

FATHER THOMAS CAMPBELL. S. D. B.

Fr. Thomas died on the feast of Pentecost at 6. 50. a. m. in the 80th year of his age and in the 33rd of priesthood. He was born on the 27th March 1882 into a large Catholic family in Liverpool. He earned his living, until he was 33yrs old, as a clerk in the shipping department of a Navigation Company. Then he joined the army in 1915 and was posted to the Royal Army Medical Corps where he remained until 1919.

At the age of 39 he took the decisive step to fulfil a life's ambition to become a priest, and entered our college at Chertsey, which had recently started as a school. He began an intensive course for Latin for eighteen months and was then able to apply for admission to the Salesian Novitiate in 1922. The letter of recommendation for each candidate reflects the man and Fr. J. Bridge. S. J. , Rector of St. Francis Xavier's Liverpool, wrote: "He is most anxious to try for the priesthood and enter religious life. His only drawback I consider is his lack of Latin but he is very industrious and a steady character and he should be able to overcome this difficulty. In all other respects he is most acceptable: a regular daily communicant and Mass server, and a most edifying member and support of our congregation."

Fr. Thomas was perpetually professed in 1926, and ordained priest on the 21st August 1929. He was highly regarded by all. . and particularly by the young boarders and day-boys of Salesian College, Battersea. He was a well-known figure in that angle of the playground reserved to them and he was a great influence for good in their lives. He was skilled in accounts and gifted with a remarkable memory for details and his talents in this area were put to good use during his many years of service as bursar in our houses in Oxford and London.

If those who knew him well through years of living together were asked to sum up briefly his effect upon them, to paint a word- picture of his character, it is likely they would choose phrases such as. . . "Our best-loved and holiest priest, whose whole life was silent edification, charity, service, sincere, forthright"- and what will remain longest in our memories is Fr. Campbell as a man of prayer with a special devotion to Holy Mass. He spent hours in chapel, rising early and staying late, and when not called away by other duties. He heard all the Masses he could and would be found seated in chapel, his slight figure bent somewhat to one side, alone with God. This aloneness was perhaps increased by a type of deafness with which he was afflicted for many years, increasing towards the end, so that he lived in a world of silence. To this was added the cross of failing eyesight, which prevented him in the last months of his life from saying Mass. But he accepted these burdens, as he accepted all things in his life, from the hands of a good God, who had his own mysterious ways of arranging things, and no one heard him complain. May he rest in peace and may he bless us all from his home in Heaven. Amen.