



FR. EDWARD DE MARTINI, S.D.B.

Salesian High School, Richmond

May 24, 1988

Dear Confreres:

His limbs slowing down at 85 years, his eyes twinkling and a serene smile on his face,

FR. EDWARD DE MARTINI, S.D.B.

often sat at the window of the dining room of the Salesian residence and watched the Salesian High baseball team play. His interest in the activities of the students of the high school, where he came to retire in 1983 at 83 years of age after 55 years of parish work, was keen indeed. He proved his deeply Salesian heritage, garnered from the first Salesians of the Province, to the very end. During the fall of 1985, he followed the ups and downs of our football team, attending all home games - often with perceptive suggestions to the coaching staff - always young at heart!

On December 24, 1899, in his beloved San Francisco, Edward De Martini first saw the light of day. His parents, Emmanuele and Maria Arata De Martini brought him to the baptismal font at the fledgling Italian Church of SS. Peter and Paul on March 31, 1900, to be baptized by Salesian pioneer, Fr. Rafael Piperni. As he attended the local elementary school, and later St. Ignatius High School, his contacts with the first Salesians in the United States led him to follow Don Bosco.

In order to prepare for the Salesian life, he had to travel across the United States to begin his time as an aspirant at Hawthorne, New York, in September, 1916. He received the cassock and made his first profession (September 8, 1919) at the hands of Bishop Ernest Coppo, then U. S. Provincial. His master of novices was the legendary Fr. John Focacci. Three years later, he made his perpetual profession, witnessed by Bishop William Piani, in New Rochelle. In the following years he studied philosophy, did his practice teaching at Ramsey, N. J., and studied theology. He received his college degree from Fordham University in New York City. His theology studies were at New Rochelle. He was ordained a priest by Archbishop Edward Hanna, in his parish Church of SS. Peter and Paul, San Francisco, on the 28th of October, 1926.

For his first two years as a priest, he was Prefect of Studies at St. Francis School, Watsonville, until he was made Director in 1928. His stay in Watsonville was short as he was called to be Pastor of St. Peter's Church in Los Angeles, from 1929-30.

After one year, he returned to his home parish of SS. Peter and Paul, to be Principal for the short-lived high school in 1930. He became Provincial Economist in 1932, and held that office until 1951, the period of greatest growth in the Province. It was his responsibility to find the funds and help the schools get on their feet until they could be self-supporting. During this time, St. John Bosco High School, in Bellflower, was built, permanent buildings were constructed for the seminary at Richmond, St. Mary's School in Edmonton, Sacred Heart Residence in Vancouver, and various camps were started. It seems a miracle, indeed, that all this could be done by such a small group of Salesians.

From 1946 to 1954, he was Pastor, first at St. Joseph's Parish in Oakland (1946-51) and then at St. Patrick's in Los Angeles (1951-54). After a short stay at Corpus Christi in San Francisco, he was again Pastor of St. Joseph's in Oakland, from 1959 until 1962.

For the next 20 years, he resided at St. Mark's Parish in Richmond, and served as Chaplain at Brookside Hospital. His assiduous care of the sick, combined with counseling families and friends of the patients, made his a loving presence at the Hospital. In addition to his scheduled visits, he was on call 24 hours a day for emergencies - and these were frequent in an urban area like Richmond. The nurse's call was all that was necessary for Fr. De Martini to return and offer his priestly ministries. Methodical person that he was, he kept careful records of these ministries which attest to the need of priestly presence at Brookside.

On the occasion of his golden jubilee as a priest, in 1976, Bishop Floyd Begin, of Oakland, wrote: *"Your outstanding zeal and fidelity as a priest must have accomplished in these fifty years, most of what our Blessed Lord expected of you on the day of your ordination."* This is the feeling of those who have known him.

Father Ed, as he was affectionately known, was one of the true pioneers of the Salesian work in the United States. He knew, well, the first Salesians in San Francisco, and shared with them the trials of those early days. He experienced the early mingling of studies, teaching, supervising students, while preparing for his Salesian vows and ordination. And after he returned to California for his ordination, he was involved, closely, with administration of individual works, or the Province, for almost four decades.

In 1983, he moved to the Salesian High School Community, in Richmond, to retire. He felt a little uncomfortable in returning to live in a school community after almost 55 years serving in parish settings. As the months passed by, he stated: "It's getting better every day." His presence in the Community was a blessing indeed for those who broke bread with him. His remembrances of Salesian happenings in the United States were informative, perceptive and entertaining. His presence among the boys was an inspiration. He could be seen, especially at school athletic events on campus, very much involved in the things that interest young people today.

In October, 1985, the Serra Club of Contra Costa County, a group of lay people who foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life, sponsored a dinner honoring Fr. De Martini on his 60th Anniversary of Ordination (actually it was the beginning of the 60th year). His family and many friends attended and paid tribute to this great Salesian priest.

On Thanksgiving Day, 1985, Father Ed accompanied the Salesian Community to the Provincial House for the Thanksgiving Dinner for all the Salesians of the Bay Area. The following day he



Photo taken in Watsonville, CA, St. Francis School in 1927. Fr. De Martini was Director of the School. Fr. Ernest Giovannini is pictured with him.



A recent photo of Fr. De Martini with Fr. George Hacker

had a fall, and on December 2nd he was taken to Doctor's Hospital in Pinole for observation. Shortly after he had a gall stone operation. On January 2nd, he was moved to Mercy Center, in Oakland, for extended convalescence, , where he quietly yielded up his soul on January 9, 1986. He was the second member of the Province to die that day as Fr. Charles Farina had passed away in Los Angeles that very morning.

A funeral Mass was celebrated on January 14th at SS. Peter and Paul's Church in San Francisco, with Very Rev. Thomas J. Prendiville, Provincial, as principal celebrant. The homilist was Father Michael Ribotta, an elementary student during Fr. De Martini's tenure as Principal of the Salesian School, in San Francisco. The following morning, Mass was celebrated at St. Mark's Parish, in Richmond, with burial at the Salesian Cemetery, here in Richmond, following the Mass.

Fr. De Martini will long be remembered by the people whom he served for his loving, caring concern. He will be remembered by his Salesian brothers as a Salesian devoted to the service of Christ according to Don Bosco's spirit. Even though he was 85 years old, and had spent many years in administrative assignments, he never lost his keen interest in the young.

Please keep Fr. Ed and this Community in your prayers.

Sincerely,

Rev. Ralph J. Murphy, SDB

Data for Necrology:

Fr. Edward De Martini, SDB

Born : December 24, 1899, San Francisco, CA

Professed : September 8, 1919, Cold Springs, N.Y.

Ordained : October 28, 1926, San Francisco, CA

Died : January 9, 1986, Oakland, CA