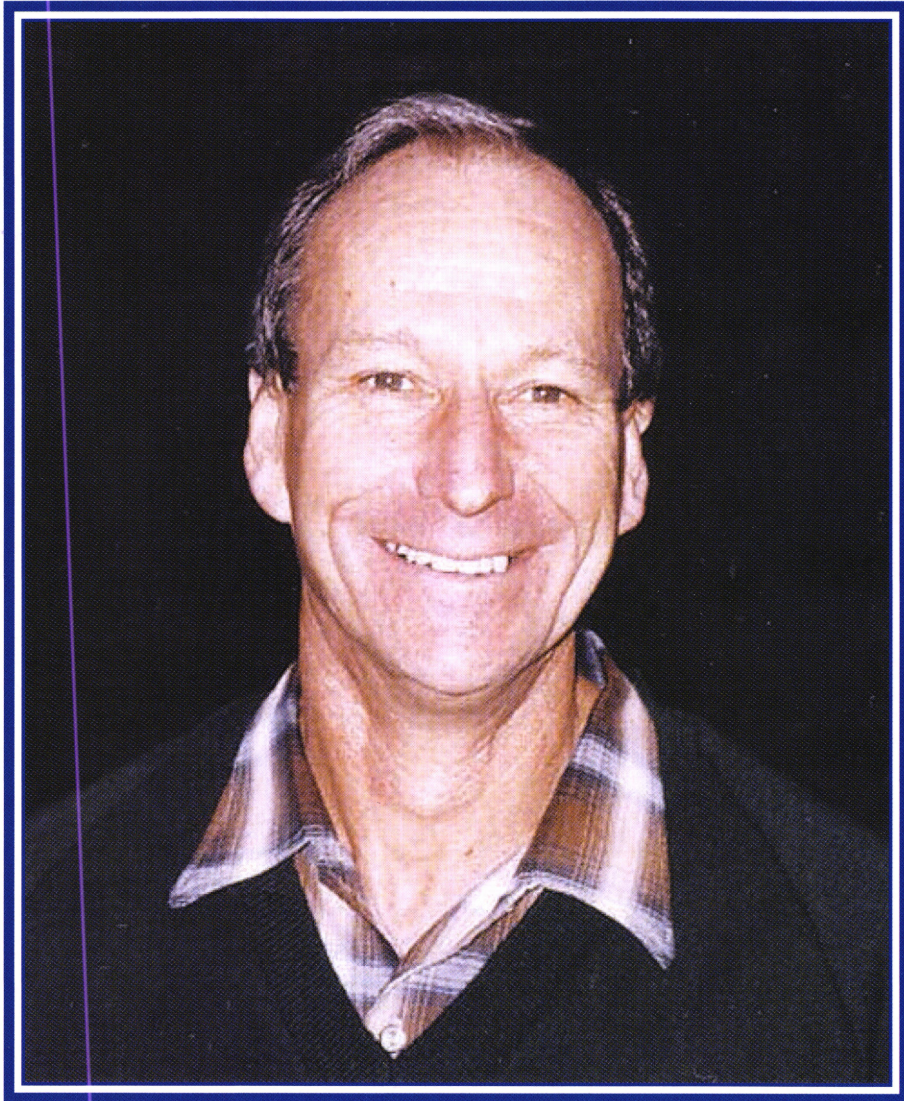


In Loving Memory of  
**Fr. Hans Dopheide SDB**



<b>Born</b>	<b>26 November 1936 Utrecht, Netherlands</b>
<b>Religious Profession</b>	<b>31 January 1958 Sunbury, Australia</b>
<b>Ordained a Priest</b>	<b>20 March 1967 Salerno, Italy</b>
<b>Entered Eternal Life</b>	<b>25 December 2011 Ferntree Gully, Victoria</b>



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God called Fr. Hans Dopheide to Himself on Christmas night, 2011. Hans had a long struggle with dementia which eventually robbed him of the ability to look back on what he had achieved, and to communicate with people. The nearest I heard him come to a complaint about his situation was when he said to me, "Stay another five minutes." That's not much of a complaint, I think you will agree. If it is a complaint. A brave man was Hans. The staff at the Sherbrooke Private Nursing Home often commented on Hans' smile and the cheerful welcome he always gave them when they came to attend to his needs. A bit of a ladies' man in fact.

Hans Dopheide was born in the Netherlands in 1936 and lived under the Nazi occupation. He had a sunny and generous nature from the start with lots of energy, which enabled him and Theo, his brother, to get into lots of innocent mischief. Like his father, John, Hans was a problem-solver all his life. He solved the problem of walking home from school by hanging off the back of a horse-drawn manure cart, thereby ruining his shoes.



To assist in supplying the family with a little food, he (being a fast runner) helped gather cabbages and potatoes that "fell off a truck" meant for the German army. Later in life, with all his commitments, Hans always found time for his family. Baptisms, weddings and sadly, funerals. He described the funeral of his sister, Lineke as the saddest thing he had ever done. Many happy times were shared as he built furniture and decks, restored roofs and solved all our technical problems! His Salesian family, however, always came first.

He emigrated to New Zealand with his parents, John and Maria and brothers Theo and Peter, in the years after World War 2. Hans and several members of his family subsequently moved to Australia in 1954, where Hans joined the Australian Province of the Salesians. He made his first profession in 1957 and his final profession in 1961 at Sunbury, Victoria. Theological studies were done at Castellammare di Stabia, in Italy, and Hans was ordained a priest in 1967. Hans had a strong practical bent. He was in his element managing the farm at Sunbury, or building schools from scratch in Samoa and Pakistan. Practical work was his means of contributing his talents to the Salesian mission. Hans returned to Sunbury after ordination and ran the agricultural aspect of Salesian College, Rupertswood, until 1985. Hans then generously took up various apostolic appointments to the 'mission fields' of Samoa, The Solomons, Pakistan, and with the onset of dementia, Ferntree Gully/Lysterfield. However, it must be stated that Hans' response to the mission of St. John Bosco was at its most evident in three places: Sunbury, Samoa and Pakistan, all of which were so close to his heart.



At Sunbury from 1968 to the end of 1985, Hans was the veritable 'Man for All Seasons', who served as Headmaster (Prefect of Studies), Farm Manager (Prefect of Agriculture), Bursar and Vice-Rector at various times. He was a very competent teacher of Senior Economics and Agricultural subjects; a gifted musician who frequently played the organ in the Chapel; an astute bursar with a good business brain; an expert builder, repairer and renovator of farming, school and boarding facilities; and a vigilant assistant in the Study, Dining Room and Dormitory.



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Yet despite his marvellous all-round abilities and contributions, Hans' most memorable achievement at Sunbury was the 'Rupertswood' Farm. Here he excelled as Manager, Instructor, Guide and Mentor to the 50 'aggies' who pursued the two-year agricultural course, and to the many lay and religious farm staff, which included such legendary names as Hamilton, Schutz, Amann, Angus, Gleisner, Walta, Mix, Casey, Guilding and East. And here he balanced the various demands and priorities of a very complex farming enterprise - with all its complementary sections - with skill and efficiency.



In 1986, Hans was called to work at Alafua, Samoa, as part of the Salesian Team which included his countrymen, Fr. Nick Castelyns and later Fr. Gerrit Kraan. Again he took on a variety of positions of leadership such as Priest-in-Charge, Rector, Principal and Vice-Rector. But it was as Principal of the Don Bosco Technical Centre that Hans' talents and all-round capability came to the fore! Taking over from Fr. Peter Carroll who established the Centre, Hans either built or completed classrooms, workshops, residences or living quarters for the students, staff, volunteers and Salesians. In the process he worked with volunteers from Sunbury and passed on key building skills to the local Samoans. The outstanding Don Bosco Technical Centre at Alafua in Samoa, the pride of that nation, he



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built up brick by brick. Not only that; it stood the test of two of the most devastating cyclones Samoa has ever known: Olf in 1990 and Val in December 1991. This latter destroyed almost every large building in the country - but not those built by Hans Dopheide! In fact Samoa and Tokelau subsequently adopted a building code on the basis of Hans' efforts - and with some personal guidance from him.

He initiated a boat-building project to restore traditional Samoan sailing skills, as well as furniture-making, especially church pews, tables and chairs for schools, and household items. He actively encouraged the beginnings of the famous Samoan dancing group, which is still performing at a high level today! However, his great gift to the young people of Samoa was his infectious enthusiasm, his respect for their culture and traditions, his kind and patient care for them, and his uncanny ability to inspire them to do something truly important with their lives. But his greatest gift - we have it on good authority that many people still talk about it - was his '100% devotion to the young'!

We also have it on good authority (from Sr. Margaret Bentley, FMA Provincial) that Hans was also very devoted to the Salesian Sisters in Samoa: "After the cyclone destroyed the House of Leauva'a he was the first to arrive with a donation from his family to begin the rebuilding. He was the Confessor of the Sisters for many years and was loved by them all." For his clear commitment and unstinting devotion to the people of Samoa, Hans was awarded a special Knighthood, the 'Order van Oranje Nassau', prompting him to





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famously quip: "As I am now a Knight and as all Knights ride horses, shipments of materials and goods to Alafua will now have to contain bags of oats for my horse!" Hans' work in Alafua, Samoa concluded in 1997 and he was offered "study leave" at Oakleigh and Ferntree Gully.

Finally, to Pakistan from 2000 to 2005, where Hans joined forces with Salesians from the South Philippines Province to establish an educational presence for young people and a new Technical Centre in Lahore. If you've seen photographs of this Centre, you'll know





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what a magnificent building it is, as you will also know that Hans built it almost single-handedly - brick by brick, floor by floor, room by room, donation by donation - from Australia, the Netherlands and all over the world! It was an incredibly difficult appointment. Hans was a "Westerner" and, in the eyes of the very poor people of much of Pakistan, he was therefore wealthy. As a consequence he was subjected to a "home invasion" by a gang, where he was forced to lie on the floor with a gun held to his head. Needless to say, they didn't get any money. Hans was nothing if not physically brave.



Fr Miguel Ruiz, who has succeeded Hans at the Don Bosco College at Lahore, which again Hans built up largely through his own efforts, says in a brief note: "Hans was indeed a great Salesian, and I was lucky to spend with him his last 3 years (in Pakistan)".

Fr. Peter Zago, a comrade-in-arms from Pakistan, writing to Fr. Hans in 2007, remembers those historic pioneering days: *"You can easily imagine how many memories live in my mind and heart ... the pioneering days in Quetta and Lahore, the start of the building, the*

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*first batch of 10 boys from Qasur, the first collaborators, the acquisition of the new land, the expansion of the hostel and new shops, then the arrival of new Salesians ... 'Those were the days my friend' as the song has it!" Then, towards the end of his letter, Fr. Peter says something truly touching and remarkable about his friend, Hans: "Don Bosco is much alive here! And he is alive also because of your great dedication, sacrifice and 'gracious acceptance' of your sickness in God's will. Dear Hans, thanks for your witness!"*

Yes, Hans, thanks for your witness to Christ, to Don Bosco, and to the Mission of the Salesian Congregation. Thanks for your whole-hearted dedication to young people and to their present formation and future happiness. Thank you for your accompaniment and support of the People of God, especially your lay partners and generous associates. Thanks for your wonderful devotion to your parents, John and Maria; your brothers, Theo and Peter; your sisters-in-law, Marlis and Kathy; all your nieces and nephews and all other members of your family. Thanks, also, for your loyalty and commitment to your Salesian Family in the Australia-Pacific Province and in the East Asia Oceania Region.

And thank you, most of all, for your courageous and selfless 'Yes' to Christ's call and your willingness to become that 'grain of wheat' that falls on the ground and dies for the benefit and happiness of so many. And now it is your time, Hans, the promised harvest-time of your rich and full life, the moment when God calls you home to himself, saying:

*"Well done, good and faithful servant;  
come and join in your master's happiness."*

**The Lysterfield Community  
February 2012**