

BR FRANCIS BEYER (1903-1968)

Dear friends,

On Good Friday 12th April 1968, God called to himself the patient gentle, kind and uncomplaining soul of Br. Francis Beyer of this community. This small Salesian Province of Australia has mourned the deaths of three Salesians within the past five months.

Francis Beyer was born on 23rd January, 1903, at Fountainwind in the diocese of Eichstadt, Bavaria; his parents were Heinrich and Creszentia Beyer.



He entered the Salesian novitiate 4 August, 1923, under novice-master Fr. Wolferstetter, and made his first religious profession 15 August, 1924. He spent 1924 at Enhub, 1925 at Abertshausen, 1926 at Helenenberg; and in 1927 came to Rupertswood, Australia. In all these houses his duties were agricultural.

Here in Sunbury, Br. Francis helped the late Fr. Michael Maiocco to look after the then Ayrshire stud, and assisted in founding the present renowned Friesian stud in 1932.

In 1945 failing health and an unbelievable blood-pressure of 240 required that Francis undertook less onerous work at our Adelaide foundation; but the next year his worsening condition necessitated his return to Rupertswood to even lighter duties. There followed two deadly heart attacks which would normally have killed a man of lesser fibre; then two major operations to try to lessen his intolerable blood-pressure. Even then Br. Francis tried to keep working by doing household chores such as setting the dining-room tables. A growing paralysis and failing eye-sight made even this impossible, and Francis entered into his long years of patient purgatory .... a once strong and vigorous worker now had to spend some score of years sitting in a chair, even unable to read. Our dear Brother Victor McGreevy (R.I.P.) tried, in these early years of sickness, to help him make wicker baskets and trays, in an effort to fight the growing paralysis.

During all these years no one ever heard a word of complaint or impatience. St. James tells us that if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man. We must indeed conclude that we had such a man in our community.

Br. Francis deeply appreciated the evening visits of our young students to read to him for a half-hour or so; and his pleasure was greatly expressed for the visits paid him by the Sunbury St. Vincent de Paul men.

Francis' physical condition deteriorated much in the couple of months before his death. To our sorrow, we hardly noticed it, for there was never

a word of complaint from this saintly man. His pace became slower, he limped a little; he began to come to the dining-room coatless (we attributed this latter to the hot weather, but it seems clear now that he was incapable of negotiating a coat or pullover).

Three weeks before Francis went to heaven, he took his first of two strokes. It must be ever recorded in his honour that such was his punctual regularity for all things that the mere fact that he was late for meditation at 6.30 a.m. meant to all of us that he must be seriously ill. We found him paralysed in his bed; and he never spoke again, although he seemed to understand the prayers that were said at his bedside.

Unable to get Brother Francis into St. Vincent's Hospital, we were more than grateful to the good Sisters at Moreland Sacred Heart Hospital, who took at once their old friend known at Rupertswood in 1928, when the Sisters used our dairy cottage as their convent, on first arriving homeless, in Australia. If Francis had been granted speech, he would have expressed his gratitude, too, in his own peculiarly gentlemanly way.

Most of us only knew Brother Francis as an invalid. Some of us remember him as an active, immaculately-dressed, polite, charming gentleman, with a great sense of humour. Indeed, he greatly reminded us of his gentle namesake, St. Francis of Sales, the "gentleman saint".

Francis' patient acceptance of his great cross of illness (more a mental than physical penance for such an active man to be condemned to such helpless inactivity) must have brought many blessings on our Salesian work in Australia. His forty-one years in our country were marked with a oneness of purpose - to serve God generously, meekly, quietly, patiently. He never saw his family in all these years. He leaves a sister in Bavaria, and perhaps a brother still living as a prisoner of war in Russia.

While we pray for the repose of Francis' gentle soul, let us also pray for his far-away relations, living and deceased. Pray, too, for this community; we mourn a true friend, an exemplary confrere and a godly religious.

Sincerely yours in Don Bosco,

Alan C. McDonald,

Rector.

*SUNBURY 1927*  
(l. to r.) Br. F. Beyer,  
Br. L. Aman, Br. J.  
Seufzger, Br. W. Streil.

