

Dear Confreres,

"The Lord has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you but to
do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly
with God."
(Micheas 6:8)

FATHER HENRY V. CLEGG, S.D.B.

spent the last day of his life in the Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford. A weak and tired heart needed the special facilities of the Hospital. Then followed a serious heart attack. He died before midnight on April 25th, 1979. He was in his 76th year of age, and within one year of his Golden Jubilee of priesthood. A Salesian confrere who saw Father Clegg a short time before his death tells us that his departure was quiet, uncomplaining, unobtrusive—much after the manner and content of his life.

The Mass of Requiem took place on Wednesday, May 2nd in the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians, Cowley, Oxford. Some twenty Salesian priests from the local community and other Houses shared the Concelebrated Mass with Father Provincial, Father Rector and the Parish Priest, and Father W. J. Chadwick, S.D.B. from Battersea preached the homily. Relatives from Accrington and local friends were present at the Mass and the Burial Service at Rose Hill Cemetery. This valedictory day is the special occasion when fellow Salesians are sensitive to their bonded solidarity with a deceased confrere, expressing appreciation for his life of service and dedication in the congregation, as well as an expression of consolation and sympathy for relatives and friends of the deceased.

Humanly speaking one could say that the 25th April 1979 was the end of the road for Father Clegg, the terminus of a life begun in Accrington, Lancashire on the 29th October 1903, the eldest son of Henry and Lucy (nee King) Clegg. The County of Lancashire, a stronghold of the Catholic Faith in England, has always been a rich source of Salesian vocations . . . and especially that enclave of East Lancs which has fostered and provided so many suitable members for Salesian ranks since the early decades of our Province. For much of this, under God's grace and direction, we were indebted in depth to the inspiration and apostolate of the Jesuit, Father Lester. Father Clegg was a protégé of Father Lester and arrived in Battersea in January 1918, the last year of World War One. After two years at Battersea he joined the Novitiate at Burwash in September 1920. The Novices moved to Cowley, Oxford, in January 1921. Then followed a period of two years of Philosophy studies, with the triennial period of teaching at Burwash and Farnborough, and the four-year course in Theology at Farnborough and Turin, Italy. The great day of Ordination to the priesthood came in June 1930, in the Crocetta, Turin.

A phrase that occurs repeatedly in the earlier letters of Obedience received by Father Henry: "Teacher and Assistant". The few

variations in his appointment include: Socius to the Novice Master in 1930; Parish work in Guernsey 1949-53, and Catechist in Cape Town 1932-35. There is nothing here that could be called distinguished, nothing to which ambition aspires, nothing that would suggest his name for a building or tower-block, for a memorial or plaque, for a picture or chalice or even a vestment.

How does one evaluate the life, the work, the contribution to a Salesian House, to the Society, to the Church, of such a confrere? Perhaps the Gospel story of St. Joseph, of the Apostles - simple, undistinguished and hidden disciples - may help with an answer.

But the real answer is contained in the theme of St. John's Gospel chosen for his Funeral Mass (John VI : 35-40): This is the Will of the Father that those who accept the Son will receive eternal life. The evaluation of the life and work of a priest or Religious is measured in the context of Eternal Life. Many talents or the lack of them, good health or prolonged illness, expanding years or a short life are not the measuring standards for eternity.

The last twelve years of Father Clegg's life were years of increasing difficulty in health and mobility. They may well have been the most fruitful years of his long life. For the elderly the advancing years can be a period of frustration and loneliness, but the amenities provided by the Welfare State and the helpful understanding of colleagues help to alleviate the difficulties. But in the final analysis the quality of advancing years depends, in the case of priests and religious, on the individual concerned, of willingness to give rather than on wanting to receive, on a deepening appreciation of prayer and of the great consolations that only God can give. Those who knew Father Henry can vouch for his attachment to Holy Mass and the prayer programme of Salesian life.

The Provincial archives provide what are known as the "Curricula Vitae" of Salesian members of the Province. Father Clegg's "Curriculum" shows a lengthy list of Houses to which Obedience called him in his fruitful priestly life. It reads like an impressive 'Cooks Tours'! Places as far-flung as Cape Town, Guernsey and Pallaskenry figure early in his appointments, and nearer home are Cowley, Battersea, Beckford, Chertsey and Ingersley. Then later in the mid-sixties came illness and a convalescing period in Stroud, Glos. His final change came in the early Seventies . . . to Cowley.

Father Clegg was always prepared for the moment when Our Lord would call him. The daily Rosary played an important part in his preparation. May I ask the prayers of all confreres and friends for Father Clegg that his gentle soul be granted the peace and happiness of Heaven.

Yours affectionately in D.B.



W. J. FAIRCLOUGH,