

Salesian Residential Technical School,  
St. Patrick's, Sliema — Malta

Dear Confreres,

It is my sad duty to announce to you the recent death of Brother John Caruana Scicluna which occurred during the early hours of Sunday 6th December 1981, in the 86th year of his age and 63rd of his religious profession.

Bro. John comes of a very pious stock. Two other members of his family entered the Religious life. One joined the Ursuline Sisters and the other the De La Salle Brothers.

Bro. John was born in Mellicha on 11th July 1895. At the age of ten he lost his father, who was district medical officer. Then the family settled in Sliema, where for the first time he came in contact with the Salesians.

At this stage, in the short space of two months, he lost his dear mother and three other members of his family, who died of typhoid fever. He himself caught the disease, but was spared and he took this as a sign that God wanted him to follow his vocation, which he felt growing in his heart since some time.

At the age of 19 he went to Sicily to continue his studies and prepare for the noviciate. His intention was to become a priest, but due to difficulties in classical languages and his weak eyesight, he asked to be accepted as a brother.

In Sicily he spent 9 years altogether and in 1923 he got the obedience for St. Patrick's where, he remained for the rest of his life: 58 years of a most exemplary Salesian presence. He carried out his duties with utmost scrupolosity. For many years he was infirmarian and linenarian.

When his age did no longer permit him to do strenuous work, he made himself useful in many ways. He was put in charge of the repository. For him it was an apostolate, a means of promoting God's love and devotion to Our Blessed Lady and the saints.

He joined the boys in recreation and had a way with him how to turn the conversation heavenwards.

Very often he was seen talking to individual boys. If a boy was sad he would try to cheer him up and ask him to offer up his little sorrow.

But where he excelled most was in his love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Mass and Holy Communion were the great moments of his day. People were edified by his composure and faith. He spent hours before the Blessed Sacrament. It was a regular thing to see him up to 10.30 p.m. in the community chapel recollected in prayer. We certainly miss now this example of a sincere and deep piety. He prayed daily for St. Patrick's and we are sure that now he does it from a more vantage point.

We take the sanctuary lamp for granted and we take notice of it when the light goes out. We took Bro. John for granted day in, day out. But now that he is gone, we feel his absence deeply.

He had a great concern for the spiritual and temporal welfare of confreres and boys alike. Always with an encouraging word on his lips; always pointing heavenwards; without fuss, unobtrusively; and that was the way he went to God.

On the night of December 6th he experienced difficulty in breathing; got out of bed; called the priest next door and with the greatest simplicity asked for

the Last Sacraments. Around 3.30 a.m. the ambulance arrived and he was taken to St. Luke's Hospital, where he was given emergency treatment, while the Catechist, the Bursar and myself stood by, hoping that he would get over the crisis. The doctor did not give us much hope as Brother's lungs were saturated with fluid and oxygen had to be administered to him. However, after some time he did improve and was taken to a ward upstairs. It was now 4.00 a.m. Re-assured by this improvement, we said good-bye to him and told him we would be back later in the morning. He took off the oxygen cup and said: "Please pray for me." They were his last spoken words.

As we required some information, we were instructed to wait in the corridor. Not long after, the nurse came over to the phone and called the doctor to come up. The doctor went over to see Brother. Some minutes later he came up to us and said: "I am sorry to tell you that Brother has passed away." We were very surprised as he didn't look that bad. It was around 4.35 a.m. We went over to him. His face showed no sign of strain; he looked as if he had just gone to sleep. The news spread quickly around, and everyone felt deeply the loss of such a lovable personality.

The funeral Mass took place in St. Patrick's church, where he spent so many long hours before the Blessed Sacrament and the statue of Mary Help of Christians, whom he loved dearly.

Fr. J. Borg, our Provincial Delegate, officiated at the Mass, with the communities of Sliema and Dingli and the Parish Priest as concelebrants, in the presence of relatives, the boys of St. Patrick's and many friends, who filled the church to capacity.

Bro. John's mortal remains were laid to rest in the Salesian grave at the Addolarata cemetery.

During an interview, he was asked if he had anything to say to young confreres, as a Salesian of long experience. "They must bear in mind, he said, that they came into the Congregation not to enjoy themselves or look for high positions, but to do good to others and work for the glory of God. Of course, he concluded, this entails sacrifice and they have to be prepared for it." That is exactly what he did all his life.

We thank God for the great gift he bestowed on St. Patrick's in the person of Bro. John for 58 years.

We are certain he was a holy man, but God's judgements are not our judgements and so I commend his soul to the charity of your prayers.

Please, remember also the many needs of this House, where the memory of our dear Brother will be cherished for many years to come.

Fr. J. Giorgio, S.D.B.  
Rector

#### Data for the Necrology:

*Bro. John Caruana Sicluna was born in Mellieħa, Malta on 11th July 1895. Died in St. Luke's Hospital, Gwardamangia, Malta on 6th December 1981, in the 86 year of his age and 63rd of Religious Profession.*