



Fr. John Giorgio

Salesians of Don Bosco

6th April 1921 ~ 15th November 2003

10th January 2004

Dear Brothers,

It was only two days after we the Salesians of Don Bosco in Malta had celebrated the hundredth anniversary of our arrival in Malta, that one of our beloved confreres, Rev. Fr. John Giorgio sdb was called to the Father's House at 4.15pm at St. Luke's hospital, Malta. It was at sunset on Saturday, 15th November 2003 that Our Lord Jesus called this pillar of gentleness, docility, kindness and goodness to Himself to receive the eternal reward he had so much strived for throughout his long and varied salesian life.

St. Francis de Sales' saying, "To be strong is to be gentle and to be gentle is to be strong" applied perfectly to Fr. John who endeared himself to the young and the not so young by his wonderful, serene and discreet character that was so typically salesian.

Fr. John Giorgio sdb was born in Sliema on the 6th April 1921. There too he was baptized, confirmed and received his initial education. Infact Fr. Giorgio's first contact with the Salesians was through education since he used to attend the St. Alphonsus Salesian School. In the evening, just like many Sliema children of his time, he used to attend the Salesian oratory together with his other brothers. There he was able to meet some well known Salesians like Fr. Fenech, Fr. Ciantar and Br. Galea. It was such Salesians, with their joy and optimism, that captivated young Johnny and left an indelible mark on his energetic and dynamic childhood.

It was way back in these days that Fr. John forged deep friendships with some of his fellow companions, some of whom later joined him on a vocational journey so as to discover whether their love for the Lord Jesus and Don Bosco was leading them to a life completely consecrated to God through the Salesian way of life. This voyage led Fr. John to leave his beloved Malta and embark on a journey that took him to Pedara in Catania, Sicily. It was here that, from August 1938 up till August 1940, Fr. Giorgio did his aspirantate. Although the world at the time was going through very turbulent times due to the Second World War, young John was determined to venture deeper into the Salesian way of life, hence from 1940 to 1941 he did his year's novitiate at San Gregorio di Catania, Sicily. On the feast of Our Lady's assumption in 1941, Fr. John Giorgio took the temporary vows as a Salesian of Don Bosco. The following two years saw the young cleric studying Philosophy assiduously at San Gregorio di Catania.

At the end of this biennial period, he travelled back to Sliema, Malta to undergo his practical training experience which spanned from 1943 up to 1947.

It was at Shrigley, England in 1948 that Fr. John Giorgio took his final vows as a Salesian of Don Bosco. In this same house, and later on at Blaisdon, the young cleric studied Theology till 1951. During the month of July in 1950, he was ordained deacon and a year later on the 15th July 1951, in the same cathedral and by the the same Bishop, Rev. Mons. Rutherham, John was ordained to the priesthood at Blaisdon, England.

His initial work was at the novitiate in Burwash, England where the young priest ably assisted the Novice Director in his formation duties. However, although Fr. John was deeply appreciated and loved by the novices, this apostolate only lasted for one year because in 1953, Fr. Giorgio took the courageous leap to travel to distant Australia – a country he grew to love so well and cherish dearly. At Engadine, Fr. John worked serenely as a catechist, infirmarian and teacher. After seven beautiful hardworking years, he was moved to other pastures and taught at Port Pirie, Australia for two years from 1960 – 1962. It was only then, in 1962, when Malta beckoned to Fr. John and he finally returned to the shores of his dear homeland. His first apostolate, which as always he gently and diligently followed, was that of headmaster for the Junior School at St. Patrick's, Sliema. In 1970, he crossed over to the community on the other side of the road and worked for three years at the Oratory in Sliema, a place he dearly loved as it was in that same place where his vocation was sown many years before.

His previous ability in being a Salesian headmaster for the Junior School at St. Patrick's led him to, once again, be called to undertake the same role at the fledgling Savio College in Dingli, Malta in 1973. Enthusiastically Fr. John steered Savio College for three years till 1976 when he was chosen as rector at St. Patrick's School, Sliema. This role lasted till 1982 when he finally returned to Savio College and served as vice rector till 1988.

For a couple of years as from 1988, Fr. John ably taught French to our students while also being catechist at the College. He was also a dearly loved and well sought confessor by our boys right up to a few months before his passing away.

21st July 2001 was a very special day for Fr. John. Together with all his Salesian brothers and surrounded by his family members, he joyously celebrated the golden anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Alas, a year later, Fr. John's health started to deteriorate

gradually but surely. Despite his various ailments, he strived to keep on following the community practices with extreme punctuality. He also made it a point to continue joining the lads during their recreation time. In so doing, he was a delight to the students, who chatted with him as to a granddad, and an inspiration to his community.

On the 17th May 2003, after many short stays at hospital, Fr. John left Savio College never to return again and reside in it, due to his various ailments that required professional care and attention. The last months of his life were spent at Zammit Clapp Geriatric Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital and Casa Leone Nursing Home where he received the skilled medical care and supervision he required constantly.

After months of waning health, comforted by the Holy Sacraments, Fr. John Giorgio went to meet the Risen Lord, he had served so well, at St. Luke's hospital surrounded by Salesians and close family members.

A very serene and dignified requiem mass was celebrated at St. Patrick's Church in Sliema on the 17th November 2003. Afterwards, Fr. John was laid to rest at the salesian grave in the Addolorata cemetery.

May Our Lady Help of Christians, Don Bosco and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to whom he was so dearly devoted, lavish upon him everlasting joy and peace in God's eternal kingdom where one day, we too hope to join Fr. John in singing a never ending magnificat to God.

Please remember Fr. John in your daily prayers.

Salesian Community,
Dingli, Malta

For the necrology:

Rev. Fr. John Giorgio born in Sliema, Malta on the 6th April 1921, died at Imsida, Malta on the 15th November 2003 aged 82 years during his 62nd year of his religious profession and in his 52nd year of his priesthood.