

FATHER WILLIAM JAMES BROWN. S. D. B.

Father Brown died peacefully on the 20th May 1964 at the Salesian House, Oxford. Father Brown was born in Sheffield on the 18th July 1878 and he was baptised in St. Vincent's Church, Sheffield.

He went to the Salesian College, Battersea as a pupil and later he decided to apply to join the Salesian Congregation. He began his novitiate year in December 1895 and made his first religious profession the following year.

He remained at Battersea whilst studying Philosophy for the following two years. He then started his theological studies and at the same time helped with some teaching in the school.

In 1898 he moved to Burwash to continue his theological studies and he was ordained to the priesthood on the 22nd February 1902. Soon after ordination he became the Rector and Master of Novices at Burwash.

In 1905-6 he moved to Battersea as Catechist and teacher. He then moved to Farnborough and besides doing some teaching he also acted as a chaplain to the forces there. From 1910-19 he went back to Battersea to teach theology to the young Salesians and also to give some time to teaching the boys in the College.

In 1919 Fr. Brown was asked to go to Chertsey as headmaster of the school and he stayed there for two years. For the following eighteen years he was at Battersea again teaching theology to the young confreres and also doing some teaching in the school. At the beginning of the Second World War he moved to Bolton as the confessor for the community and in 1945 he moved to Cowley, Oxford, in the same capacity. Fr. Brown was one of the "Elders" of the province, who entered Salesian life when there was little money available but plenty of good will. When fitting in time for secular studies, in a very busy day as a Salesian brother, was no easy matter. But the Yorkshire spirit in Fr. Brown came out, so that, in spite of such difficulties, he persevered in his studies and gained a degree at London University.

After ordination he was asked to take charge of the aspirants, and he taught them Latin. He also helped to teach Church Studies to the young Salesians. He was an ideal teacher for older, mature students but found it increasingly difficult to teach boys. This was probably due to the fact that fairly early in life his eye-sight began to fail. This was a severe trial and a great strain for him - the boys took advantage of this as soon as they realised that he couldn't see what was going on at the back of the class.

He was soon released from teaching boys and asked to do supply work in different parishes but, after a few years, his failing eyesight made that work impossible.

Fr. Brown now found that he had to change his life-style to suit his disability so, to keep himself usefully occupied, he took an interest in and became quite skilled in rug-making, leatherwork, and crocheting.

Fr. Brown was most entertaining when he spoke about the early days of the province and the very difficult times those early Salesians endured.

But like any human being, he had to undergo a path to Calvary and the cross of human weakness. There was so much he would have wished to do in the course of his life, and which was left undone. So it is with all of us.

May his faithful soul rest in the peace of Christ.