



Fr. John Dal Maso, S.D.B. 243076



The San Francisco Province was saddened by the news of the death of Father John Dal Maso, SDB on Sunday, April 6, 1997. Father John died peacefully at the Jeanne Jugan Residence in San Pedro, California, a skilled nursing facility which is operated by the Little Sisters of the Poor. For the five months preceding his death, Father battled to reduce the size of a malignant brain tumor which had severely weakened him and finally obliged him to spend his last months confined to his bed.

In the month before his death he lost the ability to communicate; he recognized visitors but was not able to speak with them. The confreres of this Salesian community and other communities in Southern California were frequent visitors. The Little Sisters were heroic in their attentiveness to Father's needs and constantly ministered and prayed with and over him in his last weeks and hours. His family in Italy was kept informed as to his condition throughout his illness.

A rosary and vigil took place at 7:30 PM in the school chapel of St. John Bosco High School in Bellflower on Tuesday, April 8; a funeral Mass was celebrated at 9:30 AM on Wednesday with students, faculty and Salesians present. A Mass of the Resurrection and burial took place at Salesian High School, Richmond, California on Thursday, April 10 at 11:00 AM. followed by burial in our Salesian Cemetery on the grounds of the High School in Richmond.

A Short Biography

"Giovanni "was born in Schio (province of Vicenza), Italy, on February 5, 1911 to Giovanni and Maddalena Raumer Dal Maso. In his own memoirs, Father John attests to the fact that he grew up in a deeply religious family. Three of the children: Eligio, Antonio and John eventually became Salesian priests. As a youngster, John frequented the Salesian Oratory in his own town of Schio, and it was there he gave thought to becoming a Salesian and a missionary, following the example of his brother Antonio. However, when he joined the Salesian Society at the "Istituto Missionario Cardinal Cagliero" in Ivrea he was not directed to Asia as he had thought. Instead, the Director, Fr. Ambrose Rossi, sent him to the United States and finally to the newly established San Francisco Province. In the next three years (1927-1930) he prepared for his novitiate with one year of philosophy and after his novitiate he professed his first vows as a Salesian of Don Bosco in Richmond, California on September 8, 1929; he completed college studies at the Salesian House of Studies in Richmond, which was then in the process of affiliating with the newly established Don Bosco College across the continent in Newton, New Jersey. John Dal Maso's name, in fact, is the first listed in the student roster of Don Bosco College: his student transcripts identify him with the matriculation number 0001. During the following three summers he attended St. Mary's College in Moraga, California.

After three years of practical training (1930-1932 at Sts. Peter and Paul's School in San Francisco and 1932-33 in Watsonville) he began



May 30, 1930. Formation Community. "Salesian House of Studies", Richmond, CA. First row(l to r) George Hacker, David Zunino, Thomas De Matei (Master of Novices), Robert Wieczorek (Director), John Dal Maso, Francis Hilber, Felix Penna. Middle Row: James Collins, Robert Ferguson. Top row: Emmanuel Stettmayer, Caesar Montali.

his theological studies while attending to assistance duties and some light teaching (1934-35). "Bro. John" completed his theological studies in his native Italy, at the International Studentate of Crocetta (Turin) in 1937. He was ordained to the priesthood in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin on July 4, 1937 by His Excellency Most Rev. Bishop Felice Guerra, SDB.

For 14 years Father John worked as a teacher and administrator at Salesian House of Studies, Richmond and St. John Bosco School, Bellflower. In 1951, he was part of the pioneer group of Salesians that established Don Bosco's work in the western Canada, first in Edmonton, Alberta and then in Vancouver, British Columbia.

In 1957, he became director of St. Mary's School in Edmonton. Here he brought his own "oratory" experiences to bear on building a curriculum designed for at-risk youth: sports, dramat-

ics, technical training, academics and religious activities were to be blended, he used to say, so that every young person could find something of interest. At a time when few schools in Edmonton

himself useful in whatever capacity he was needed. This was very important to him. He loved this school and its boys.

The Dal Maso Style

Short in stature, but active and athletic, Father John Dal Maso impressed young people with his competitive style in play and his easy-going acceptance of everyone in every other environment. He was a man of few words. As director, he brought a sense of "team work" to the Salesian staff, and quietly promoted the talents and abilities of his teachers and house council. He came across as someone who was gentle but self-assured; he believed in giving people their space.

Father John can be remembered for his gentle and kind personality, always emulating the spirit of Don Bosco. An avid sports fan, he attended more practices and games that one could count. Even in his later years when unable to be present at some of the games and matches, he always made it a point to find out game results. Father John can also be remembered for his individual attention to keep-

September 28, 1979. Salesian High School, Richmond. Celebrating 50 Years of Religious Profession. Frs. George Hacker, Robert Ferguson and John Dal Maso first met in Richmond in 1929.

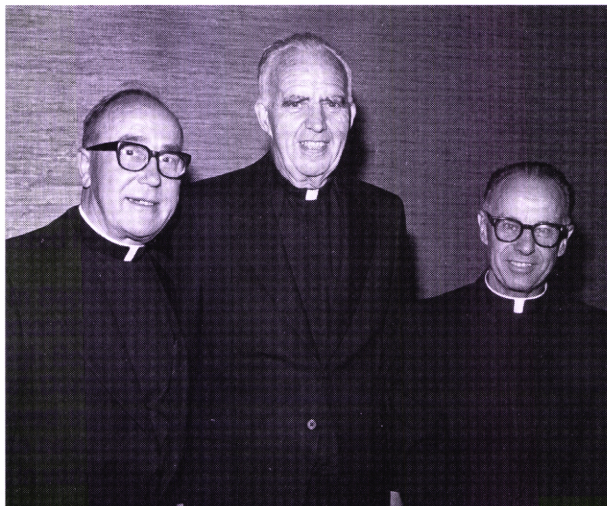
promoted recreation, Fr. John spearheaded the construction of a state-of-the-art gymnasium and ice arena. He also gave impetus to the "industrial arts" curriculum at St. Mary's, and this proved to be a pilot program for Edmonton's secondary schools.

In 1963, Fr. Dal Maso returned to California where he served successively as director at St. Joseph Juniorate in Rosemead (1963-1967), St. John Bosco High School, Bellflower (1967-1973), Don Bosco Tech, Rosemead (1974-1979), St. Francis School, Watsonville (1979-1984). In each of these schools, he brought the same sense of team-work that had characterized his leadership in Canada.

In September, 1984, he chose to live out his remaining years in retirement at St. John Bosco High School, Bellflower. This he called his "home". During these last years he kept himself involved in many areas of the school's apostolate as a confessor, team chaplain and assisting in various school functions. He made



1967-1973. Fr. John Dal Maso, Director, at his desk. St. John Bosco High School, Bellflower



ing physically fit and active. He could be found regularly each morning pedaling his bicycle around campus.

To attest to his commitment as a priest and as a Salesian, marking his 50th anniversary as a priest in 1987, he said: "Not once in these fifty years was I ever sorry for becoming a priest".

"Father John during his Salesian life was one who was always 'in charge' up until he retired in 1984", remarked Father Richard Presenti, Director of St. John Bosco High School, during the homily at Father John's funeral Mass: "We used to joke about Father John being 'Director of one of our communities' longer than anyone else in the history of our province." His longevity in leadership probably stems from his style. "Being in charge" for Father John meant a very quiet and gentle approach to leadership. He was not one to raise his voice. Because of his respectful, quiet inner strength he never had any problems with discipline. The students always knew he was in charge."

Father Tom Juarez, now pastor of St. Luis Rey Parish in Laredo, Texas, has some fond memories of his Director at St. Mary's School in Edmonton. "From Father John I learned what Salesian presence and care were all about. Two things stand out. On Friday and Saturday evenings when often there was nothing to do with the kids, he would join us in the gym where we would play basketball for as many as two consecutive hours, it was run, run, up and down the court, non-stop. He never seemed to tire. All of us had the clear impression that he enjoyed being with us and that it was important for him as the Salesian Director to spend that time with the young.

"Twice a week when the boys were in the evening studyhall, Father John would play music for the duration of the period, thus helping the boys to concentrate on their homework in a calm atmosphere and making studyhall supervision easier for the young Salesians. A delicate touch on his part. When the boys were spending their holidays at home or with some kind family, Father John would take the community to the mountains, the

majestic Canadian Rockies, where we would spend three to four days. What a stroke of kindness! It was a break that we sorely needed. A few days in Yellowstone or at the Grand Canyon, visits to Seattle and Crater Lake or Salt Lake City and Bryce Canyon. John taught me how to live some elements that are essential to our Salesian way of life: **presence to the young, the importance and the sacredness of play, concern for the community, bonta'**. He was a blessing to me and a good teacher."

In a letter to Father John back in 1969, Father Arthur Brainard thanks him for the guidance he had received as an aspirant in Richmond. "I'm sure, he writes, it was due to your kind words and great patience that I've spent the last 53 years as a Salesian."

In conclusion I would like to quote from the last paragraph of the eulogy delivered by Father Richard Presenti on the occasion of Father John's funeral Mass: "We are here to celebrate a life lived in simplicity and faithfulness to the things in which this man believed. He understood that serving the needs of others is what had brought the most happiness to his life. He did the best he could. This is all that God asks of us—to do the best we can- in the best way we know how and I believe that Father John did exactly that. ". May our lives of faith fill us with a never ending desire to live in the shadow of Jesus so that we will be prepared for that day when life really begins for each of us. We pray with sincere hearts that this faithful priest enjoy his new life with the Father, a life of love and understanding which is no longer measured in years."

May Father John rest in peace!

Faternally yours in Don Bosco,

Father Mario Mich, SDB
Province Archivist
For The Community of St. John Bosco High School
Bellflower, California USA

January, 1998