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Marian Shrine
P.O. Box 9000
West Haverstraw, NY 10993

**Father
JOHN "Jay" VERONA**

Dear Confreres,

On Wednesday, June 7, 1989, our brother,

FATHER JOHN "JAY" VERONA

died while on a visit with his family in Italy. Confirmation of his death reached the States on June 9, 1989, the day before his funeral, which was held in his home town. Burial was in a family plot.

Father Jay, as he was affectionately known, was born on July 4, 1915 in Gusago, Brescia, Italy. At the age of 17, he began his aspirantate at Ivrea and in 1936 was sent to the United States for his novitiate at Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey. He made his First Profession on September 8, 1937 and spent the next fifty-two years carrying on Don Bosco's mission by faithfully fulfilling many unglamorous, unsought after tasks that are often taken for granted or go unnoticed in communities. Father Jay fulfilled these duties in an unassuming and cheerful spirit.

Upon completion of his philosophy studies in 1940, Father Jay was sent to Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa, Florida for his tirocinium. Due to World War II, he had to return to Newton for his theological studies, and was ordained in the small Chapel there on June 29, 1947 by the famous Bishop Francis X. Ford of Maryknoll.

After ordination he was sent to our orphanage at Hope Haven, Marrero, Louisiana for six months. From there he was sent to Don Bosco Prep, Ramsey for three years (1949-1951). The next two years were spent in Goshen and East Boston, respectively. Then, in 1954, he was sent to Don Bosco Technical High School in Boston, where he remained for nine years. In 1962, he was sent to our then newly opened Archbishop Shaw High School in Marrero, Louisiana where he is still remembered for his ten years of service to the young people there. In 1972, Father Jay was sent as associate pastor to our mission parishes in Birmingham, Alabama. In 1975, Father Jay return to the "north country" teaching at Don Bosco Prep Ramsey for five years (1975-1980); Administrator of St. Ann Parish in Manhattan (1980-1984); spending a Sabbatical year in Italy in 1985; associate pastor at St. Anthony Parish in Paterson (1986-1988) and coming to the Marian Shrine in West Haverstraw in the Fall of 1988. In all of these assignments, Father Jay never held any outstanding positions of responsibility within the community. He taught Algebra, plain Geometry and Religion. In his own words, he writes: "From 1936-1987 I had fifty years of actual work trying to pull the wagon so that the big wheels might turn."

Fr. Jay loved sports. During these years, wherever he was, he found himself surrounded by a group of boys as he coached them, played with them, or moderated them in baseball, basketball, ping-pong, golf -- and, most of all, tennis. Father Jay will always be remembered for his love for tennis and his ability to play in the game. Even in his later years, he could offer a big challenge to the best players in the Province! Right to the end, he was a champ at table-tennis, and here, at the Marian Shrine, was most at home challenging the youngsters in our Youth Center to a game of ping-pong!

As regards his formal education, with the simplicity and openness of a truly humble man, Father Jay writes: "I have no degree. I finished my third grade at home. At 17 I had to learn to read some Italian, until then, I knew only dialect. I was given to teach as a Salesian - out of obedience - not because of my knowledge." In spite of these apparent odds, Father Jay's love for young people and evident enjoyment of their company made him a good teacher, one who, in a past student's own words, was "easy to follow and understand."

With the passing of years and reflection on his own experience and life in the Province, Father Jay wrote his thoughts about those who guide Salesians and the availability confreres should have for the mission. He writes:

My suggestion for anyone who could have enough common sense to guide other confreres: Candidates should be allowed to choose any subject which they like, provided

- a) it is going to help to carry out "our" work, and not merely personal satisfaction;
- b) the candidate should leave it in writing that he is going to be willing to make use of his degree or whatever, as long as and at any time his help is needed--mainly from those who expect help from him;
- c) and one who is reluctant to learn a minimum in music and/or in sports, should be examined; if he is found deficient, he should be asked to join an order which is not TOTALLY dedicated to youth.

In many ways this little paragraph summarizes Father Jay -- we should love what young people love and be available to use any talents we have in order to better serve them, because we belong to a Congregation totally dedicated to the young.

In September, 1988, Father Jay joined our community at the Marian Shrine. He had not been feeling well, and the move was to be sort of a semi-retirement. Father Jay soon became restless. He had received word that the pastor of his local home town in Italy was in need of help. In a few months,

Father Jay was scheduled to visit his family. Why not leave early and be of some help to the pastor? Father Provincial gave the permission and in mid-October, Fr. Jay left for Italy. He wrote back telling us about the pastoral work of the parish, the warm welcome he received from his family and friends, and the delicious home-made pasta he was enjoying! At the end of November, we received word that Father Jay had suffered a heart attack and, consequently, moved into one our Salesian health-care centers. He wrote a few more times, but it was obvious from the letters that the heart attack had taken its toll. In May, 1989, he was attending a family First Communion celebration when he suffered a fall from which he never regained consciousness. He died at the hospital a week later.

In a funeral homily, last year, Father Jay wrote: "We do not know when and under what circumstances we shall die. So it is only natural that we should be afraid of death But this thought should not prevent us from spending the rest of our days serving the Lord more faithfully. The thought of death should urge us to love God and turn to Him with great confidence and hope that He will give us the necessary strength we need to face Him as our kind judge on our last day." Father Jay went to Italy to help the parish priest, who was alone and sick -- he wanted to serve the Lord and feel useful. We pray that Father Jay faced that kind Judge who, no doubt, gave him the reward of a good and faithful servant who loved Don Bosco and his mission.

Fraternally in Don Bosco,

Rev. Patrick Angelucci, S.D.B.
Director

Data for Necrology: FATHER JOHN VERONA, born July 4, 1915 in Italy; died at Brescia, Italy, June 7, 1989 at the age of 73, after 52 years of religious profession and 42 of priesthood.