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Fr. Vincent De Bono

Salesian of Don Bosco

13th of August 1923 ~ 25th of January 2002

Fr. Vincent De Bono was born on the 13th of August 1923 in Birkirkara Malta. He attended both primary and secondary school in Sliema. He continued his education at St. Alphonsus Salesian School in Sliema as well.

His vocation began to take shape in 1936, when he started his aspirantate, which lasted up to 1939. At such a tender age, Vincent left our shores to do his prenovitiate in the then turbulent island of Sicily. Indeed, it was a turbulent Europe, one that left its mark on those who happened to be in their formative years. Vincent stuck on, and August of 1942 saw him finishing his novitiate and make his first profession in San Gregorio, still in Sicily.

It was however, the town where his vocation to the Salesian life had its beginnings which had the pride of seeing him take his second profession and lastly his perpetual profession in 1945 and 1948 respectively. During these years, he had already started his work with the young, for during these times he had worked as teacher both in Sliema and in Palermo. It seemed however, that Vincent was destined to travel, this time to England, where he finished his Theology course which he had started in Italy.

It was in England that Vincent became a deacon and where he was eventually ordained priest on the 18th of July 1953. For two years he taught in Oxfordshire returning to Malta in 1955 to work again in Sliema both in the Oratory and in St. Patrick's.

A change of scenery came after a spell of five years, when he went to work in the Gozo Oratory. Here he left his mark not only on the young people amongst whom he worked, but also in the Oratory

building itself which was embellished with a much needed Chapel dedicated to St. John Bosco. Yet again his superiors believed that Fr. Vincent was needed elsewhere, so it was pack one's bags again and leave for Bootle in the U.K. Again, his work was being in charge of a youth centre, a task very close to his heart.

In the meantime, almost thirty years had passed since his first profession, during which he had worked in Italy, the United Kingdom and in Malta. A drastic change came about in 1970 when, for the first time, Fr. Vincent was going to work in a mission country - The Republic of South Africa, specifically in Laudium, an Indian township. Laudium benefited from his energy and dedication for fourteen years, leaving behind him a magnificent church, which the congregation of Laudium built with the help of benefactors from Vincent's native country.

At the age of sixty-one, he returned to Malta, not to retire, but to continue working, this time in St. Patrick's Church, St. Barbara Church and Capua Hospital. Apart from this, he always found time to be present for confession for the boys attending St. Patrick School and maybe, offer a little prayer for the Liverpool football team for which he had always been a vociferous supporter.

The end came as a shock. He died on the 25th of January 2002, aged 79. We lost a greatly admired confrere and a true friend. We paid our last respects three days later, at St. Patrick's Church, where he had spent most of his spring and autumn years.

Fr. Savio Vella SDB
Rector

