

Salesian College  
Battersea  
LONDON, SW11 3PB  
24th May, 1971



Dear Confrères,

The death, here at Battersea, on December 28th 1970, of

REV. FATHER FRANCIS JOHN DONNELLY S.D.B.

brought quietly to its close a life marked throughout its whole course by a wonderful spirit of prayer and of union with God. That it was on the feast of the Holy Innocents that God called him to Himself was not, perhaps, without significance. A child-like faith and love had ever been the hall-marks of this holy priest and religious. We recall now, not only his almost painful scrupulousness, but even more, those lips of his ever moving in prayer. To the very end also he had an intense conviction of his own need of the prayers of others. Time and again, he asked that, in their Masses, prayers and Holy Communions, they should remember him.

- - He was born in Wandsworth (London) on 1st February 1894, and he received his early education in our schools here at Battersea. His family were noted for their strong faith, and he was no exception. As a youth, and during his early manhood, he was remarkable for his fidelity as an altar-server in our church of the Sacred Heart. There, every morning, before setting off for business, he would be seen at Mass and receiving Holy Communion. Trained, too, as he was, under such great Salesians as Father Macey and Father William Kelly, he developed a great and ardent love for the Church and for the Salesian Society. It was no surprise, therefore, when, on demobilisation from the Royal Naval Air Service at the end of World War I, he was found still strong in his determination to

become a Salesian priest. He entered our noviciate at Burwash in 1920 and made his final profession at Cowley (Oxford) in 1924. His philosophy and the first two years of his theological course were completed in England, and then, in 1926, he went to the Crocetta in Turin. There, in the Basilica of our Lady, Help of Christians, he was ordained by Cardinal Gamba on July 7th 1928.

For ten years thereafter, he taught in various houses in England and Ireland, finishing this period as Catechist at Cowley in 1938-39. He next spent four years at Chertsey in the dual role of Prefect and Catechist. From 1943-48, he was at Beckford as Confessor. His health had sadly declined, and he had to undergo a serious operation. He was sent once again to Cowley to recuperate and, there, as an invalid, spent the next twenty years until he came back to Battersea in 1968. Here, he remained to the end.

Many there are who will remember him only as an invalid. Others of an earlier vintage will recall him, not only as a holy man, but also as one who loved to think in terms of "serving the Lord with joy." Practical jokes and a great sense of fun were very much in his line. His Purgatory on earth as an invalid was a long one. It lasted for a quarter of a century, and must often have distressed him. Yet his spirit of faith was such that we know his sickness was a sacrifice lovingly offered to God. It was, too, surely, a pledge of that eternal happiness for which we now ask your prayers for him.

His example of prayer, his devotion to Our Lady and her Rosary; his loyalty to the Church and to Christ's Vicar on earth—as well as his love of all things Salesian—these are all things which, in these difficult times, we may fondly and fruitfully imitate and cherish. God rest his holy soul!

Pray, please, for this house and community and for

Yours very sincerely in Our Lord,

FRANCIS TREANOR S.D.B.

(Rector)

DATA FOR THE NECROLOGY

REV. FR. FRANCIS J. DONNELLY S.D.B., born in London,  
1st February 1894: died at Battersea, 28th December 1970, aged  
76 years.