

FATHER PHILIP WILLIAMS. S. D. B.

Father Philip, died suddenly at Oxford on Friday, the 5th March 1948. He was 70 years old.

Philip Vaughan Williams was born on October 18th, 1877, near Newport, Monmouthshire, Wales, of Catholic parents, his father being Welsh and his mother being Irish. In 1886, his mother died and his father placed him under the care of the Sisters of Charity at Bullingham, Herefordshire, where he was well educated and trained. In 1891 he left Bullingham to enter the newly-opened Salesian College at Battersea, London. Philip seems to have enjoyed his time at the College and eventually he asked to be allowed to join the Salesian Congregation. His request was granted and in October 1893 he received the religious habit at the hands of Don Bosco's first successor, the Very Rev. Don Rua, Superior General, who had come to England for the consecration and opening of the first Salesian Church in England. Then on December the 8th of the following year, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, he made his perpetual profession.

He began his course of Philosophy in 1895 and his Theological studies in 1898. He was not a brilliant student, but he was very painstaking and persevering and eventually on the 22nd February 1902, Philip Williams was ordained a priest. The Ordination ceremony took place at St. George's Cathedral, Southwark the ordaining prelate being Bishop Bourne, afterwards the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

hen began the work of the apostolate and Fr. Williams showed great aptitude – as a teacher, a pastor of souls and as a bursar. He worked first at Battersea, then at East Hill, Burwash (As the Superior), Chertsey, Farnborough, Bolton and finally at Cowley, everywhere showing zeal and efficiency. He had a natural sense of discipline and order and he used this to good effect in his time as bursar. His advice was often sought in matters domestic, financial and administrative.

But, above all, he was a devoted priest, a loyal Salesian, who used his talents as did the good and faithful servant of the Gospel. He undertook many outlets for his abounding energy and was most successful in organising charities, raising funds, through bazaars and the like.

As a religious, Fr. Williams was most observant. When a diseased heart in his last twenty years prevented him from practicing the common practices of piety, he was much perturbed. Yet as a confessor he was ready to hear Confessions at any time. Like Don Bosco he loved to do God's work in this way, for it was close and personal.

In appearance, Fr. Williams was short and slim, wiry, and full of nervous energy. He was very neat and clean in dress. In his latter years the doctor suggested that he should spend as much time as possible in the open air and it was characteristic of Fr. Williams that he obeyed their injunctions by becoming an expert in the art of angling.

As can be easily gathered, Fr. Williams was one of the pioneers of Salesian work in England, and for that he was justly prized, for he knew Don Rua, Cardinal Cagliero, Don Barberis, Don Albera and many of the early Fathers of the Congregation. He was a "Walking encyclopaedia" of Salesian events in England and many a story could he relate of personalities and places, some amusing, some surprising, but all interesting and edifying.

In the evening of March 4th, Fr. Williams spent many hours in the confessional to prepare the boys for the Exercise of the Happy Death to be held the following day, the first Friday of the month. He was very tired when he went to rest, but was again in the confessional at 6. a. m. to hear the confessions of the confreres and later of the remaining boys. Later in the day he went out to the river, but the weather changed and became cold and damp and he decided to return by bus. Just as he was walking to the bus stop, he was seen to fall, but when some people nearby went to help him, they saw that he was already dead. Fr. Williams was always ready for sudden death and knew well from his doctors that his feeble heart would certainly collapse under any sudden strain. He had often suffered very painful attacks with his usual patience and courage but it was only a question of time when one such attack would prove fatal.

The funeral and solemn obsequies on Monday, March 8th, brought a great gathering of clergy and laity. Fr. Williams had a special gift of friendship for many non-Catholics in the area and many came to mourn the loss of a priest whose friendship they so greatly esteemed and valued.

Apostle of the confessional as he was and always prepared for the sudden death which came to him at the roadside, we have no fear that Fr. Williams is not already enjoying the happiness of his heavenly reward; but lest we should in any way seem to anticipate the judgements of God, I commend this dear priestly soul to the charity of your prayers and suffrages, and beg you also to remember the needs of this Province and the many intentions of

Yours devotedly in Christ,

F. V. Couche. S. D. B.

Necrology: Fr. Philip Vaughan Williams, born in Newport, Wales, died at Cowley, Oxford on March 5th 1948, in the 71st year of his age, the 54th of his Religious Profession and the 47th of his Priesthood.