

Dear Confreres,

It is with great regret that I have to inform you of the death, on Wednesday, 12th June 1968, at St. Anthony's, Cheam, of the

VERY REV. FATHER FRANCIS JOSEPH GAFFNEY, S.D.B.

Francis Gaffney was born in Blackburn, Lancashire, on the 8th March, 1906, and had the great advantage of an upbringing in a part of England long noted for its strong Catholic Faith. His parents were David and Teresa Gaffney.

At the age of eighteen, in 1924 he came to Battersea as a late vocation. Here he studied until 1926 when he entered the Novitiate at Cowley-Oxon. On 25th November 1926 he received the Religious habit, was admitted to first profession on 17th September 1927 and here he remained for his philosophical studies until 1929.

Philosophy completed he was posted to Chertsey as teacher and assistant and spent four years there. Meanwhile he made his perpetual Profession at Battersea on the 23rd September 1930.

From 1933-34 he taught at Battersea and then moved on to Shrigley (Cheshire) to commence his theology which he completed at Blaisdon in 1938. He was ordained priest by the late Bishop Lee of Clifton on July 17 1938.

For a year he taught the small boys in our prep school at Burwash (Sussex). Then followed his long and very fruitful work at Battersea (1939-1953). It coincided with the beginning of the Second World War and with the consequent evacuation of Salesian College Battersea to Cowley-Oxon. (1939-45). The war over, Father Gaffney returned with the school to London and continued his dedicated teaching until 1953. It was about this time he first felt the signs that his heart might fail him. He was appointed Parish Priest of the Sacred Heart Church. This was a total change of work but the admirable qualities he developed during his teaching years served him well. His people responded to his open friendliness and as soon as he had become established he turned his attention to the essential redecoration of the parish church and this he kept in perfect condition. But in 1966 he had to leave the Battersea he loved so well and go to Chertsey as parish priest and the very next year he was made Rector of the Salesian College there. He had only a few months to live, but long enough to show his boys his qualities as a father; one really concerned with their progress.

Father Gaffney had great gifts of friendship. He was always keenly interested in the lives and careers of his pupils, his parishioners and confreres. Among the Old Boys he was a general favourite. He was always so happy to welcome them and to hear all they had to say. He retained contact with them over the years and knew them all by name. Whenever reunions came round he would be in the centre rich with anecdote and great was the laughter. He was a keen gardener and found time to direct the care of the grounds at Battersea.

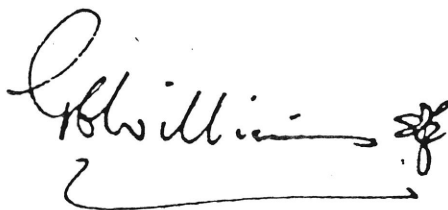
He will be most remembered for his expansive friendliness. Many an Old Boy and many a parishioner can tell stories of his warm-hearted helpfulness and many a lonely person will miss him greatly. His concern for deprived children was known to all. Our Sisters and their charges at Hastings counted on his visit every Christmas when he would arrive with a car loaded with gifts which he collected from friends.

Although he was known to have heart trouble, the illness was unexpected. He suffered coronary thrombosis after lunch on June 1st and although he was rushed to hospital and treated with every care the dreaded second attack came suddenly.

On June 17th his body was brought to St. Anne's Church, and many parishioners came to pay their last respects and pray for his soul. The following morning there was a solemn Requiem Mass at which were present the boys of the school and the staff, local parish priests and many parishioners. That same evening the remains were brought to the Sacred Heart Church, Battersea where the office of the dead was sung by the Battersea Community and on June 18th we paid our last tribute. There was a Solemn Requiem Mass followed by a panegyric and the interment in our Salesian grave in the Chertsey cemetery. May he rest in Peace.

I commend his soul and the needs of this Anglo-Irish Province to your good prayers.

Yours devotedly in Dno.,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'William', followed by a decorative flourish and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Provincial.

Father Francis Joseph Gaffney, born Blackburn (Lancs) 8th March 1906; died Cheam (Surrey), England, 12th June 1968, in the 63rd year of his age, the 41st of his religious profession, and the 30th of his priesthood. He was a Rector for one year.