

Salesian College,
Battersea,
London. SW11.

Dear Confreres,

Let us pray for the soul of our dear confrere

FATHER THOMAS JOSEPH GILTINAN. SDB.

who died on November 19th.

Fr. Giltinan was born in Cork on the 5th November 1872 and he came to Battersea on the 27th October 1895. He made his religious profession the following year at Valsalice into the hands of Don Rua. He then set off with Fr. Barni to start the Salesian House in Capetown. He used to recall at times to his friends that he made sure that he disembarked quickly from the ship so that he could claim to be the first Salesian to set foot on South African soil. He successfully completed his philosophical and theological studies there and he was ordained by Bishop Rooney, the Vicar Apostolic. He then worked with great zeal in South Africa for about seven years

Fr. Giltinan then returned to London where he was in charge, for several years of the St. George's orphanage in Southwark. In 1907 he was asked to go to Farnborough to help as assistant priest in the parish and also help in the College. It was he who later started the Catholic mission at Alton in Hampshire. He used to go there on Saturdays after lunch. On Sundays he said Mass in the small, improvised chapel, heard confessions and taught catechism. In the afternoon he cycled the 17 miles back to Farnborough in order help with the Evening service at Farnborough. This programme continued for three years but his heart was still with the work in orpanages and so he accepted with joy an obedience to go to Malta, where he directed the house of St. Patrick for six years. He was sorry to leave when his term of office finished.

On his return to Farnborough he became the zealous Parish priest there and he took great interest in developing the parish schools there and introducing the Knights of St. Columba. However after a short time his health deteriorated and a gradual paralysis immobilised him and he had to retire from his work.

I met Fr. Giltinan for the first time in the dining room of the novitiate at Foglizzo in 1896. He sat opposite me – full of his future mission, fresh in the grace and joy of his profession and he delighted in the fervour and spirit of our novices. He had not previously seen a novitiate and that year we had 140 novices. In those times at Battersea – as in the Mother house of the Oratory, the novices helped in the assisting and house-work. Our cleric Thomas was a tall person with a large heart typical of a person from the south of Ireland. . . and he seemed to face the future with the optimism of his race. We communicated with a bit of English and Italian and managed to exchange ideas, hopes and wishes.

No more than six years had passed when we met again in the smiling city of the Cape, where he was Bursar in the house of Arts and Trades. The first thrill of founding this house had passed and we met during a period of work and trials and worked together for a year. He gave me valued and reliable help. Fr. had a good understanding and empathy with young people – he understood their aspirations and their failings. As a good educator he knew how to animate, correct and spur on towards goodness. In his talks and sermons he knew how to address the minds of the young. He often prayed for efficacy of speech and he certainly enjoyed it in full measure.

In 1909 I was all alone at Southampton waiting to board the boat to South Africa when, quite unexpectedly Fr. Giltinan and Fr. Muldoon appeared to offer me fraternal greetings and good wishes for myself and their many friends in South Africa. That kind act gave me great joy and it illustrated the characteristic goodness of Fr. Giltinan and his ability in cultivating friendships with both the great and the lowly. He had become friendly with such people as the governor, Sir Healy Hutchinson, Generals Bothe, De Wet, Delaray, Mgr Kolbe and many others. The same thing happened in Malta where he managed to surround the house with the esteem and friendship of the authorities of the island both ecclesiastical and secular.

Fr. Thomas Giltinan died at Farnborough on November 19th 1935 after devoutly receiving the Last Sacraments. I ask your prayers for this good and holy priest.

Your affectionate confrere,

Fr. E. M. Tozzi. SDB. (Provincial)