

Salesians of St. John Bosco



Salesian High School
Netherton Way,
Bootle, L30 2NA.

January, 1984.

FATHER VANDER
(Francis Van der Voort, S.D.B.)

Dear Confrères,

On Sunday, 1st January, Father Vander returned home to Ince Blundell Convent at about 9.30 p.m. complaining of chest pains. At 4.00 a.m. the following morning he had a heart attack. He received the Sacrament of the Sick and was moved to hospital. I visited him and prayed a while with him. He then asked me to leave saying that I had things to do and he would like to rest. Soon after mid-day he had a further attack and died peacefully at 4.00 p.m. The speed and smoothness of his going to meet his Lord would, I am sure, have been his wish. It was, however, a great shock to his confreres here in Bootle as to all the Province, but also to his sister and brother-in-law in Holland as well as so many friends.

A week later a very great many of these joined as a family to say our last farewell in the school chapel at the Salesian High School. In many respects this was a joyous occasion for through a beautiful liturgy we gave thanks to God for his long service in the priesthood. A very beautiful and moving homily was preached by his great friend, Fr. James Maher in which he stressed Father's great strength and cheerfulness in adversity.

It was in Delft in Holland that Francis was born on 23rd April in 1907. Delft is a city famous for the beauty of its ceramic art. It was here too that he, young clay in the hands of the Master Potter, grew into manhood. With loving care He formed a chosen vessel that would carry the message of his love to far-off lands. Here too, he received his early schooling and professional training as an engineer. At the age of nineteen, he decided to become a Salesian and went to Ivrea in Italy to continue his studies in that direction. He volunteered for the foreign missions and in 1930 he entered the Salesian Novitiate at Bang-Nok-Khek in Thailand. He was professed in 1931. With typical proficiency he began to learn about the people, to absorb the new culture of his adopted land and soon held a diploma in the teaching of the Siamese language.

While teaching in the Salesian Schools at Hang-Pong and Haad-Yai, he continued his studies for the priesthood and was ordained in 1940.

The War, shock of internment and deportation cut short a promising apostolate, but one happy consequence was that Fr. Vander came to work in England in 1942. Here he worked in many houses putting at the disposal of his fellow Salesians and many others his great practical and organisational gifts as Bursar. He worked at Blaisdon, Battersea, Melchett Court, Oxford, Aberdour and finally here in Bootle. Efficient and gifted as he was, he never allowed these talents to overshadow his generous and warm-hearted human qualities.

When ill-health forced him to retire, he continued to be of service where he could and rendered help and encouragement to many. The Augustine Sisters at Ince Blundell would, I know, prefer to dwell on the service he rendered them. But I should like to put on record the gratitude of the Salesian Community for the loving care they gave to him during his last years.

We should also like to invite all his many friends to share in their gratitude to God for his long and fruitful life in the priesthood. We shall remember his warm, jolly personality, his lively sense of humour and his readiness to help. We know that they will also share in our prayers for the repose of his soul.

May he rest in peace.

Yours affectionately in St. John Bosco

(Fr. J. Kavanagh, S.D.B.)
Rector

Date for Necrology:

Fr. Van-der-Voort born on 23rd April, 1907, at Delft, Holland. Died Liverpool 2nd January, 1984, at the age of 76 after 52 years of Religious Profession and 42 years of Priesthood.

R. I. P.