

BR ROBERT VERONA (1903-1957)

With deep sorrow I communicate to you the sudden passing of our confrere Br. Robert Verona, aged 54.

Born at Retignano di Stazzema (Lucca) on 16th July 1903, he grew up in a deeply Christian family and at the age of 18 left his beautiful mountains and his work in the marble quarries to live with his uncle, Fr. Paul Verona, in Venice.

Admitted, after a year, to the novitiate



at Este, he made his first vows on 8th December 1923. He began on that day his busy and adventurous Salesian life: a carpenter at the Professional School at Milan, then in 1925 he went to Australia as a handy man. After only seven months he was posted to Macau where he remained until 1929 as a teacher in the woodwork shop. From 1929 to 1932 he was in charge of the woodwork shop in Dili (Timor) and in 1932 returned to China where he was occupied in many different ways for the next 18 years generously putting himself at the disposition of the Congregation and of souls.

Bishop Michael Arduino, Bishop of Shiuchow, in expressing his condolences for his sudden death, recalled his untiring work in those missionary years and especially during the difficult war years and the communist occupation.

"He was a great worker. He was with me at the Don Bosco Institute at Shanghai, during those crucial war years. How many difficulties, how many sacrifices had to be faced to keep our work going! Our confrere Verona, with his expert knowledge of the city, was able to find rice and other necessities to keep our orphans. He loved the Congregation and, to be of use to it, turned his hand to so many things; carpenter, driver, printing, office work, building supervisor. He was prepared for any sacrifice to help the House and the superiors. The arrival of the communists made him leave his field of labour, but he would have liked to return to help his beloved Chinese."

He returned to his homeland in 1950 but still had a longing for his distant China. All the same he soon settled down once more to do anything the Superiors asked of him: cook at Colle Valdelsa (1950-51), assistant librarian at Pisa (1951-55), librarian at La Spezia (1956), librarian's assistant at Pisa where he also looked after the buying of provisions.

His goodness, his pleasant manners, his constant serenity earned him the esteem and friendship of all those who met him.

An outstanding Salesian characteristic of his was his love of work; not that work which is done for its own sake but which is permeated with a spirit of sacrifice and faith, done according to obedience and the directives of Superiors. He put the same spirit of joy and dedication into those things he liked as well as those with which he found difficulty in adapting. In every case his Superiors knew they could rely on him.

This can be said of his final task. When this House needed a cook urgently he made the sacrifice of breaking his short holiday which he was enjoying with his family. He came down from the mountains straightaway and, with a smile, set about the task with the hope that he would soon be able to finish off his holiday. But the Lord planned otherwise. On the evening of 30th August,

leaning over the balcony of our House to speak with someone down below, he lost his balance and fell heavily to the ground below. He was taken, unconscious, to the Hospital, given Extreme Unction and cared for immediately by the doctors. Nothing could be done. He died as the 31st August dawned, surrounded by his grieving relatives and confreres, without regaining consciousness.

So many years of religious and missionary life, so much work and so many sacrifices for the good of souls must have heaped up for him many merits before the Divine Judge but his sudden death urges us to be generous with our suffrages.

Also remember in your prayers this House and he who professes himself,

Your loving confrere,

Fr. Aloysius Gili (Rector).



SUNBURY 1927

Front Row (l. to r.) beginning fourth from left:
Archbishop D. Mannix, Apostolic Delegate B. Cattaneo, Fr. E. Manassero.