



*FATHER HENRY FERREIRA, S.D.B.*

*94 years of age, 76 years of profession, 69 years of priesthood*

Watsonville, May 24, 1975

Dear confreres,

God has called to himself a great Salesian pioneer, Father HENRY FERREIRA. He died here in Watsonville, where he had been stationed since 1951, on Saturday, March 15, 1975, just fifteen days short of his 94th birthday.

The souvenir card bearing the picture of his gentle face summarizes his long and rich life very simply thus: "Father Henry Ferreira, SDB... Born March 30, 1881... Died March 15, 1975... 76 years a Salesian... 69 years a priest... First Portuguese Salesian... Secretary to Blessed Michael Rua 1904-1906."

One cannot help but pause in reverence and gratitude, for, hidden in the brevity of those twenty or thirty words, are the voices of countless souls who would want to thank good Fr. Ferreira for having brought God into their lives. Who could possibly give an estimate of the number of baptisms, weddings, funerals, confessions, communions, words of friendship, of counsel, of reconciliation that have made nearly seventy years of priesthood a veritable chain of grace and of blessings for Fr. Ferreira and for all the people whose lives he has touched?

It is very difficult to describe adequately in a few brief pages the figure of a man whose life has spanned nearly a century. It is generally impossible to capture the significance of the early years and first experiences of such a man. But we are rather fortunate in the case of Fr. Henry Ferreira for, in a very true sense, he himself unknowingly prepared his own life story for this obituary letter. On the occasion of his Diamond Jubilee as a Priest, and more exactly on the very eve of the 60th anniversary of his ordination, Fr. Ferreira sat at his typewriter before retiring for the night, and prepared two full pages of facts and reminiscences as a friendly aid to his confreres who were preparing a banquet in his honor on the following day and who needed a few names and dates for the joyful celebration. Fr. Ferreira's typescript was faithfully reproduced for the April 1975 issue of SALESIANS WEST. I shall attach it to this brief letter because it is an extraordinary document indeed: besides describing the salient experiences of his long life, it retains a delightful quaintness and the flavor of the earnestness and simplicity of Father Ferreira's gentle soul.



I am sure you will enjoy Father Ferreira's own resume of his life's story. Let me just add a few observations and facts not referred to in the attached document: they are rather significant and have been a source of edification and pride to all the Salesians and friends who have known him in life.

Father Henry Ferreira was a prolific writer. He left voluminous typewritten notes on the history of St. Joseph's parish, a veritable treasure trove for future historians of the Diocese of Oakland and of our Western Salesian Province. His articles in the Portuguese newspapers and periodicals of the region were always well received and widely read. I have before me an account by Fr. Ferreira of his 1953 trip to Europe, seventeen closely spaced and meticulously typewritten pages. The title speaks for itself: "*FULL REPORT OF MY LAST TRIP IN EUROPE AND JOURNEY TO OTHER COUNTRIES DURING 1953 A.D.: An outline about my last trip to Europe as a pious pilgrimage and to revisit persons and places so dear to my heart.*" His capsule descriptions of each place visited and of each confrere encountered along his journey are a joy to read.

The Salesians at St. Francis will not easily forget his kindness and the concern he always showed for the success and well-being of his confreres, young and old alike. His interest in life was evidenced when, at the age of 82, he took up and mastered a new hobby, the mouth organ. How happy he was when called upon to play some favorite song at a festive banquet or community gathering!

Father Ferreira was known among us as a staunch advocate of the *via media*, the wise avoidance of extremes and a prudent moderation in whatever one must do in the line of duty or of pleasure. His gentleness and longevity are perhaps best understood as a logical by-product of this life philosophy.

Allow me to close with an inspiring story from Fr. Ferreira's life. The Salesians had taken over St. Joseph's in Oakland at a rather difficult moment in the history of that wonderful parish. The pastor, Fr. William Gloria, had left the priesthood. It is a fact, however, that, even after his departure, Fr. Gloria had continued to write a monthly article, poem or story about the Blessed Virgin in the local Portuguese press. Some forty years later it was Fr. Ferreira whom Fr. Gloria called to his bedside for his final reconciliation with God and the Church. It is interesting and inspiring to note Fr. Ferreira's sensitivity and gentleness in his single-line reference to Fr. Gloria's pastorate in the detailed history of St. Joseph's which he wrote for our provincial archives: "...The pastor was Fr. William Gloria who in that year had retired to private life."

May our Heavenly Father, who loves the merciful, welcome in mercy the soul of our dear Father Henry Ferreira.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Fr. Jerry Bonjean, SDB  
Director



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*This article was written by Fr. Henry Ferreira himself at the request of Fr. Larry Lorenzoni on the occasion of Fr. Henry's 60th anniversary of ordination, March 31, 1966. It has not been edited, but left intact, just as he wrote it on March 30th, 1966. Father Henry would have celebrated his 94th birthday on March 30th of this year. This issue of SALESANS WEST commemorates his many years of hard work, toil, and sacrifice in the pioneering work of the Province. May his words be a remembrance and his memory an inspiration to present and future Salesians.*

Father Henry J. Ferreira is a Portuguese priest by his birth in the Northern province of Portugal named Minho, where the Portuguese kingdom started over eight centuries ago, about 1140 years of the Christian era. He was born March 30th, 1881, celebrating his happy birthday just today.

He was orphaned of his father and mother when still a child, mediating only six months between the death of his father and mother—six months only. He was taken care of by some relatives in the same house of his birth with a brother John, one year old only. This brother John went to the city of Porto to live and be raised up by an uncle; and Henry, the youngest, was taken to the city of Braga, where some of his relatives were. An uncle and an aunt were raising him while he was doing some light work for the house and waiting for his admission in the Saint Caetano's Orphanage, under the direction of the Ven. Fr. Cruz, whose Process for Beatification is in its regular course in the Congregation of Rites, Rome. Fr. Ferreira entered that institution for the poor orphans on January 25th, 1891. The Salesians took over its direction on November 10, 1894, by request of its director Fr. Cruz to Don Rua, the first Salesian Superior General.

Under the guidance of so good educators, the "Saintly Padre Cruz" as he was known in Portugal at large, and the Salesian Fathers of the Apostle of Youth, Don Bosco, after his preliminary studies, both elementary and complementary instruction, when Fr. Sutura, a Sicilian, was the Director of that school, he, Fr. Ferreira, was about 14 years of age and decided to join some of his school mates already separated from the community, to study his vocation and start the life of an aspirant. Not a very long time elapsed when an order came to send three aspirants to the first Salesian Novitiate house, the Sacred Heart, in Lisbon. They were about 8 youngsters who took the train from Braga about 4 o'clock p.m. to arrive in Lisbon about 7 o'clock a.m. and from there to the poor house of the novitiate on a beautiful hill, in a manor house, in front of the



Henry Ferreira, S.D.B.  
1881 - 1975

Jesuit school and college named Campolide. Once there, Fr. Ferreira kept company with his school mates pursuing his studies and the practices of piety with instructions in the houses of the novitiate by the direction of the famous Fr. Augustin Colussi, Sacred Theology Doctor in the Gregorian University of Rome.

In the year 1899 (March 18), Don Rua made his first visit to Portugal and during his visitation to the novitiate, there were two novices who made their religious vows in his presence, Fr. Ferreira was one of them; another one, after a few months left, returning to the world.

Fr. Ferreira was then called to start his religious training in the old school of Arts and Trades in Lisbon, to be assistant and teacher for the boys. At the same time he was pursuing the studies of theology, moral and dogma, for 2 years and a half. One day he was called by Fr. Peter Cogliolo who was the Provincial, and told that he had to get ready to go to the Oratory of Don Bosco in Turin, Italy, to take over the writing and direction, administration and correspondence in Portuguese of Don Rua and "The Salesian Bulletin" in Portuguese. There were 7 other languages of Salesian publications in the oratory, the

mother-house of the Salesian Congregation.

Two years of studies in theology were accomplished, finished, there in the years 1903 to 1906, the last year of Fr. Ferreira's residence in Italy. He was ordained on March 31st, 1906.

In order to make it short, Father Rua one day sent one of his secretaries to call me to his office, the room where he received the daily visitors, that was always crowded, to see him there.

While I was waiting in the ante-room he discerned me at a distance and came forth to the door, to tell the visitors: 'I have called that father, please come in here.' So I did. Once in his presence, he asked me if I or any of my family had objection to go to Oakland, California, to help Frs. Galli and Bergeretti, who were too busy with so much people, immigrants of several nationalities and couldn't attend them as they should, because of lack of help of another priest at least. I told him that on my part there was no objection neither of my folks.

He said, 'Then go and talk to Fr. Borghino,' the first provincial of the Salesians in the U.S., 'and get ready to do what he will tell you to do.' He was there in the oratory. So it happened that I asked him to go back to Portugal and say good-bye to my family and then at the proper time I would go to my destination. (I knew Fr. Galli in Portugal; he was my first teacher in Latin and other matters, etc.)

On November 17, I and a caravan of other missionaries bound for the U.S. left the Port of Genova in company with Fr. Provincial towards New York where we arrived after 14 days of very rough seas and lots of sea-sickness for the majority of the passengers.

On December 1st, 1906, we landed in the harbor of New York and after the long practices of the customs and passports, etc., we were accompanied by other Salesians to the Church of Transfiguration national parish for the Italians, who numbered thousands and thousands in New York.

There I had to wait with some other confreres to take the train to California, we were about 8 bound to go to this state in the company of our Fr. Provincial.

After a 7 day trip we arrived in San Francisco where I spent the night at the Italian Church of SS. Peter and Paul in North Beach. Next day, Fr. Bergeretti came to pick me up and take me to the St. Joseph's Portuguese Church, West Oakland, where I was to stay, labor and toil for 45 years in two national parishes for 4 nationalities, obliged to talk in 4 languages all the time.

While I was too busy like the other fathers in the parish work in Oakland for so many years, I was sent by Fr. Galli, the Pastor of the Church, to





Fortieth Anniversary of Ordination - 1946

go and preach missions outside, especially in San Joaquin Valley, like a little Portugal, and in other places where my countrymen are very many in numbers, the majority in certain places.

After the 45 years of hard labor in that Mystical Vineyard of Our Lord, the Salesian Provincial at that time, Fr. Cogliandro, called Fr. Anthony Ragogna, to whom I was assistant in Our Lady Help of Christians in East Oakland, to tell him that his time of pastorate in that parish was up and asked him if he did not think that it was high time to go on retirement? I don't know what he answered, but he had to go somewhere else, to Richmond, our Salesian High School there, and take a good rest. And he was told to ask me to go to the Provincial office of Fr. Alfred Cogliandro and, 'Tell Fr. Ferreira to go there the following day to receive the same order to change and go on retirement.' So he did and I went to San Francisco to the Provincial office to hear the good news that certainly it was high time to take a good rest. I agreed with that. He told me that he had heard somebody who told him that I had decided in a case like this, of retiring, due to too many years of hard work. I liked to go to Watsonville, St. Francis School. And I told him, 'Yes, Father, that is true.' 'So, prepare yourself and go there and take a good rest,' he said.

That is all the long history of my religious life in California after 45 years of hard work with the immigrants from the Latin Countries in Europe, and at present 59 years of my life spent in California, as some kind of a missionary life in this civilized state. Although in our days, it seems to be returning to the WILD WEST, according to what we can read in our daily papers, all kinds of crimes, horrifying debauchery, criminality soaring, rising up every day in all classes of people in our midst, all over. But why? What is the cause of reason for that?

No religion, at all in the public schools, no God, no commandments of God, no morals, no principles of morality. What can we expect?

There is not such a thing in our Constitution, first article; nor in the amendment of the first article of the Constitution forbidding religion or the teaching of religion in the public schools. Those articles were sophisticated, falsified by people in the highest classes of society because they want to be free of any inhibition, to do whatever they like, the same as the Communist Russians where all religion is abolished, because it is incompatible with the atheism of their rulers. I read those Articles of the U.S. Constitution and they say that the U.S. government must not establish any religion.



seventy-five  
years  
of  
salesian  
life (1974)



↓ sixty years of  
priesthood (1966)

