

**DON BOSCO COLLEGE
NEWTON, N.J., 07860**

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REV. DONALD BROWN, S.D.B.

Born at Jacquet River, N.B., Canada 1930

Joined the Salesian Society 1950

Ordained a priest 1961

Died in Newton, New Jersey, May 26, 1969

November 1, 1969

Dear Confreres,

On the evening of May 26, 1969, the soul of Father Donald Brown, age 39, left this world to be with its Lord and Maker. His tragic death took place by drowning when the boat from which he had been fishing capsized, and he was unable to swim to the shore.

Funeral services were held here in our seminary as well in his home town of Jacquet River, New Brunswick, Canada, where he was buried.

His loss is felt very deeply. He was so enthusiastic, so full of life, so exuberant and jovial that it is still hard to believe that he is gone.

As a youngster Donald had learned the meaning of hard work. He developed a great deal of moral and physical stamina during his boyhood. His good parents and his older brothers and sisters (he was the youngest of eight children) instilled in him the practical virtues and a thirst for knowledge. His mother, who is still living, had been a school teacher and carefully and patiently taught her children the basics. She succeeded in passing on to her children a love for the teaching profession. In fact, four of the five sisters who survive Father Brown are school teachers. He himself thoroughly enjoyed teaching, whether in the church, in the classroom, on the athletic field, or just in friendly conversation. He had specialized in mathematics, and at the time of his death he was teaching four different math courses here at our college.

Donald first became acquainted with St. John Bosco when, as a high school student, he read Neil Boyton's biography of the Saint. He was deeply impressed by how effective Don Bosco had been in bringing Christ's message to youth, and a great desire grew in him to join Don Bosco's family, and to work for youth.

He left his beloved Canada and came to the U.S.A. to begin his seminary studies. After two years of aspirantship he made his novitiate here at Newton and consecrated himself to God as a Salesian on September 8, 1950. His college studies were also done here. He had a very alert and inquisitive mind and an excellent memory. He succeeded well in his studies. He was always very active, very generous, and very cheerful during his college years. His capacity for giving himself to the task at hand with great energy and enthusiasm was certainly a characteristic that he kept during his nineteen years of Salesian life.

After his college graduation he was assigned to Salesian High School in New Rochelle, N.Y., where he remained for the three years of his practical training. Then he did one more year of philosophical studies and his four years of theology at the Salesian Pontifical Athenaeum in Turin, Italy. Everyone in the studentate and in the oratory knew the friendly and outgoing Don Brown. There, as in his years as a priest, he took a special interest in bringing simple, humble folk closer to God. He was ordained in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians on February 11, 1961. His father had died not long before, but his mother was able to make the trip to Turin to be there for that great occasion.

His first assignment after he had returned to the Province in 1961 was at St. Dominic Savio High School in East Boston, Mass., where he stayed for two years. His other assignments were; St. Louis de Kent (Canada), 1963-1965; Boston College (study) 1965-1966; and Don Bosco Technical High School (Boston), 1966-1967. It was in September of 1967 that Father Brown came to Don Bosco College. He generously gave of himself as confessor, teacher, and friend. He took a great interest in the activities of the Sons of Mary, the Novices, and the young Salesians of our community. As often as he could he participated actively in athletic events — something that the students thoroughly appreciated and enjoyed.

Father Brown not only made friends easily, he did not forget them. He kept up a correspondence with many people, young and old, whom he had met in various places where he had worked. Thus he had a continuing influence on them. He spoke often and in simple and convincing terms of the one thing necessary: to save our souls. His boys and all his friends sensed that he was interested in helping them save their souls.

He did not know how to say no to someone in need. People in dire need would contact him at any time of the day or night. They knew they would receive both understanding and help. His heart went out especially to the poor. He had once said in a homily which he preached on the feast of St. John Bosco: "Don Bosco was so obviously sincere in his love for the poor. He really gave to the poor. He gave himself, his time, his love, and his good cheer." Father Brown was very much like Don Bosco in this respect.

He loved his priesthood. He willingly accepted requests for his priestly ministry. He was especially fond of good sermons. His own sermons, which he almost always wrote out and then memorized, were both

interesting and inspiring. He liked to speak of the eternal happiness of heaven, and he frequently voiced his conviction that man must detach his heart from material things if he expects to gain everlasting glory. On the front cover of his address book he had written these words: "God bless my good friends who write and send me things, though I have not an earthly thing to give them in return." In a sermon on death, which he delivered at the novitiate of the Salesian Sisters here at Newton, he stated clearly: "One of the great tragedies of life is attachment to material things. So many people preoccupy themselves with storing up material possessions, money, prestige, honor, etc., to such an extent that these things become the end of their every effort, the goal of all their plans, their all-consuming love and interest as so many false and fleeting gods." The closing words of that same sermon were: "At the hour of death may our detachment from creatures and our attachment to Christ be our cause of joy." His was indeed a life of attachment to Christ.

We hope and pray that he is already enjoying Christ's friendship to the full. We, the friends he has left behind, will surely continue to pray for him. We are sure, too, that he will intercede for us with God that we may receive the many graces we need to live a life of cheerful, generous service to our needy brothers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Harry W. Rasmussen, Director