



FATHER ADAM BERNARD CONNOLLY, S.D.B.

Dear Confreres,

FR. ADAM BERNARD CONNOLLY, affectionately known as "Father A.B.C.", was born on May 23, 1904 in Willington, county Durham in northeastern England. His father was Adam Connolly (who was born in County Cavan, Ireland) and his mother was Bridget Rice who was born in Bishop Auckland, County Durham.

After local Catholic school he attended the Salesian Boarding school in Farnborough in Hampshire. On finishing high school, he entered the Salesian novitiate at that time located in Burwash in Sussex, and professed his vows on September 17, 1921. He was ordained a priest in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin on July 6, 1930.

During his long Salesian life, Fr. Connolly fulfilled a variety of ministries in England, Ireland, South Africa, the Channel Islands, Rome and latterly since 1968 in the United States. Quoting John Wesley, he would say with more than a touch of whimsy: "the world is my parish".

Fr. Connolly was not a highly organized person, as those few who ever gained privileged access to the fortress that was his room well knew! Like most of his countrymen, in his personal life he was a very private person. Neither was he an intellectual, and he would be the first to rejoice in the fact; his gifts were different. He might not have been familiar with Rahner or Lonergan, but he was much at home with the lives of the saints, particularly with the life and thoughts of his beloved John Henry Newman.

Those who knew him well will recall his many endearing characteristics and special gifts. First there was his enthusiastic love of people. He enjoyed nothing better than being, as he used to say, "in the midst of the people of God." This was especially true at time of celebration in their lives, whether baptisms, confirmations, or weddings, as well as in times of sadness, hospitalization and bereavement. In fact, participating in funerals was one of his cherished apostolic activities. He was completely at home with people, whoever and wherever they were. That did not exclude fraternizing with them in the local pub, joining in their merriment or reciting and singing some of the many songs and ballads from his extensive repertoire. It was often in these perhaps unlikely circumstances that people spontaneously brought him their problems and listened to his words that bespoke empathy and simple wisdom.

A second attractive quality of Fr. Connolly was that he was thoughtful and kind to a degree and never forgot a kindness rendered. This spirit of generosity was coupled with earnest priestly zeal. When it was a question of helping or substituting in a local or distant parish he was always eager to oblige and take any pains to bring the comfort of the sacraments to those who were sick or shut-in.

A third quality for which Fr. Connolly will be remembered, especially by his own Salesian confreres, was his community spirit

which was precious beyond words. His many little foibles, quaint sayings, his rather original interpretation of some liturgical norms, his irrepressible joie de vivre and sense of fun all combined to ensure that dullness was absent when he was present. Yet, never was a coarse word or expression known to fall from his lips.

It was as a priest, however, that he made the deepest impression on those who knew him well. His simple unshakeable faith found its supreme expression in the sacrificial and sacramental ministry of the priest. The Mass was the anchor of his life. The day he could not offer Mass was for him a non event, nor would he ever pass up an opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist. He loved everything associated with the sanctuary and the worship of the Lord. There was no more ardent patron of the copious use of holy water and aromatic incense! From time to time he was heard to quote his mother's firmly held sentiment: "You are the Lord's anointed."

Fr. Connolly was deeply convinced that the priest, despite his human inadequacies, is chosen, called, and sent to proclaim the good news of the Saviour and to share in a special and unique manner the power of Christ the high priest. He also realized that this did not make the priest better than others or entitle him to any special privileges.

He was indeed proud of his priestly vocation of being the servant and minister of the Lord. The homilist at his funeral stated: "We realize that 'never' and 'always' are words to be used with a good measure of caution. But I fear no contradiction when I say that Fr. Connolly was always and everywhere a priest: at the altar, in the confessional, in the community and in the marketplace. To paraphrase the words of Cardinal Bernardin to his priests: he did not try to hide or downplay his special divine calling by espousing values or adopting a lifestyle that would cloud his true identity and that would ultimately betray his vocation.

The greatest tribute we can pay to him and the one I believe he would humbly most appreciate is to acknowledge very simply: "Father Connolly was a good priest and a loyal Salesian."

Fr. Connolly passed from this life on May 12, 1987. He had been enduring the sufferings of a heart ailment for an extended

period of time. Throughout his illness, Fr. Connolly gave witness to the deep faith that animated his life. The last word Fr. Connolly was heard to utter was "Alleluia"!

May he rest in peace.

Fraternally in Don Bosco.

Rev. James B. Curran, SDB
Pastor
St. Rosalie Parish
Harvey, Louisiana



Data for Necrology: Father Adam Bernard Connolly, S.D.B.
Born: Willington, England
May 23, 1904
Professed: Burwash, England
September 17, 1921
Ordained: Turin, Italy
July 6, 1930
Died: Suffern, New York
May 12, 1987