

34  
**BRO. JOSEPH DiBELLA, S.D.B.**

SALESIAN JUNIOR SEMINARY  
GOSHEN, NEW YORK  
July 16, 1970



Dear Confreres:

Bro. Joseph DiBella died very peacefully on Saturday, June 20, 1970 about 4:00 in the afternoon. He completed his 89th year last January and lived a very fruitful and exemplary life, always ready and willing to be of service to his neighbor.

Funeral services were held at our Marian Shrine in West Haverstraw, New York, together with those of Fr. Paul Csik who died on the same day. Both confreres were buried here at the Salesian Cemetery in Goshen, on Tuesday, June 23, 1970.

Since the members of the Provincial Chapter being held at Riverdale, New York, attended the services, the funeral Mass turned out to be very impressive and was a real tribute to our two wonderful Salesians, Fr. Paul Csik and Bro. Joseph DiBella. Bishop Peter Carretto of Thailand was the principal celebrant, and he was joined by over 50 concelebrants among whom was our own Provincial, Fr. John J. Malloy who gave the final absolution. This was probably the largest concelebrated Mass held at our Marian Shrine, a fitting tribute

especially to Fr. Csik who spent the last years of his life working and beautifying those hallowed grounds dedicated to Our Lady.

A large group of Salesians who were making their annual retreat at Mt. Mongola in Ellenville, New York, came down for the burial service held in Goshen. Together with the families of the deceased, it is estimated that there were about 150 present for the burial. Providentially, these two Salesians who were esteemed by all who knew them were, therefore, given a very fitting final tribute by confreres from all over our province.

Joseph DiBella was born in Italy at Bronte (Catania) on January 27, 1881. As a young boy, he attended elementary school for a few years, and also worked as an apprentice barber. At the age of 13, through the good offices of a relative, a Salesian priest who was director of a school and who later became provincial, Joseph was accepted at the Institute of St. Francis de Sales in Catania as an artisan and barber. At that time, the students and artisans totaled about sixty. When he was not busy giving haircuts, Joseph worked in the tailor shop learning something about that trade.

In 1894 he made the acquaintance of Father Rua. Three years later he entered the Institute of St. Gregory di Catania as a son of Mary, and caught up on his schooling which until then had been rather meager. In 1901, the superiors sent him to the Salesian Junior Seminary at Pedara for clerical aspirants. He managed to go as far as the second year, but difficulties with Latin made him drop his studies. After that he went to the seminary at Bova Marina, run by the Salesians, and there he adapted himself to be of general assistance in varied household duties. In 1906, he received his secondary school diploma, and two years later went to Don Bosco Institute at Palermo to take charge of the linen room. For the next two years he attended normal school to qualify for elementary school teaching. This course of studies, however, proved too expensive because he could no longer board at the Salesian School.

He married in November 1910 and was hired as a foreman in a local firm. Business, however, was not good, so he decided to come to the United States. He arrived in New York on May 8, 1911 and worked as a barber. In 1953, his wife died; four years later on August 1, 1957, he went back to living with the Salesians at Goshen, New York.

Bro. DiBella took his vows for the first time privately on October 13, 1969 while he was in the hospital. Since a good number of confreres wanted to be present to share in his joy, he made his profession publicly on December 8, 1969 at our seminary here in Goshen.

Not long after his public profession, the weakness resulting from the malignant cancer, that previous surgery had arrested, developed gradually but constantly, until finally on Holy Saturday, March 28, Bro. DiBella was admitted to Arden Hill Hospital in Goshen. Shortly afterwards he was transferred to the Andover Nursing Home near Newton, New Jersey, where he spent the last months of his life. Since the nursing home was only a short distance from Don Bosco College, Bro. DiBella had the opportunity of receiving Holy Communion daily, and he also was comforted by the daily visits of the confreres of the college.

In the afternoon of Saturday, June 20, 1970, two confreres who were close friends of his visited Bro. DiBella and seeing how weak he was, consoled him with the words, "Courage, Giuseppe, you are doing your purgatory here on earth. Soon you'll be with the Lord in heaven." The two priests blessed him and Bro. DiBella gathered together the bit of strength he had left and tried to make the sign of the cross. Shortly afterwards he passed from this life into eternity.

For those of us who knew him, Bro. DiBella was always a source of great edification. This is evident from his last will and testament which closes with these words:

"I humbly beg pardon of the Lord for my innumerable faults. I also ask pardon of all my superiors for my defects and shortcomings, for not having fulfilled the duties of my state with diligence."

"I trust that God has forgiven me all my sins through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ and through the intercession of the Virgin Mary whom I have always invoked and do so now and at the hour of my death. Amen."

"I ask pardon of all; I thank everyone for everything done on my behalf, and I implore your prayers for the repose of my soul."

Most humbly yours,

Di Bella

After the kind of life Bro. Joseph DiBella lived, we can be sure he is enjoying the friendship of Christ and the glory of paradise, and is interceding for us with God that one day we too may join him in the home of our Heavenly Father.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. August J. Kita, S.D.B.  
Director

Data for necrology: Bro. Joseph DiBella born in Italy at Bronte (Catania) on January 27, 1881. Died at 89 years of age at Andover, New Jersey, on June 20, 1970. Professed nine months and seven days.