

BR EMMANUEL GOMEZ (1898-1970)

My dear confreres,

The departure for heaven of our incomparable Br. Manuel Gomez Fuentes, a simple and lovable soul as few are, ought to lead us to recognize in this humble Salesian the charism of Don Bosco at its best. It is very difficult for anyone who had dealings with Br. Manolito (as we familiarly were fond of calling him) to ever forget him. Because of this, even today, now that by the mercy of God he is in heaven, I do not doubt that there will be more than one of us who will direct our prayers to him, happy to have such a great intercessor before the Lord.

Without troubling anyone, as silently as he had lived, our dear Br. Manuel left us at the age of 72.



Manuel was born in La Alameda in the Province of Malaga in 1897, the son of a deeply Christian family. In 1916 he attended the Holy Trinity School in Seville where he received his vocation. In 1916 he joined the novitiate in San Jose del Valle where he made his religious profession. How many times have we heard him tell of his heroic obediences which called him to be the community cook, a task in which he became an expert. After two years of training in the House of Cadiz, we see him joining a missionary expedition. Fr. Ricaldone, who had known him for many years, was surprised at his request to become a missionary as he had such a timid nature. Manuel used often to say that Mary, Help of Christians wanted him to go to South America but, despite this, he ended up by going to Australia to the Mission in the Kimberleys.

His stories of those years were always interesting. He was only in the Kimberleys a very short time. The years 1925 and 1926 were spent in Macau but his poor health made his Superiors decide to bring him back to Spain. The years 1926 to 1929 were spent in this House and that of Triana always willing to do the humblest of tasks with a joy as innocent as a child's. For many years he was sacristan in the church and his nickname "Manolito the Sacristan" gives us a good idea of what he meant to those who knew him. Always smiling, a friend of all, extraordinarily modest, he was a man who was available and approachable to all.

His religious poverty caused him to be very severe with himself. Br. Manolito was a man who loved the Congregation deeply. I remember him telling the story that, on his arrival in Australia, the Salesians were the guests of the various religious communities and he happened to be the guest of the Spanish Benedictines. Since he was so young they wanted to put him in charge of the Guest House. Caught between gratitude to his guests and fidelity to his vocation, he had no doubts what his decision should be.

This love for the Congregation was manifested even in the smallest of details. Even if he was given a very minor responsibility he carried out the task to the very best of his ability. Until the end of his days he was always to be found in the sacristy helping all those who needed his attention.

His health had not been good for some years. The doctor saw him periodically and he seemed to be responding to treatment. Halfway through the morning of the 2nd September he did not feel well so he went along to see the doctor who lived closeby. The doctor, who was busy at the time, told him to go back to the College and he would come along as soon as he was free. Whilst he was waiting he went to bed. When the doctor arrived fifteen minutes later he found him dead. We gathered the confreres around him and, as his body was still warm, we administered the Last Sacraments. Manolito was the picture of a saint who awaited death - on his lips was his habitual smile. He was the good and faithful servant who was resting in the bosom of the Lord, the innocent soul whom God had found with his lamp burning.

Together with the Provincial who presided at the Requiem Mass, many confreres from the various Houses of the Province attended the funeral. All remarked on his serenity - the death image of a simple man.

In recommending him to your prayers and in writing these lines, I ask your prayers for this House and for the Salesians who work for so many young people.

Yours most affectionately in Don Bosco,

Fr. Jose Hernandez Andres (Rector).



DIAMOND CREEK 1925.

(l. to r.) Br. R. Verona,
Fr. J. Cerutti, Br. E. Gomez,
Fr. E. Rossetti, Br. C. Azseli.



"RUPERTSWOOD" - 1929.