

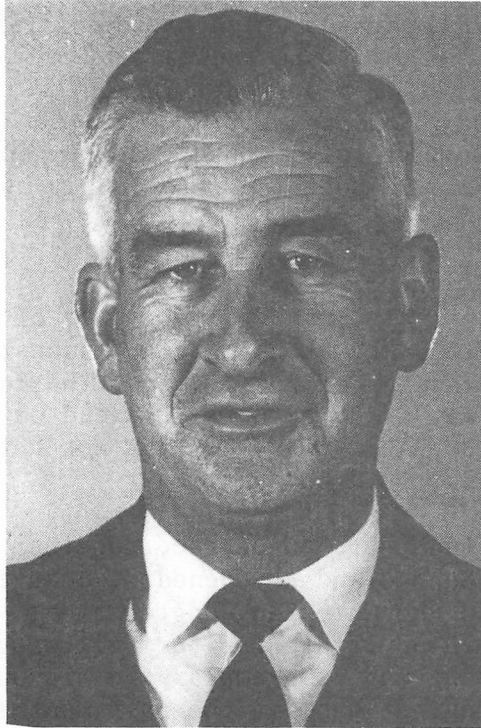
BR ROBERT ANGUS (1923-1971)

7th October, 1971

My dear confreres,

I have the sad duty to convey to you the news of the sudden death of Brother Robert Angus, at the early age of 47 years.

On the Wednesday he had complained of a severe headache, caused, he thought, by sinus trouble aggravated by having to run through some freshly irrigated pastures the previous Monday. On the Thursday he kept to his bed



for most of the day and on the Friday I suggested he see a doctor but he assured me that he was feeling a little better and did not think such a visit was necessary. Later that afternoon he was up and about, doing some of the jobs about the farm. That evening he still appeared to be far from well and was persuaded to go to the doctor - on the short trip there he collapsed on the shoulder of the driver. He was rushed to the doctor, and from there sent by ambulance to Melbourne.

The vice-Provincial and the Prefect of this House followed him to the Hospital, after anointing him at the local Clinic. He was still unconscious when he reached the hospital - the doctors realized that he was in a very serious condition and beyond human help. The prayers for the dying were recited, the Apóstolic Blessing given and then the two priests said the Rosary by his bedside. On the very stroke of midnight the instruments beside his bed indicated his last heartbeat. The doctors diagnosed a massive cerebral haemorrhage.

Brother's body was brought to the College chapel on the Monday night. His sister and two of his brothers, with members of their families had travelled over from South Australia and were present, together with a packed congregation of boys, parents and friends, for the recitation of the Rosary. On the following day 21 priests, including representatives from our interstate Houses and Fr. Angus (a nephew of the deceased) concelebrated the Requiem Mass. In a very moving panegyric, the vice-Provincial, Fr. James Carroll, referred to his close relations with the deceased and the admiration and respect he had for him. He was a humble servant, a devoted son of Don Bosco, a friend to the boys he instructed, a man who fully realized that religious life means dedicated service to God and one's neighbour. After the Mass his body was laid to rest in our own cemetery in a grave prepared with love by the senior boys over the week-end. As the body passed from the chapel to the cemetery the students of the College formed a proud bodyguard. Very moving it was to see two members of the Horse Riding Club, in which Brother had always taken a very keen interest, sitting astride two horses, one on each side of the gates of the cemetery.

Robert Samuel Angus was born on the 12th December, 1923, the youngest of the five children of Samuel Angus and Julie Seamens. At the age of eighteen he commenced his novitiate with the Brothers of St. John the Baptist, an Australian Institute which was founded by Monsignor Healy of Adelaide some twenty years previously. This Institute, as stated in its Constitutions, "devoted itself to the religious and secular instruction and reformation of poor boys, and also the spiritual and temporal care of poor men, together with making up for the sins of intemperance which are committed throughout the world." Brother Augustine (as he became to be known) took his first vows on the feast of St. John the Baptist in 1942 and spent six months teaching at a Technical School conducted by the Brothers nearby. He was then transferred to Boys' Town, Brooklyn Park which the Brothers had recently opened, at the request of the Archbishop of Adelaide, in buildings previously used by them for two separate works: a Reformatory for about 40 boys and a Night Shelter for poor and needy men.

It was in this year, 1943, that the Institute of St. John the Baptist was disbanded and the Salesians, at the urgent request of the Archbishop of Adelaide, took over the running of Boys' Town. The late Fr. John Biloni was sent to take charge and was assisted until the end of the year by several of the Brothers, including Br. Augustine. It was not until the following year that any further Salesians could be sent.

Towards the end of 1943, Br. Augustine, together with two others of the Institute (Br. Ignatius Supple and Br. Benedict Schutz) requested and received permission to transfer to the Salesian Congregation. In recommending his acceptance in the Salesian novitiate for the following year, Fr. John Biloni had this to say: "The young man is exemplary in his duties to God, to his neighbour and to the young. He has, in the past months, carried on the duties of Catechist. I recommend him most heartily." At this stage it is interesting to note a comment made by the priest who baptized him and who had been a Brother of the Institute of St. John the Baptist in reply to a request from Mrs. Angus for a copy of the baptismal certificate for the Salesian novitiate: "I shall never forget the fine Catholic spirit shown by your good self when you so wholeheartedly handed Robert over to devote his life to God in religion." How true is that old Jewish proverb: "God could not be everywhere and therefore he created mothers."

Robert Angus made his novitiate at Sunbury under the direction of Fr. Joseph Ciantar, a giant of a Salesian and referred to in later years by Don Ziggotti as one of the 'heavy-weights' of the congregation. From this outstanding Master he was to learn so very thoroughly the twin Salesian virtues of work & prayer - virtues that were to shine so brightly in his person for the remaining years of his life.

On the 31st January 1945, Br. Robert Angus took his first vows as a Salesian. In recommending his acceptance into the congregation, the House Council agreed unanimously on the following comments: "A young man of deep piety and spirit of sacrifice; humble, cheerful. Although he was a religious in another institute (now no longer functioning) he has learnt our spirit well and has a great love for our Society."

Brother spent the next two years working in the College dairy here at Sunbury and was then transferred to Brooklyn Park where he managed the farm for the next five years. In the meantime he had renewed his vows, again being highly commended by the House Council: "A young man of solid piety, of good common sense and diligent in his work up to a high degree of sacrifice. Docile, charitable and always cheerful. Very attached to the Congregation. A good organizer, at present doing the work of two men." He also made his

perpetual vows at Brooklyn Park, this time meriting the comments: "An exemplary religious - shows a spirit of co-operation, work, regularity and earnestness."

After he had taken his final vows, Brother was asked to manage the farm at what was then the aspirantate at Oakleigh - it was also quite evident that the Superiors felt his influence would be a fine forming process for the young aspirants who hoped to follow in his footsteps. After two years, the urgent needs of Brooklyn Park called him back there for another four years. He then returned to Oakleigh for another two years and then, from 1956 until the time of his death, he was an instructor in the Agricultural Section of the College at Sunbury.

As one who had the privilege of knowing Br. Angus from 1943 onwards, many of those years as his Rector or Provincial, I knew him to be a very saintly religious adorned with many virtues. If I had to single out any I would name three which combined so closely in this Salesian as to be almost one: his sense of obedience which appeared so natural because it was inspired by a real love for the Congregation and for his Superiors and which seemed to make difficulties disappear because of his ever-present cheerfulness; his charity, made more exquisite because of his willing obedience and his happy disposition which made his very many acts of charity appear quite normal and matter-of-fact; his spirit of joy which gave him the courage to obey and to love. These virtues were displayed on the Wednesday before his death. He had asked me did I think he should ask permission from the vice-Provincial to go over to Adelaide for a week-end to be present with his brothers and sisters for a special family occasion. Knowing that Brother asked for so little in this regard, I assured him that there should be no difficulty and advised him the vice-Provincial would be calling in on the following Friday and so he could ask him then. He replied that he would write for permission as he felt it unfair to face a Superior with such a request and perhaps put him on the spot. He considered that a Superior should have time to think the matter over - to do otherwise could embarrass him and he felt that this would be a lack of charity and concern for the feelings of others. Although he was very keen to be with his family for the big occasion he would cheerfully accept whatever decision was made. As regards his charity still further, those who knew Br. Angus well were accustomed to seeing his look of embarrassment whenever anyone at all was adversely criticized in his presence and his immediate effort to change the subject of conversation.

A confrere of this community thus expressed his own thoughts concerning our departed Brother: "To meet Br. Angus was to like him. He is one of the few gifted men who had no enemies. If it can be said that the goodness of God shines in the face of men then one must say that Brother had this gift. There was about the face of Br. Angus that aura of goodness. Never was there far from his lips a smile, whilst the brightness of his eyes must surely have given witness to the purity of his soul. Never was he too busy for a "How we" or "Buon Giorno". So magnificent was his spirit of consideration for others that often his work was taken for granted. Never can it be said that we heard him criticize a student under his care; he never discussed them in public unless it was to mention that they had done a good job. Men there may be who can do his job, but none will ever replace him. His greatest glory was the stain of his work visible on his hands. One can quote from the Rule: 'If one dies doing his work, then this is a great gift to the Congregation' and a great inspiration to us all. His goodness marks him as a servant of God; his toil marks him as a man. The two combined makes him almost Christlike and thus a saint gone to eternal reward."



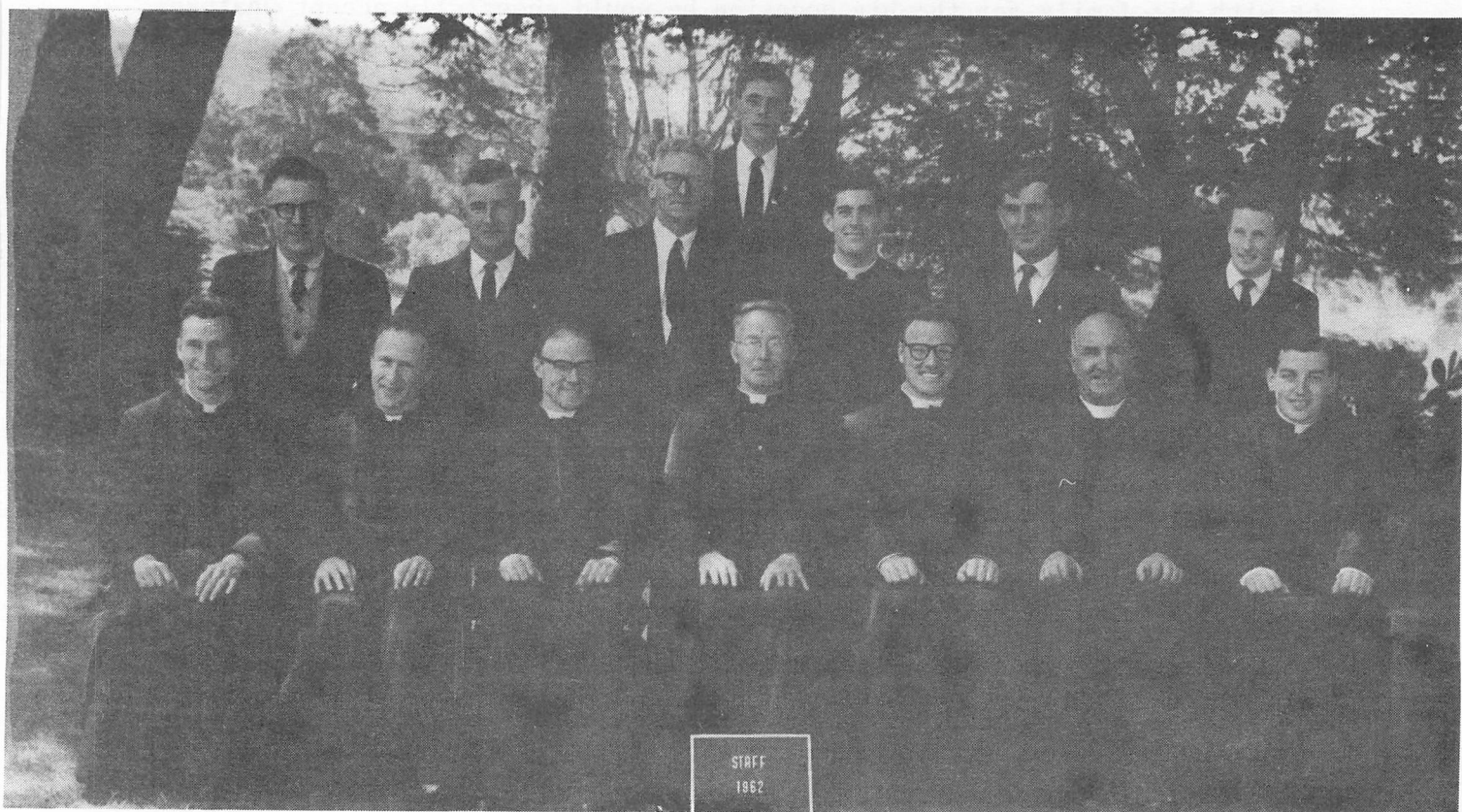
And now two quotations from other sources - the first from the Parish Magazine of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Sunbury; 'Recently the Sunbury Pony Club shifted to a new site. Some material for a building had to be shifted so Br. Angus helped with the College truck. Nothing unusual about that. It was typical of what we have taken for granted from Br. Angus. He frequently served God and the Salesian Community by serving the community generally. His happy manner cheered Sunbury, well fitted the Salesian ideals and must have pleased God. He was a particular friend of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and quietly helped our Store. Many of us were able to join the Rosary on Monday night or attend the Requiem Mass on Tuesday. We were impressed with the crowded concelebrated Mass. We were moved by Fr. Carroll's panegyric. The decorum of the College students reflected their esteem for Br. Angus. The two well-groomed horses were a fitting symbol of the care and attention he gave to animals as well as man. Let us continue to pray for the worthy soul of this active young man that God called to Himself.' The local newspaper printed this following comment: "Br. Angus was a man with a perpetual smile and of a generous and kindly nature, and was a popular personality in Sunbury. He was a friend of all he met but especially of those boys who were students at "Rupertswood" and who shared with him the great love of the land and of animals. It was one of the familiar sights around the College to see him doing the rounds of the paddocks on a Saturday afternoon with a Landrover loaded with boys."

This Province has been blessed with very many saintly, hard-working lay-brothers who have understood Don Bosco's mind in their regard and have lived this vocation to the point of heroicity. May Br. Angus' example inspire many other generous young men to follow his example.

Will you join us in this prayer?

Yours fraternally in St. John Bosco,

Wallace L. Cornell, S.D.B. Rector.



SUNBURY 1962.

Br. Angus second from left in second row.