

Salesian College
Farnborough
HANTS

October 20th, 1978

Dear Confreres,

GOD in His inscrutable wisdom and compassion called to Himself on September 9th the soul of our dear

FATHER CHARLES GRACE

After some weeks of sickness and increasing weakness, he was admitted to the Cambridge Military Hospital on July 20th and the following morning transferred to the Intensive Care Unit. The main trouble appeared to be one of high blood pressure with its attendant problems. During the month of August he improved, was transferred to St. Bartholomews Hospital in London and at the end of the month was cheerfully predicting a speedy return to normal activity. But during the first week of September, matters took an unexpected turn for the worse and he died, very peacefully, fortified by all the consoling ministrations of our Holy Mother the Church, on Saturday September 9th. Requiescat in pace.

Charles Henry Grace was born in Rotherhithe, a suburb of London and baptised in the parish church of St. Peter and the Guardian Angels. He was the eldest of a family of four, three boys and one girl, born to staunch Christian parents. The father was in business and young Charles grew up with a consuming interest in practical matters connected with the family business. In all such families at the beginning of the century, music was almost a fact of life and Charles' precocious gifts were early discovered. At the age of thirteen he was the assured and competent organist of his parish church.

Possibly it was his love for church music and the rich liturgy of those happy days that moved him to take a further step. On his application to the Salesians in Battersea, he was sent, at the age of fourteen, to the aspirantate in Ireland, the Missionary College of Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick. The House was also an Agricultural College and the young London boy was introduced to a new world of farming, of the growing of crops and the raising of prize cattle.

He was still only 16, when in 1927 he went to the Novitiate in Cowley, Oxford and was professed there in the following year. Here he continued his musical studies in the University environment and made his perpetual profession six years later.

He approached his theological studies with mixed feelings. In spite of his great desire for the priesthood, so deep was his reverential fear, so great his awe that God should give such spiritual power and such responsibility to man, that he long hesitated. Only the repeated assurances of his confessor and his superior of his fitness for the priesthood gave him at last the courage to go forward to ordination at Blaistown in 1940. Over the years he was often troubled by scruples in his Mass and in his pastoral work although by nature he was of a happy disposition, fond of practical jokes and with his own sense of humour; as a young man, he was a keen and vigorous sportsman.

His musical talent sent him around the Province in many Houses, particularly in the Houses of Formation. He acquired diplomas in music as well as his Mus.B., with particular emphasis on the piano and the organ. He was rather a solo player than a producer. For his personal performances and for those he directed, he was a somewhat merciless perfectionist; but as an accompanist, especially at school concerts, he followed Don Bosco's advice and listened with his heart rather than his head, and throughout his life, in his skill, sympathy and understanding he was in this, an acknowledged master.

However, his practical sense, inherited from his father, played a great part in his life. He followed the development of engineering technology with unfailing interest; he loved to work hard with his hands and acquired an acknowledged professional skill in plumbing, heating and kindred trades. It was always a wonder to his confreres that his hands, hardened often with hours of manual labour, could retain their marvellous ability on the piano.

His mother and father, and later his Salesian brother Peter, moved to South Africa in the late fifties and Father Grace followed them to take his musical talents to a land where men of his quality were not so plentiful. He was in great demand as an advisor for cathedrals and convents in all matters concerning liturgical music, the purchase and upkeep of instruments and of course for organ recitals and school concerts. His pastoral work also widened its horizons.

However, his health began to fail and in consequence of his physical weakness, some of his early scruples began to manifest themselves again. He went through a period of great suffering for some months. When he began to regain his strength, he returned to England and under the care of his devoted sister Alice and her husband, made a complete recovery. He came to Farnborough almost two years ago and spent with the community and the boys what he himself declared to be the happiest time of his life. He was a most welcome member of the community and it was a sad shock to us all when we learnt he would not recover. But we would not wish to keep him with us in suffering and while we ask for the prayers of our confreres for the repose of his soul, we are sure he is in the peace and happiness of God's presence. Our sympathy goes out to his Salesian Brother Peter Grace, his sister Alice and her husband and family.

Please pray for the blessing of God and of Mary Help of Christians for the many problems of this House.

Yours affectionately in D.B.

CYRIL KENNEDY, SDB

Rector.

Data for the Necrology:

Charles Henry Grace	
Born Rotherhithe, London	1.4.1911
First Profession, Cowley	8.9.1928
Ordained, Blaistown	21.7.1940
Died Farnborough	9.9.1978