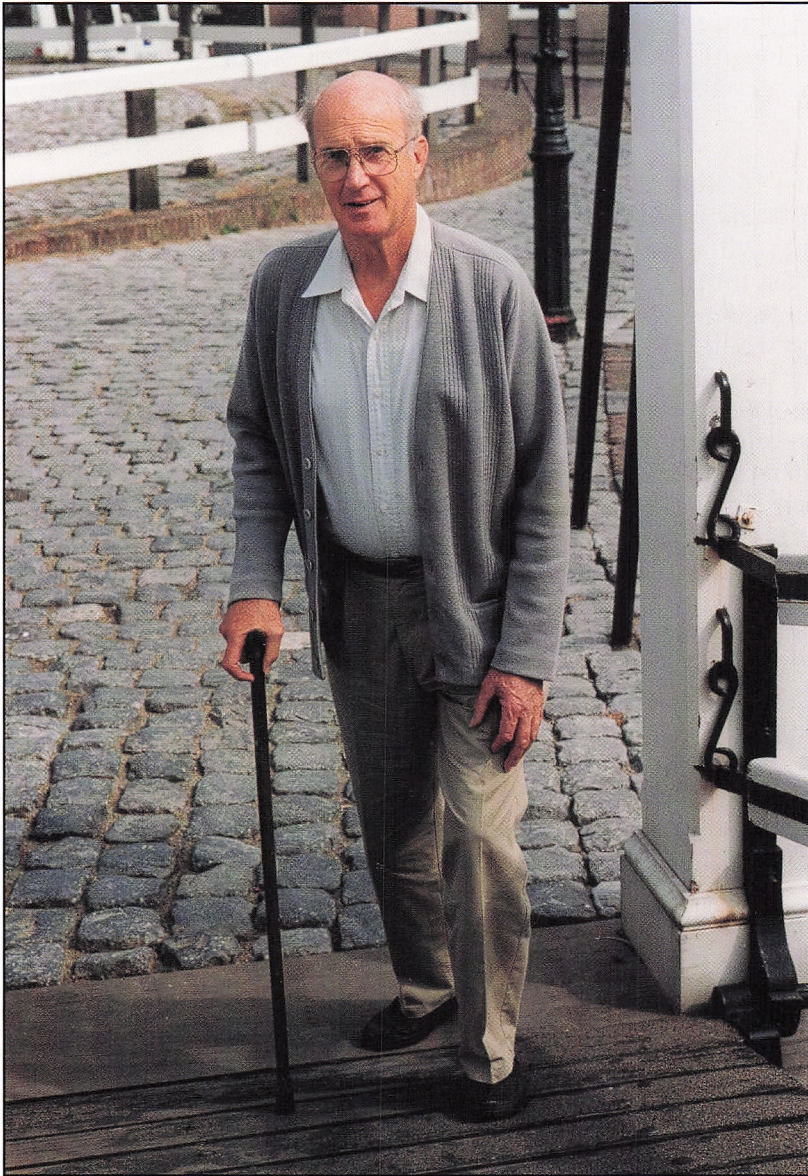


+18.7.1999
50B243



Fr. Adrian Charles Wenting S.D.B.
1929 - 1999

Born in Arnhem (Holland), 19 November 1929
Died in Ferntree Gully (Victoria, Australia), 18 July 1999
69 years of age, 49 years of profession, 39 years of priesthood.

Dear Confreres,

Quietly and unobtrusively our confrere and friend Adrian Wenting died in his sleep, shortly after 5 a.m. on Sunday, 18th July 1999, in the William Angliss Hospital at Ferntree Gully (Victoria, Australia). So often we use the expression: "A patient sufferer at rest". It does not apply to Adrian. He led a heroic life.

He was born 16 November 1929 in the beautiful city of Arnhem, Holland, the only son of Adrian Wenting, a postal worker, and Elizabeth Werner. He had three sisters: Wilhelmina (dec.), Elizabeth and Mieke (dec). After his father left the family, his mother's brother took the young family into his care. Adrian was a keen athlete, an excellent student, a fine altar server. His mother gave him her blessing when her only son wanted to be a priest. He started his studies as a boarder with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. During the evacuation of Arnhem (September 1944, "A Bridge Too Far Away"), the students were evacuated as the seminary in Westervoort was in the firing line. He, his mother and sisters walked over 100 km till they found safe lodgings with a family near Amsterdam. Active as he was, while staying with this family when he was cutting up firewood, he chopped off part of his finger.

After the war finished, the MSC superior did not take him back, he confided once, because he came from a family without a father. His uncle found a place for him with the Salesians. Adrian arrived 21 September 1945 in Ugchelen and quickly settled in. Besides his studies, he always found something to do - art, music, handywork.

During his novitiate in Twello, in May 1950 while all the novices were playing a soccer game, the novicemaster took him and two companions aside to meet the Provincial. They were asked separately if they would volunteer to work "abroad" as Salesians. In June they were told they would go and work in Australia. He took his first vows in Twello, Holland, 16 August 1950, he renewed them in Sonada, India, 15 August 1953, and professed the final vows 31 January 1956 in Sunbury, Victoria.

Adrian spent his tirocinium years in Sunbury, his theology in Bollengo, Italy, where Bishop Mensa of Ivrea ordained him a priest 1 July 1960. It was a great joy for him to have his mother and youngest sister present at the ordination. At least from 1945 on Adrian suffered migraine headaches, yet never complained, stoically taking aspirin tablets.

1961 and 1962 were for him relatively peaceful years of teaching at Salesian College at Chadstone (Victoria). Responsibilities were added from then on: Prefect of Studies in Brooklyn Park (S.A.) Rector in Chadstone, Brooklyn Park, and Engadine (N.S.W.) During a walk at the time of the clergy retreat in New Norcia he suddenly confided speaking in Dutch: "I am jealous of all those who have never been asked to carry out responsibilities". This was the only time ever he had revealed this thought.

Adrian was gentle, kind, courteous, yet believed firmly in discipline. Serious as

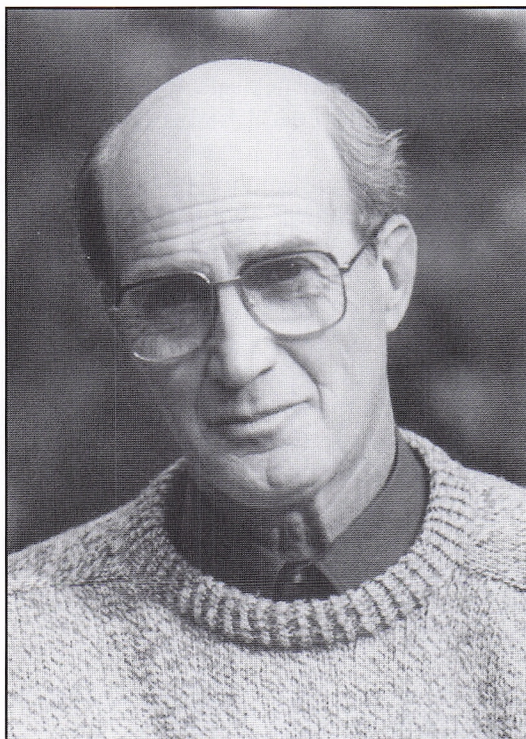
he was about excellence, he expected the best from his students and confreres. He spent long hours preparing reports and submissions to Government and Church Departments, outlining the need for facilities and funding. He was a person who worked well with others. He believed in delegating authority but was unhesitatingly ready to support and to advise. He worked till late at night, yet was on time for the practices of community life. He once said that the introduction of the praying of the breviary in common had been the greatest help in building up community life.

Adrian's relaxation was the enjoyment of simple things: reading a book seated in an easy chair in a holiday house; net fishing with the boys at Warooka Camp; growing vegetables in his little organic garden; taking and developing artistic photos; listening to classical music. Whenever he saw the chance, he did a course to update himself, in theology, religious life, Social Welfare, photography, art. From his uncle he had learned appreciation of a semi modern liturgical Dutch artist, Jan Toorop. He was happy when he installed Jan Toorop's Stations of the Cross in the Brooklyn Park residence chapel. This artist was close to his character: the essential, the simplicity, the intenseness appealed to him. After this he searched hard and long in various countries to find a crucifix and a statue of Our Lady to his liking. They were hand carved in Bavaria, Germany. These three objects of devotion were the best he could give to the community chapel.

The years as Rector of Boys' Town Engadine took a toll on his health, because they followed so quickly after the heavy years of Social Welfare Reform in South Australia which affected the St. John's Boys' Home and the effort to keep Salesian College Brooklyn Park going. While his excellent staff contributed greatly, his was the decision which pointed out the future. It weighed on him.

He had a year as Bursar in Oakleigh (Vic), several years followed as Vice Rector and Bursar in Lysterfield (Vic). Then came his opportunity to be fulltime parish priest in Kelmscott

(W.A.) Overcoming resistance of displaced loyalty by some in the parish, he enlarged and upgraded the church building, acquired a house for a community residence, visited the sick, made friends with the children, promoted the Western Australian Holiday Camp outreach and the Salesian Co-operators. Adrian was also Bursar of the combined Salesian Community of Victoria Park and Kelmscott.



Increasingly he had problems with his hips. Some five or six times they needed replacement. Once or twice he was close to death. Blood clots developed. They affected his eyesight, his memory and his co-ordination. He could no longer read the Gospel, had to ask the acolyte to help him out; he could not drive the car around; could not balance the ledger accounts and found it difficult to converse. Medical investigations showed he suffered from Alzheimer's disease. Adrian did not cry, did not complain, though he was devastated. He enrolled as a member of the Alzheimer Society, read up about the stages of the progress of this disease as much as he could. "I pray, and you pray with me too, that I may be spared many years before they enclose me in a home".

In 1995 Fr. Provincial retired him from all responsibilities, allowing Adrian to choose a community to live in. He thought long, then selected Lysterfield with its young brothers, its grounds, its memories. He walked there with a stick. cap on his head, peering through his thick glasses, smiling when he met people, straining to hear. Never a complaint.

Fr. John Murphy, provincial, said during the funeral Mass;" During his final years he lost the capacity to celebrate Eucharist which had been the mainstay of his spiritual life. No longer could he join in the divine office - not even the rosary could he finger as he had done so regularly during his good years. Yet did he withdraw? Not on your life. To me he became the epitomy of the true contemplative. He was there as regularly as clockwork. Never failing, never falling away. Stripped of any capacity to do or perform - even to the degree where the host had to be placed in his trembling hand at Communion - he continued to come with nothing to offer, and his very presence gave God the recognition that was His due".

Adrian took ill at Lysterfield, was taken to hospital with a suspected heart attack. After his death the Rector found Adrian's room tidy, the pencils neatly lined up one next to the other, the shelves almost bare. He had given away his belongings to others and his life to his God. He was much beloved by all who came into contact with him.

His funeral took place at Sunbury in the Salesian College chapel. His coffin stood side by side with that of his good friend Gerard Remie, who had died in Adelaide two days before.

Let us pray that we may be granted many good vocations who will give of themselves to the very end.

Fr. Tony Moester S.D.B.,
Provincial Secretary.