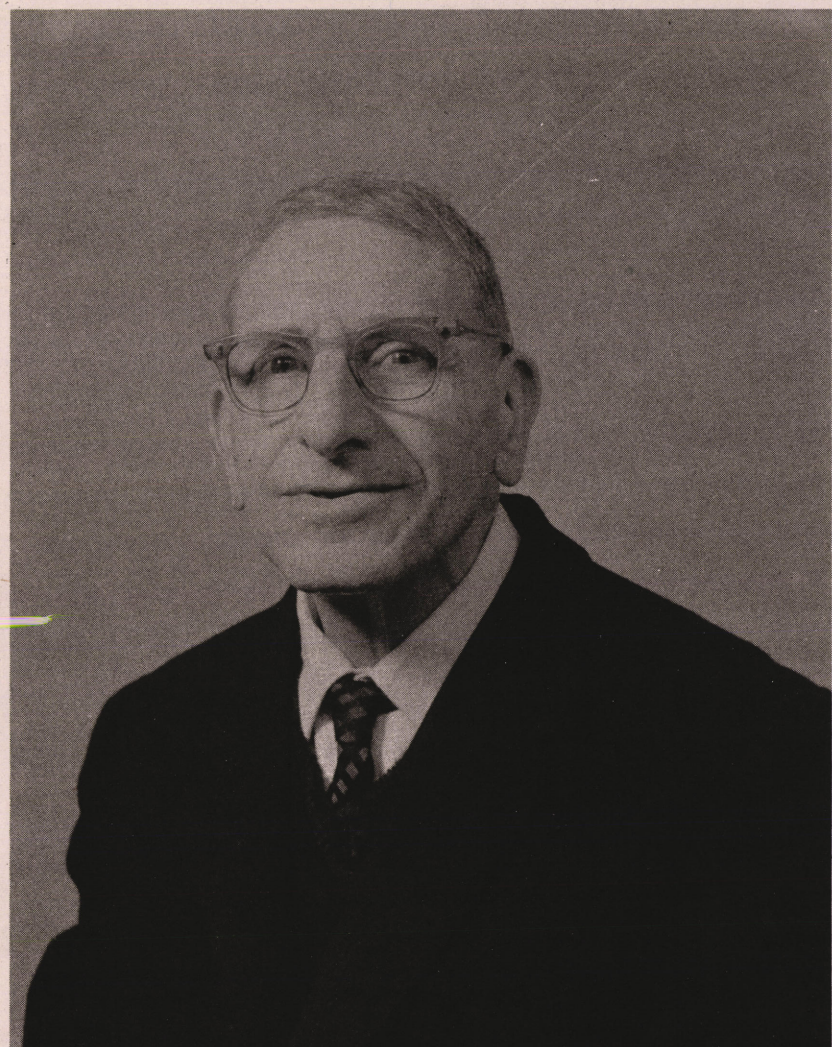


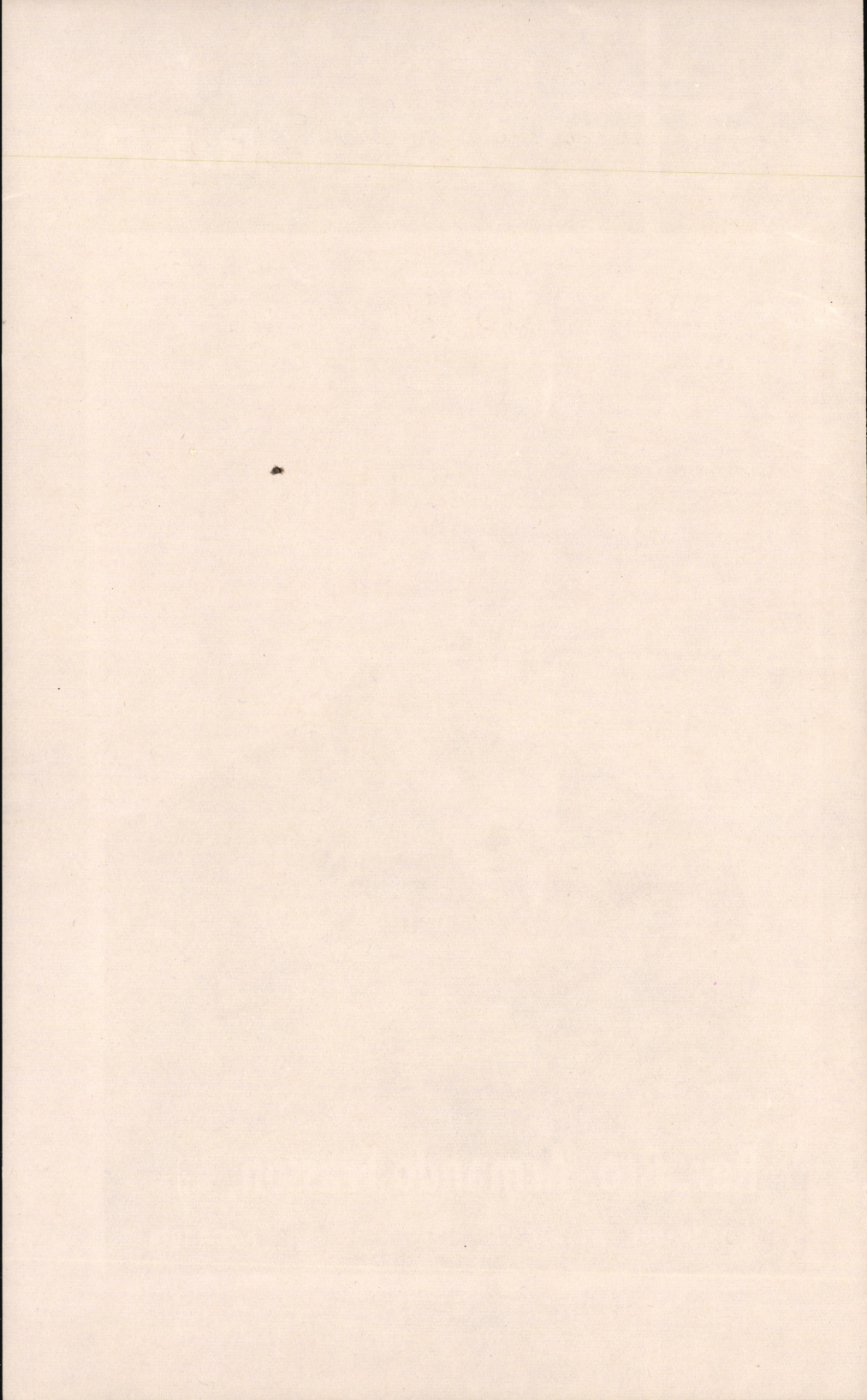
R.I.P.



Rev. Bro. Armando Frasson, S.D.B.

° 14.10.1901

† 26.4.1978



BROTHER

Armando Frasson

S. D. B.

The news struck Don Bosco Technical School, Shillong, like a thunderbolt: "Bro. Frasson has suffered from a heart attack and his condition is serious." The confreres and the boys had been eagerly waiting for his return from Italy after his first and only trip home in fifty-four years of mission work.

Bro. Frasson had left for his home country in good health and accompanied by Bro. Bongiorno. On the way he passed through Calcutta, Madras, Bangalore and Bombay and renewed contact with confreres whom he had known earlier. In Rome he visited the Vatican, St. Peter's, and the other sacred shrines, and was thrilled with the joy that is the experience of every devout pilgrim to the Eternal City. He met the superiors, and in true Salesian tradition, placed himself at their disposal. As he had no known relatives in Italy, he was invited to stay in the Mother House in Turin. There he spent his three months of holidays quickly becoming a part of the Salesian community at Valdocco. Though Bro. Bongiorno took him to visit places like Milan, Venice and Pauda, Bro. Frasson was himself when in a large Salesian community, and felt he was contributing his share to the common apostolic effort. He was asked to give a helping hand in the "Ufficio Viaggi" which does an enormous amount of work on behalf of the Salesian missions throughout the world. Bro. Frasson took up the work with a sense of

gratitude. He felt that as a missionary he owed a great deal to this mission office. He thought it a pleasure and a privilege to help Fr. Tatak, Bro. Da Roit and Fr. Beltramo who were doing so much for the Salesian missions.

The Confreres of the Mother House were really edified by his deep piety, his regularity, his diligence, his easy companionship, his unassuming and kindly ways and his spirit of helpfulness. Someone remarked: "Here you have a true missionary and a real son of Don Bosco. It will be such men that will bring about conversion of hearts." Meanwhile Bro. Frasson's heart and his thoughts were in Shillong. He was eagerly waiting for the end of the holidays to return to India and to the boys he knew, to the house he loved and the work that made him feel immediately at home.

It had been arranged that he would pass through Greece on his way back to India and meet his only sister aged 86 who was working in Timos, an island of the Cyclades. Bro. Bongiorno was his companion also on the way back. Turin – Rome – Athens. The journey was pleasant and uneventful. His sister was waiting for him at the Provincial House in Athens. It was to be a meeting after 64 years and the emotional strain at the separation was to prove too much for Bro. Frasson. Two full days in the company of his sister, Bro. Frasson visited the ancient monuments that were the glory of Athens. Sitting together on those ruins they chatted, little realizing that one of them was destined in a short time to leave for his heavenly reward. When the time came for Bro. Frasson to take leave for India he faced the separation bravely, but evidently he was deeply affected.

Stopping briefly in Bombay he reached Calcutta. Since he had never been to Krishnagar Bro. Bongiorno thought of taking him for a trip that side to enable him to have an idea of the work that the Salesians had done in that diocese. Unfortunately it was there that he suffered a severe heart attack and was taken to Mary Immaculate Clinic. After a few days he was taken to Woodlands in Calcutta. Confreres of Don Bosco Shillong went down in turn to keep company with him, and bring him up if

his condition improved. But his condition did not really improve. Gradually it became clear that he was sinking.

At this point we would like to express our gratitude to the confreres of Calcutta and Krishnagar and the sisters of Mary Immaculate for their kind services to Bro. Frasson. We cannot thank them enough for what they have done. During the two months that he was in Calcutta he was given the best care and attention. We would also like to thank the sisters of Nazareth for the attentions they lavished on him after his arrival in Shillong.

Brother Frasson had all the while been dreaming of returning to Shillong. In his parting speech before holidays he had promised to return, and he had "promises to keep." Thus he held on with hope of coming back to Shillong, while the boys of Don Bosco Shillong made fervent Novenas for his recovery. As time passed it became evident that he would not get over the ailment. The doctors now began making a supreme effort to make him fit for undertaking a journey to Shillong where he longed to rest his bones. Ultimately on April 18. Bro. Frasson made a historic trip to Shillong accompanied by Fr. C.V. George and two sisters of Mary Immaculate. He lay on a stretcher during the air-flight and the last road-trip from Gauhati to Shillong. What gave him the boldness to face the inconveniences of the journey was the thought he was returning to the people for whom he had worked. Jokingly he remarked at one moment, "This looks like the journey of Joseph and Mary to Egypt."

He was delighted when he realized that ultimately he was in Shillong. He was taken directly to Nazareth Hospital, as he was far from being well. For a few days he seemed to be making progress, and everyone began to hope that he might yet make a recovery in the climate he was used to. But soon enough his condition began to deteriorate, and he was given the last Sacraments. On April 26, 1978 Bro. Frasson left for his Eternal Reward leaving his confreres and boys in profound grief. May his soul rest in peace!!

Bro. Armando Frasson was born of Italian parents in Cully (Switzerland) on October 14, 1901.

He entered the Salesian Novitiate of Foglizzo in 1923 and began thinking of asking for the missions. In August 1924 as he was approaching the end of the Novitiate a missionary from China invited him to volunteer for the Chinese mission which he readily did. A little later, however, Fr. Peter Ricaldone assigned him to the Assam Mission which was eagerly waiting for a pressman. He travelled to India aboard "Cracovia" along with Fr. C. Vendrame, Bro. L. Ravalico and four others. In Bombay Mgr. Mathias and another father introduced themselves as two Jesuits who had been asked to receive the newly arriving Salesians. They had a big laugh when the two bearded "Jesuits" proved to be good Salesians.

Bro. Frasson was assigned to Don Bosco Shillong where he arrived on the 23rd of December 1924. Except for two short assignments to Tanjore and C.O.P. he remained in Shillong all his missionary career.

When Bro. Frasson took over the Don Bosco Press, an old machine and a few boxes of types were all the wealth he had. There was just one workman to help, and a bookbinder who worked part time when he could make himself free. Soon he had a few trainees in the printing trade. He may deservedly be called the founder of Don Bosco Press. In those days the art of printing was so undeveloped among the pressmen of Shillong that Bro. Frasson was very often approached for advice and guidance which he readily gave to anyone in need. He played a decisive role in the setting up of the Shillong Government Press.

There was none like Bro. Frasson when it came to the question of work. One could see him working late into the night to finish the pile that had accumulated in the Press with each missionary wanting everything "Urgently." Bro. Frasson never learned the art of saying "No" to anyone. Everything was possible, and there was a way out of every problem and even the impossible could be done, with some extra bit of sacrifice, after all!

Aside from the work in the Press, he was called upon to take up so many other types of activities as needs arose. He was always prepared to accept any burden when it meant the benefit of boys and the general welfare of the community. He was a willing substitute of anybody on any occasion. He would get the press moving in the morning, rush to the kitchen to supervise the cooking, assist the boys at games and wash, and give a helping hand to any confrere in need. After a heavy day's schedule, Bro. Frasson would keep awake late into the night completing work that called for urgent attention.

What characterised Bro. Frasson's love for work was his amazing regularity. For him orderliness, punctuality and regularity were the all-important qualities of a person's performance of his duty. He was the bell-ringer of Don Bosco for 50 years and proudly performed the task to the very end. Clocks may go wrong, people may argue about the exact time, but there was none like Bro. Frasson for precise timing. On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of his Religious Profession he was presented with a transistor. He never used it except for checking the time. And when he did, he would turn on the volume, and the echoes of the cuckoo announcing the time would resound down the corridors, and an awareness of the passing hours would be impressed into the mind of the community. While visiting houses he would speedily acquaint himself with the time-table and would unfailingly be present at every community event. For Bro. Frasson being punctual and regular was not mere obedience to a rule, but the concrete manner of living the Gospel norm: "Be ye ready..... Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them." His every hour was given to the Lord and he was ever at his appointed task.

Bro. Frasson was the living chronicle of the house. He could tell what happened on a particular day the previous year, or the year before, or 35 years earlier. If at times he fumbled, he could refer to the Chronicles which he kept up-to-date with great diligence. He had an eye for details and would record faithfully a thousand things that would have escaped others.

So too, if anyone wanted to be called up early morning, to be reminded of something to be done the following week — they would all appeal to Bro. Frasson who had his memory at his command. Allowing for the natural uncertainty in all such matters, he could forecaste weather with amazing skill. When at times his predictions did not come true he would good-humouredly complain that the landing of the Americans in the Moon had put out of gear the lunar influence on climatic changes.

But what was truly admirable in Bro. Frasson was his simplicity of life. He owned few things and would have preferred to do with even fewer. It was hard to persuade him to accept something when he thought it was not strictly necessary. He just could not see what he would do with it. The last thing he was concerned about was his comfort or convenience. When he received as a Christmas present a hat or a muffler, he was grateful beyond words. A sense of economy was ingrained into him. One could notice him going round in the evenings turning off taps and switching off lights where there was any wastage. The indifference of others to such matters sometimes pained him. He kept his room in great simplicity. He was truly the man who preferred to decorate his heart with virtues and not the walls of his room. The simple life and tastes of Bro. Frasson was a constant witness to the inner wealth of his soul.

Bro. Frasson was a marvellous example of humility and obedience. He was ever ready to take up any work, move to any place, and do anything at all, as obedience expected him to. He manifested no preferences, he placed no conditions when accepting an assignment. He never considered it below his dignity to ask permissions, to seek advice, to wait for instructions, when he thought them necessary. And this did not spring from some uncertainty of mind, but from his firm convictions regarding the way religious communities should hold together, grow in strength and carry out their apostolic mission in the world. Consultation with his superior at regular intervals was an essential item in his life programme. Even in this he manifested the most enviable spirit of simplicity, openness and confidence.

But if in anything he excelled, it was in his goodness of heart, kindness, generosity and helpfulness. Bro. Frasson was just incapable of an unkindly act or a harsh word. He thought well of all and spoke well of all. He had no complaints about any body or anything. As far as he was concerned everything was going on perfectly well and everyone was OK. He paid everyone his due deference and pretended nothing for himself. So, he never took note if he should ever be slighted, forgotten or neglected. He was always pleased with the situation and most grateful for the least thing done for him. During his last illness nothing was more frequently in his mouth than the word "Thanks." To the very end of his life he preserved the golden quality of always wanting to help others. Since he knew French, not rarely he would be asked by someone to translate a letter or give a few French lessons, and he would immediately comply with the request. It was not in his life-style to refuse.

Aside from all these qualities, what made of Bro. Frasson a true son of Don Bosco was his genuine love for boys. He felt perfectly at home in their company, and never missed an event where the boys were involved. Games or sports, picnics or films — Bro. Frasson would be there if the boys were present; in their absence he found no pleasure in anything. As a young brother he was well known as a great comedian and loved to make the boys laugh with his gimmicks and pranks. When he appeared on the stage there was no end to roaring laughter. On sports days, he and Bro. Cid would dress up as clowns and keep crowds of boys amused the entire day. There would be sham fights, comic races and breath-taking tricks. Now Bro. Frasson would appear on the roof and deliver a speech, now from a window he would make an announcement — there was no end of surprises. That day was a happy day for him when he made the boys happy. Nor was his interest in boys confined to hours of recreation. The boys found him a patient assistant, a sympathetic teacher and a sacrificing Salesian. Work on behalf of boys was a pleasure for him and there was no end of it. Early rising, late bed — everything was welcome when the good of boys was the issue. Their noise and shouts, their rudeness and rowdy behaviour never upset

him; he was equal to any juvenile situation and his presence made a difference. Even during his last illness nothing gave him as much joy as hearing how the boys were making progress. Every achievement of the boys was his own achievement.

But if Bro. Frasson will be remembered for anything at all, it will be for the example he gave as a perfect religious. Prayer was the breath of his soul. It is no exaggeration to say, (and those who knew him closely will bear me out), that his life was a continuous dialogue with God. As he was an unfailing member at every community event and effectively participated in every community activity, he was truly himself in moments of silence and prayer when he poured out his soul before the Lord with manifest fervour and with evident absence of all inhibitions. If his regularity of life was something to be admired, his unfailing presence at the Practices of Piety was a legend in the community. We might even say Bro. Frasson was the guardian of religious observance in the house. He was a reminder to everyone what should be done on every occasion according to Don Bosco's traditions.

He was willing to give a Good Night or a talk, especially in Khasi, and spoke eloquently and forcefully of divine realities as though he had touched them with his hands. He evidenced a measure of confidence that was characteristic of a person who was in his own field and was sure of what he was speaking about. He could repeat with the Apostle John: "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands..... that which we have seen and heard we proclaim to you....." (1 John 1: 1-3)

After Night Prayers as everyone else was retiring for his rest, one could notice Bro. Frasson moving to the centre of the playground. There turning towards the statue of the Sacred Heart that stood on the old building (popularly known as the Vatican) he would invoke God's blessings on the house and on its inmates. No one can know what blessings he brought down on the community and the entire Congregation as he stood there

praying in silence in full view of everyone. Today we miss his visible presence among us, but we are certain that he continues to intercede for us with God in Heaven. May God in answer to his prayers send to our beloved Congregation men of outstanding virtue like Bro. Frasson.

Yours in C.J.

FR. THOMAS MENAMPARAMPIL
Don Bosco Technical School
Shillong (Meghalaya), India.

REV. BRO. ARMANDO FRASSON, S.D.B.

Born: 14.10.1901 (Cully, Switzerland)

Professed: 4.10.1924

Died: 26. 4.1978 (Shillong, India)

