



St. James's  
Chestnut Grove  
Bootle  
Merseyside L20 4LX

August 1987

**FATHER LAWRENCE CASTELVECCHI**

Dear Confreres and Friends,

On Wednesday June 17th Fr. Lawrence Castelvechi suffered a severe and prolonged heart attack, the effects of which were to prove fatal in spite of the medical attention and care he received from the sisters and staff at Park House. On Friday July 3rd Fr. Bailey and I visited Lawrence and were both considerably distressed by his condition. Nevertheless the sisters, while recognising the seriousness of his condition were hopeful that the crisis was over. "All he needs" said the sister "is rest and quiet". These words were to prove sadly prophetic. He passed quietly and peacefully to the Lord he loved so much in the early hours of the following morning Saturday July 4th. It was a great shock to us all, but even this was mitigated by the knowledge we had of his continual closeness to God. Within the hour of receiving the news I rang his family in Carlisle. His brother's response to me was "Lawrence is where he always wanted to be."

The hymn "Going Home" which we sang at the reception of his body into St. James' Church seemed particularly appropriate for Lawrence. His journey to God began when he was baptised in the church of Our Lady in Carlisle soon after his birth there on January 26th 1925. There too within a closely knit family he took the first steps in following Jesus as he also developed his tremendous intellectual potential which he was later to place at the disposal of that Lord and Master. It is very typical of the man who fed his own details into the Provincial computer that he should be very reticent about his early academic career. We know that he graduated from Durham University in Physics and that while there he played Rugby.

Lawrence came into contact with the Salesians at Farnborough while doing National Service with the Army in Aldershot. Here he was involved in the development of Radar. Having spent some time in Cowley as an aspirant he made his novitiate in Beckford in 1949. He was professed on September 8th 1950 and went to Shrigley for three years. Here he did tremendous work in establishing science laboratories. In 1953 after taking his final vows on September 21st he went to the Crocetta to study Theology obtaining his STL. He returned to Shrigley to be ordained to the Priesthood on July 15th 1956. He then went on to Beckford to begin a long association with the students of Philosophy that was to last thirteen years. He was Catechist there until 1965 and then Rector until 1969. These were difficult years, times of change and upheaval for the Church and Religious life following Vatican II. They must have been especially stressful for a man of such a delicate and sensitive nature. They were also happy and fruitful years during which he was able to pass on to these young men his scientific expertise, while also constructing and preparing equipment to make this possible. He was also able to give them from his own study and understanding insights into the meaning and purpose of the changes taking place in the Church.

In 1969 he left Beckford to spend a year teaching at Farnborough and then a further three at Thornleigh, Bolton. From 1973 -1974 he was attached to Savio House and during this period he spent some time at the Pisana in Rome.

From 1974 - 1976 he was again in Thornleigh teaching Physics and then went on to Bootle as Rector where he combined this heavy responsibility with a teaching programme. From 1982 - 1983 he was Bursar and Vice Rector at Shrigley during the last difficult months of the College. In 1983 he went to Cowley as Rector and Provincial Secretary. During this time he computerised the provincial files laying the basis of a very efficient system.

In September 1985 Fr. Castelvechi returned to Bootle as Bursar. Very soon his expertise was needed in the teaching sphere at first to help with Sixth Form computer studies. In January 1987 he agreed to join the staff on a temporary basis in the Physics department. He willingly undertook these extra duties in spite of ill health.

Lawrence did much to help us all in his quiet way applying his practical skill to all sorts of problems, however, his major contribution to us as a community was rather what he was than what he did. His personal closeness to God had its effect on us all. His busy mind was engaged with problems of life and faith. His quiet positive influence for good, was best summed up by a Sixth form pupil. "Without him I would never have passed my exams, but much more than that he helped me to find God again."

His brother and sister and their families joined us in St. James' for a very moving celebration of his final stage of his journey to God. We pray for them in their grief. We thank God for lending him to us.

Yours sincerely in Don Bosco.

Fr. John Kavanagh S.D.B.

**Date for Necrology:**

**Fr. Lawrence Castelvechi, Born on January 26th 1925 in Carlisle, England. Died while Bursar in the Salesian Community, Bootle on July 4th 1987 at the age of 62 years after 37 years of profession and 31 years of the Priesthood.**

