic around him. He had priceless opportunities to give good-night talks to boys. His face shone with brilliance as he narrated the ordeals of China during the Communist persecution, and how instead of staying in Italy, he preferred to come to the Philippines.

Bro. Tambascia left us without in the least inconveniencing the Salesian Community that took care of him with loving affection in the few days of his sickness. Thus he lived his 63 years, without creating problems for no one. Even as he dealt with material things, he lived in exemplary poverty. He was ever docile and obedient to his superiors, endowed with delicateness in matters of modesty. We can say that Brother possessed the gift of a serene soul, simple and single-minded. He was a fine example of the wonderful people of the town where he was born. This led him to treasure a very practical piety, yet deeply characterized by the details of our Salesian traditions. His devotion to Mary, for example, nurtured him with the conviction and hope that at life's end he would certainly go to heaven. "Just imagine, after honoring her all my life here on earth, would she abandon me in death?"—he said to the writer in utter simplicity and characteristically Neapolitan accent.

And this is also our belief—that Bro. Nicolino now enjoys the bliss of heaven with the Mother of God, St. John Bosco and all those Salesians who preceeded him in the passage to eternity. We are likewise sure that the memory of Bro. Tambascia, his example of Salesian joy in the religious life will be a magnetic force that will attract vocation to the Congregation in the Philippines—especially among the youth that knew him. The tradition of new groups of candidates that join our ranks will flourish the more. From heaven Bro. Tambascia will be our intercessor. And all of us, especially the community of Cebu Boys Town, will endeavor to follow his shining example of fidelity to the vows and to the Spirit of St. John Bosco—in the Salesian style of goodness as a motor and pulse of our work. And vocations will never be wanting.



Let us unite ourselves, Brothers, in this intention, while praying for the eternal repose of Bro. Tambascia, whose death we lament, but resignedly accept according to God's wonderful design.

Sincerely yours in Don Bosco,

Fr. Jose Carbonell, S.D.B.
Provincial

