

Province of San Francisco,  
CA 94109.

Dear Confreres,

The purpose of these notes is to communicate the departure from this life of our dear confrere

**FATHER DAVID JAMES DE BURGH. S. D. B.**

He passed away on May 23rd 1980 after a sudden attack of acute pancreatitis that kept him in intensive care in the hospital for a period of nine weeks. During this time he was visited daily by his confreres and also by his brother, Hubert, residing in British Columbia. We are still somewhat dazed because of the sudden loss of this confrere so valuable for the apostolate of our Province. Numerous letters from his many friends brought us details of his life and work.

David was born at Kimberley, in the Cape Province of the British Union of South Africa. He was educated by the Newcastle Dominican Sisters and at the Salesian Institute in Cape Town. He was greatly influenced in his vocation by the memory of Fr. Michael De Bary, a Salesian who died in an accident whilst looking for some boys lost in the mist of a high mountain. Information about David's life as a young student comes from Fr. William Ainsworth of the Community at Bolton. David left for England at the age of fourteen with two other aspirants and remained at Shrigley for the next three years. In 1936 he entered the novitiate at Beckford where he was greatly influenced by Fr. James Simonetti and later, during his years of practical training, by Fr. E. Tozzi and Fr. F. Couche.

At this point I wish to quote from Fr. Bernard Tohill, a classmate of David during the years passed at Shrigley. "He was very pious and remained so throughout his life. He was a fellow-novice. I chose him as my monitor and he let nothing slip. He was very dutiful and conscientious and I imagine he was one of the very best of the fifty-seven novices."

He was ordained in 1946 at Blaisdon, England. In 1947, with a degree in English, he was assigned to South Africa. He worked in various important positions as teacher, catechist, president of the Catholic Schools Association, Director of the Novitiate and Philosophate, Novice Master, Pastor of the Sacred Heart African mission and member of the National Education Council of South Africa. He became well-known for his ability in preaching retreats and for his skill in spiritual direction.

As Master of Novices he had great influence in the preparation of many Salesians for the region of South Africa. Quoting from Fr. Ainsworth. . "This work was very close to his heart and he seemed happy and well content; numbers were encouraging in the early years and he was able to give full scope to his ideas. As for his gift of tongues, one would see the Novices saying their evening rosary in the orchard using a different language for each decade - usually Greek, Latin, Afrikaans, Italian and Sesotho, the local African language. David became a fluent preacher in the latter tongue and several of his Anglo-Irish students likewise."

In 1968 his health began to fail and after a period passed in a clinic in Germany he was called to Turin and later Rome as English secretary of the Congregation. Fr. Bernard Tohill comments - "In 1968 my secretary, Fr. J. Dean died and I invited David to take his place. He was an excellent secretary, a good typist, a prudent colleague. He worked hard, was always busy and saw to it that the first translation of the Acts of the Council to be handed to the Press after the original Italian was the English version."

David became a member of the San Francisco Province in 1973 at the end of the retreats he had preached that year. His first assignment was with the students of theology. The following year he was transferred to Don Bosco College, Newton, N. J. with the students of Philosophy and he remained there until 1977. In these last years he also devoted his talents to the writing of several books dealing with the spiritual life and Salesian formation.

His last years were spent as provincial secretary in San Francisco. He was meticulous in his work and used his talents in trying to make the task of the Provincial easier. In these last years besides being an effective preacher and spiritual director he also served as a "team priest" and counselor for the Marriage Encounter movement. The numerous mourners at his funeral showed the deep appreciation of the many people he had helped.

The members of this community are deeply grieved at the loss of Father David and think of him often as they miss his spiritual insights, his piety, his jovial spirit, and his sense of humour. David died on the 23rd May as we were preparing for the feast of Mary, Help of Christians. He celebrated the twenty-fourth of May in Heaven.

Many letters received from South Africa, England and United States indicate how deeply he had influenced the people he met. We ask all his friends to join our community in offering suffrages for his soul and ask Father David to intercede with the Lord for the grace of many vocations.

Fr. Gabriel Zavattaro, SDB. (Rector)

Necrology: Fr. David De Burgh, born in Kimberley, South Africa on April 22nd 1918 was professed as a Salesian on the 30th August 1937 at Beckford, England. He was ordained at Blaisdon, England on July 14th 1946 and died in San Francisco California on May 23rd 1980.