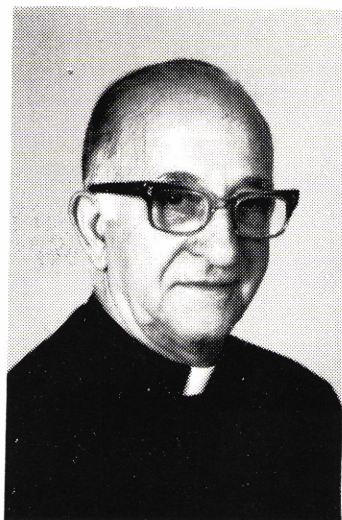


Archbishop Shaw High School  
Salesian Lane (P. O. Box 132)  
Marrero, Louisiana



Dear Confreres,

In the history of every Province we meet those "special" Salesians who through their warmth, genuineness and human tenderness steal a place in the very heart of the Province so that every confrere who comes in contact with them falls under the spell of their great Salesian hearts. Such a man was our brother

### **FATHER THEODORE CIAMPI**

On Thursday, June 11, 1987 at 5:45 P.M. "Fr. Ted" told the nurse who was with him "I'm going home now"—and he quietly and peacefully shut his eyes and passed away. Months before, in a homily for a funeral Mass, he wrote: "It is an old saying that 'the best part of traveling is coming home!' This is true more than ever for the great journey of life, for the best part of it is coming home to God—where we came from—where we belong." For Fr. Ted, the last ten months of that journey were filled with pain and suffering caused by terminal cancer and a spirit of resignation that spoke loudly of a deep and sustaining faith. With his death, our Province has lost one of its Salesian giants, whose memory continues to be an inspiration for all of us.

Fr. Ted was born June 20, 1907 in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. The son of immigrant parents, and one of nine children, Fr. Ted was always grateful to God for his family and for the "good Christian common sense" his parents used in raising him. He was raised in hard times and worked various jobs as he continued his education. He graduated from Teachers' College in 1929 and taught in various Catholic and public schools—even spending some time teaching at the famous Jewish Yeshiva University in New York City. During the Depression he worked for social services and was greatly impressed by the hardships of so many families he met. A man of many talents and interests, in 1939 he played the role of a "palm reader" in the New York World's Fair—and some forty years later, was still willing to put on a turban and play the part of the seer at our high school's annual fair! In the Fall of 1939, Fr. Ted came to Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey to begin his Salesian formation. In a letter written to "Mr. Ciampi" in November of that year, the Provincial, Fr. Ambrose Rossi, wrote: "It seems Don Bosco has taken full possession of your heart." Indeed, those words were prophetic. On September 8, 1941, Fr. Ted made his first Religious Profession and for the next forty-six years there was nothing too big or too small that he was not willing to do for Don Bosco and the spread of his mission.

There at Newton in those early days, he taught his companions English and opened their minds to so much of what was going on in the world at that time. He immediately won the hearts of his students—who were his peers—and proved to be a challenge to the closed attitude of some of the superiors at that time. He prided himself on being up with the times and even at the age of 79 could talk to our young people about the latest music, rock singers and movies.

On June 29, 1949 Fr. Ted was ordained a priest in

Don Bosco Chapel in Newton, New Jersey. He said his ordination motto had been given to him by Fr. Rossi years before: "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." The tenor of his life showed how he lived that motto.

Many things can be said about Fr. Ted. In 1946 he was part of the group which pioneered our work in Boston. In 1955 he pioneered our work in Sherbrooke, Canada and to this day still kept in contact with many of his Canadian past pupils. In 1962 he pioneered our work at Archbishop Shaw High School in Louisiana. In 1970 he pioneered the novitiate in Ipswich, Massachusetts. During those years he held various positions: Catechist, Prefect of Studies, Prefect, teacher and assistant, perpetual Camp Master, Parish Administrator, Guidance Counselor, cook, janitor and all-around moderator for whatever activities needed a Salesian presence. Most of the time he was doing five or six of these jobs at once. During those years he also continued his own education getting a Master's Degree in Guidance. After his death, I received a letter from a Holy Cross Brother in the Guidance Counselor's Association here in New Orleans. He wrote: "Father was loved and respected by the counselors in all our Catholic high schools. We enjoyed his company as a religious and a friend."

Throughout this time he was constantly being recalled to Newton to teach our young philosophers and to beef up the College education programs. As a result of his work in Newton, Fr. Ted always had a special love, interest and concern for our young Salesians. Who of us who had him in class can forget his wit and practical, down to earth common sense solutions of dealing with teenagers in a classroom? In 1970, at the age of 63, he was appointed Novice Master and with his usual sense of humor declared that even now in his old age the superiors were making sure that he had to "strive for perfection." He loved



the novices and each of them found in him a kind-hearted father. He would talk of each class as if it were a "batch" of cookies—and was tremendously concerned that none of his novices would finish the novitiate "half baked." After completing a six year term as Novice Master, in 1976 he was appointed Director of our Retreat House in Ipswich, Massachusetts for three years. Then, in 1979, at the age of 72—ever young in heart, spirit and outlook and physically "blessed with good health" as he would say—he was sent here to Archbishop Shaw High School as Guidance Counselor. He was happy to let it be known that finally he was getting an opportunity to use his Guidance Degree! No words can describe Fr. Ted's role here at Shaw—a friend and "grandpa" to the young people he guided—a much sought after Confessor—faithfully present at his assistance duty in the playground and locker room areas, substituting classes and ever punctual at student activities and games. In the community, he was involved in all our activities: ever present at prayer, taking his turn preaching and giving Good Nights, purchasing our food supplies, serving as Sunday cook, helping out on Sunday service in the neighboring parishes. He was proud of what he called his "ministry to the elderly"—caring for a senior citizen's residence located nearby the school—most of whose occupants were younger than he! Fr. Ted took part in all the community happenings—even insisting he get his turn to sing the Christmas novena!

In August 1986, the doctor discovered an intestinal growth and insisted Fr. Ted have surgery. Fr. Ted wanted to wait because he did not want to "upset the beginning of the school year." However, obedient as usual, he had the surgery and it was found that he had cancer. It was the first time in 79 years that he was really sick. The day of the surgery, as we waited for the doctor's report, he quoted to me his favorite line from Dante: "In His will is our peace." For the next ten months, Fr. Ted exemplified



for our community and our Province the depth of a truly Salesian heart which conformed itself to the Lord's will.

As the months passed, Fr. Ted's body became ravaged with cancer, and in the last weeks at times even his mind would be affected. The doctor told us that the only thing keeping Fr. Ted alive was his strong heart—his body had wasted away long before his great heart stopped beating. His was a heart that was deeply human, the heart of an educator, a truly "Salesian" heart and it is Fr. Ted's goodness of heart that we will most remember.

Fr. Ted will always be remembered and loved for his affectionate and fatherly heart. A ready smile, it seemed Fr. Ted could not pass anyone without handing him a piece of candy, a "cough drop for your throat"—or some such goodie. He loved to shop—and never went out without bringing home a little thing for the community's enjoyment. A priest in our Province wrote to Fr. Ted reminiscing a time the clerics in Newton went to an Atlantic City Convention—each given very little money to spend. The priest writes "Tony and I were on the convention floor in Atlantic City for the NCEA; there you asked us: 'Do you have enough money?'" I was so touched with your fatherliness, your kindness, your consideration. You let your students know that you really cared for them" I, myself, recall that as assistant to the novices, while Fr. Ted was Master, he discovered I enjoyed jelly beans. Every year from that time on—even these years as his Director—every Easter I could count on receiving a little package of jelly beans from Fr. Ted! He always kept a candy bowl on his desk in the Guidance office—a way to the heart of his boys. An incident occurred just a couple of weeks before he had to go to the nursing facility. Fr. Ted was not feeling well; it was a cold, damp, rainy day and I looked up from my desk and standing in the corridor was

Fr. Ted, trembling and leaning on his cane. "What are you doing here?" He pulled a huge chocolate bar out of his pocket—it was for one of the boys who was having trouble in his studies—"He passed everything on his report card and scored the most points in the basketball game last night. He deserves some encouragement," said Fr. Ted. Stories such as these seem endless. "Pass out the bug-juice"—getting Fr. Tozzi to wear an "I like Ike pin"—"Philip's 66"—"Number one at the board and number two in your seats"—smuggling baseball scores to the novices at a time when they were not allowed to see a newspaper—are all phrases and events that trigger off happy memories in all of us who fell under the spell of Fr. Ted's great human heart.

Fr. Ted truly had the heart of an educator. He brought out the best in his students and loved to teach. A mother wrote to me, "Fr. Ted will always have a special place in our hearts and we will always remember his kindness to our son. Truly, he touched all our lives and we shall never forget him." He will always be remembered for his "memory gems" and famous Bell-curve with the reminder, "It's C students that run the world!" At times he would get frustrated saying he wished he were younger so he could get back in the classroom and do more. He was always willing to help and give a good word or some advice to a younger brother just beginning his practical training. Any of us who ever lived with him had the experience of picking up the newspaper and finding a hole in it because Fr. Ted had cut out some educational article that he thought "so and so" should be sure to read. "So and so" would find the article in his mailbox all underlined with the points Fr. Ted thought were important! In these last years he frequently expressed deep concern that perhaps we were not giving enough attention to our schools and that our young Salesians did not understand and appreciate enough the apostolate of the classroom.

In all of this, he was the Salesian priest always available to hear the confessions of the boys. One day while in the nursing facility, he was a bit confused due to medication. When I went in to visit him, he scolded me—wanting to know how I could sit and talk with him when there was a long line of boys waiting to go to confession. "Hurry," he said, "go hear their confessions. I wish I could help!"

Perhaps the best description of Fr. Ted—the educator—came from the boys themselves. In 1963, the students of our high school in East Boston dedicated their yearbook to him. The Dedication reads:

Ours is a different sort of youth, perhaps more aware, perhaps more disillusioned, than any youth in history. Here at Saint Dominic Savio High School we will always remember Father Ciampi as a man that stuck to his principles, no matter what the cost. He was to us a completely selfless person who gave his heart and soul to the education of young men. We humbly dedicate this yearbook to Reverend Theodore Ciampi because he helped boys become men by being a man.

Fr. Ted had a truly Salesian heart which could best be expressed by his commitment to the "Big O"—obedience. In Fr. Ted, we found the ideal which Don Bosco presented to us: someone who was ready to preach at one moment, cook the next, then go to the classroom, and later to hear confessions. Fr. Ted was available. With his novices, he constantly emphasized the importance of the "Big O" and lived as a model of ready obedience.

I remember talking with him one day about a change of assignment and he said to me that all his life he had tried to obey, and now in his old age he would



be no different—he was available for whatever the Provincial wanted. As his sickness progressed, we watched as each day he slowly and painfully detached himself from his own will accepting that he could no longer do what he wanted to anymore. For almost seven months after the surgery he stayed with the community—asking only for the grace that he die at home. Finally, the day came when the pain was so great he could not stand it. The doctor came to the house and insisted we move him to the nearby nursing facility. Fr. Ted cried, he did not want to go. After accompanying the doctor to the door, I went back to the room and told Fr. Ted the decision was his—that if he really did not want to go to the nursing home he did not have to go. Fr. Ted was crying, "I don't want to go" he said, "but I know we should obey the doctor. It's God's will." That spirit of availability to God's will was a marvel to all of us. The humility with which he accepted having to become dependent was a constant sermon to each of us. What a sacrifice it was for him when he could no longer celebrate Mass! All he asked was that we pray he grow more patient.

After his death, when we took his Consitution to place in his hands, the one marker in the book was at the section entitled "Our Obedience." These were the only articles which he had underlined and marked and an asterisk was next to the line which reads: "All the confreres collaborate by obeying readily and sincerely with cheerfulness and humility." The day of his death, Fr. Ted was alert and complaining that he wanted to come home. I reminded him of what he said the day the doctor insisted he leave home and that surely now, after all these years of obedience, he would be patient for soon he would get his reward in heaven. He looked at me and simply said, "Okay. I want to go to heaven, I'm so tired."

A few days before June 11, it seemed that Fr. Ted

was in his last agony. A number of times the Community gathered around his bed to say the prayers for the dying. On Thursday, Fr. Ted rallied, and it seemed he would go on for a few weeks longer. Around five o'clock that afternoon he even asked for "a little beer." He had some beer and he and I spoke for a while. I told him I would be back after supper with other members of the Community, but he "went home" to heaven before we could return.

Fr. Ted would not want this letter to end without a special word about this community in which he wanted so much to die. A couple of months after his surgery, Fr. Ted thanked us for all the attention he had been shown--but little did any of us know at that time how much was ahead before he went to the nursing home: caring for him, feeding him, changing him, helping him take care of all his needs, taking turns spending nights to listen for any emergency he might have--every confrere in the community from the oldest to the youngest happily took his turn to serve Fr. Ted without any complaint in spite of the many other responsibilities each one had. Through the presence of Fr. Ted our community experienced in a vivid and real way those words of Article 53 in the Constitutions, and Fr. Ted became for us a source of blessing which enriched our family spirit and deepened our unity. One of our young confreres in practical training expressed it well: "Fr. Ted did so much more for us than we ever did for him."

My dear Confreres, it would be sad if Fr. Ted remained merely a beautiful memory for us. One of our confreres from the San Francisco Province wrote to me, "We will miss Ted but he so filled our hearts with his love that it will take a lifetime to share it." By the witness of his life, Fr. Ted taught us how to love and his memory challenges us to love in that same selfless way.

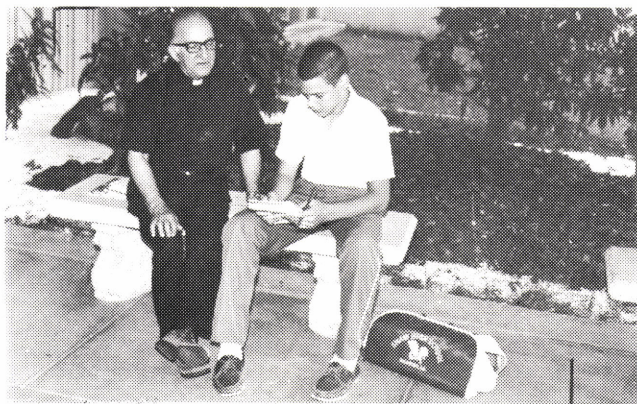
As you pray for Fr. Ted, please pray for this community which greatly misses him; for the intentions of his surviving brothers and sisters; and for his many friends who now count on his heavenly support.

Fraternally in Don Bosco,

Fr. Patrick Angelucci, S.D.B.  
Director



Where Fr. Ted was most at home -- amongst the boys



Helping the young, 1986

Data for Necrology: **Father Theodore Ciampi**, born on June 20, 1907 in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania; died June 11, 1987 in Marrero, Louisiana at the age of 79, after 46 years of religious profession and 38 years of priesthood.



A Prayer of Praise written by Fr. Ted during the last Retreat he made in June, 1986.

All praise and honor be to you Lord God almighty  
Thanks be to God for gift of this Directed Retreat  
Through the light of your guide and the silent times  
with your Son and His word, trust has been  
strengthened and faith revitalized to renew my fidelity  
and perseverance in His love. Awareness of these  
blessings and in gratitude I pen these words of  
praise and thanksgiving.

Praise and glory to our Creator  
from earth and sky and sea  
Praise and glory from all creatures  
for thy Son's gifts to me.

Thanks be to God for His unconditional love.  
Thanks be to God for the gift of life.  
Thanks be to God for His word.

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for Christian parents and Baptism

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for a Christian family

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for brothers and sisters

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for my Church and pastors

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for my teachers

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for my vocation

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for our congregation

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for our apostolate to youth

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for my confirmation and the Holy Spirit

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for the sacraments

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for my successes

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for the weather

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for my failures

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for Christmas

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for Easter

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for my health

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for my work

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for the wonders and beauty of nature

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for my friends

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for time

Thanks, glory and praise be to God  
for solitude and silence

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for amusements

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for laughter

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for a sense of humor

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for the guiding lights of Scripture

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for spiritual direction

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for daily contacts with Jesus

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for food, shelter and clothing

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for reconciliation

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for forgiveness especially of my sins

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for the spirit of joy and cheerfulness

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for heaven

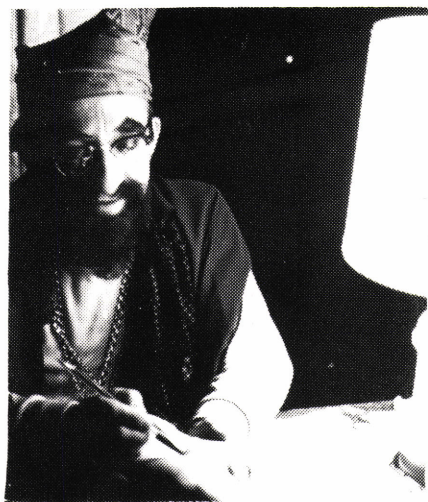
Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for the prophets

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for the missionaries

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for the preachers

Thanks, glory and praise to God  
for the saints and the communion of saints

**ONMIA POSSUM IN EO QUI ME CONFORTAT!**



Reading palms, 1984



Cooking for the novices, 1973



Fun Night at Camp Don Bosco, 1946



On the beach with the novices in Ipswich, 1971



LEFT: Mt. Don Bosco in the 1950' s

RIGHT: His favorite spot : The Grotto in Newton, 1944



SINGING "April Showers in a play at Newton in 1970