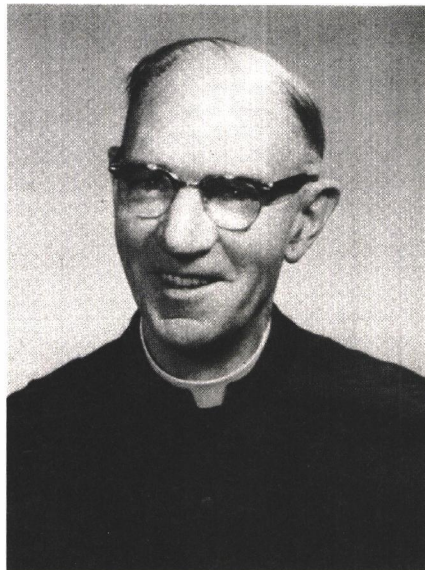




Fr. Henry J. Hall, S.D.B.



Fr. Henry died in the early morning of July 1, 1982, in Oxford, England; he was assisted by the hospital chaplain. At the beginning of May, 1982, Fr. Henry left St. John Bosco Parish in Edmonton, Alberta, for his native country, England. He wanted to visit his sisters, one of whom was celebrating her seventieth birthday. Father Henry was under a doctor's care when he left Edmonton, and intended to undergo further medical tests while in England.

"During our Province Assembly in Moraga," wrote Fr. Carmine Vairo, provincial, "we received word from Fr. Henry that he had entered the hospital for exploratory surgery and was offering his sufferings for the success of our Assembly. He wanted to be remembered to the assembled confreres on the day of his surgery, June 15. The cause of his death was cancer. "

Fr. Henry left behind his two sisters "Tante" Hall

and Mary Ashby. His niece, Mary Anne Ashby, and her husband, Brian, had lovingly and generously taken Fr. Henry into their home and cared for him on several occasions. Before moving to Illinois Mary Anne and Brian had lived in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Henry Hall was born in Battersea (London) on August 4, 1908 to Henry Francis and Elizabeth Kyte and baptized in his parish Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel on August 30th.

We have no details of his early childhood, but we do know that he was soon brought into contact with the Salesians of Battersea. His early schooling was received there under the influence of the Salesians. They soon noticed in him the seed of a vocation to the religious life. On September 4, 1924, we find him in the Novitiate at Cowley (Oxford). His Master of Novices was Fr. James Simonetti. He pronounced his first vows on September 12, 1925 into

the hands of Fr. Francis Scaloni, Provincial. By 1927 he had completed his university course also in Cowley (Novices and Clerics lived in the same building at the time). His three years of Practical Training were spent at Burwash (1927-1930). He began his theological studies at Bolton, while teaching French, and he finished his courses at Shrigley (1930-1934). He was ordained in Southwark on August 15, 1934, in St. George's Cathedral.

Fr. Henry was an excellent French teacher; from 1934 to 1941 he was assigned to various schools (Battersea, Bolton, Cowley) to teach that language in the higher Forms. During World War II (1941-44) he served in the Armed Forces as an Army Chaplain. He returned to teaching after his military service. From 1944 -1953 he was a professor of languages first at Cowley and then at Bolton. He served one year (1953 -1954) in Guernsey-Battersea in parish work.

In 1965, Fr. John Malloy, the Provincial of the Western Province with headquarters in San Francisco, California, graciously accepted him in the Province and assigned him to St. Mary's Parish in East Los Angeles, where he served as assistant pastor for two years (1966-1968). In 1972-74, he served as Hospital Chaplain in San Francisco; then at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Surrey, British Columbia, as assistant pastor (1974-75); in Rosemead, California, at Bosco Tech as a Confessor (1975-1981).

Two important experiences changed the life of Fr. Henry Hall in these days: A six-month program of medical treatment at St. Joseph Hospital, Orange, CA. and a three-month renewal program for priests at Menlo Park, CA. Fr. Henry enjoyed great personal peace following these programs. What proved to be his final year was the last assignment as associate pastor in Edmonton, Alberta, at St. John Bosco parish. 1981-1982 was a year of extraordinary happiness for Fr. Henry.

Upon hearing the sad news of Fr. Henry's death, Fr. Carmine Vairo, the Provincial, expressed the gratitude of the Salesians of the Western Province to the Salesians of the Oxford Province and especially to Fr. Cyril Kennedy, provincial, for their kindness and attention to Fr. Henry during his last illness. Fr. Kennedy celebrated Mass with Fr. Henry in the hospital the day before his death.

Father Kennedy wrote: "I am quite certain that

he (Fr. Henry) knew that he was very sick and probably close to death viewing it in a most edifying spirit of deeply felt personal unworthiness. That is how we would all expect to be, or hope to be, when we are in a like position, but he was also peacefully resigned to the will of God, whatever it might hold for him. He never complained to me about his pains or discomfort; several others remarked on the same thing. There was a calm inner peace in the face of death which transcended his natural fears. I would be happy to meet my own end in a like spirit of faith and submission to God's will for me."

His body was brought into the Salesian Church of Mary Help of Christians in Cowley at 7:00 pm Tuesday, July 6. After the reception and the recitation of the Office of the Dead, a Mass was celebrated for the repose of his soul. On Wednesday, July 7th, the funeral Mass was held at 1:30 pm, after which his body was laid to rest along with the English Salesians in Rose Hill Cemetery in Cowley.

We are short of testimonies of Fr. Henry's life and style. But I would like to quote Fr. Larry Lorenzoni as he offered a Mass for our deceased Salesians during the Retreat at Three Rivers, California, about a month after the death of Fr. Hall. "One recollection of Fr. Hall is deeply etched in my memory. It happened here, at Three Rivers, two years ago. The poor man had fallen helplessly, in the dark, down the rocky ravine at the end of the walk outside the downstairs rooms nearest the chapel. There was no guard rail yet. He was badly bruised, his glasses gone. I shall never forget how grateful he was when, after combing brush and stones for nearly three hours after lunch the following day, I finally found the glasses that had slipped away as he fell. Every time we met in the two ensuing years I unfailingly heard about the glasses I had found. Under a rather rough exterior, he was truly a gentle and most sensitive soul!"

Let me conclude this letter with part of the eulogy offered by Fr. Kennedy for Fr. Henry on that July 7th. "In all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us ... there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8: 37-39).

"I first came to know Fr. Hall in the years 1937-1939 when he taught us French in Thornleigh. He

drove us very hard; boys automatically resent that, but he exercised a great influence over us and, in my own case, there developed a real and lasting affection which, as I look back, I recognize as one of those unique benefits of our school days. I suddenly remember his sermons. He was one of those very few priests who could hold us in rapt attention; I can even see one particular occasion as we stood out on the lawn, on one of Bolton's rare sunny days, and enjoyed his sermon.

"During the war he served as an Army Chaplain. When he came back from the Middle East, and was lying sick in bed in Battersea, I visited him there enabling me to see him just once and that very briefly. Our next encounter, again measured in minutes rather than hours, was two years ago in Los Angeles. Finally, there were these days from May 20th to June 30th, the day before God called him to Himself. I could not see him everyday, but when I was here I spent a little time with him. It cost no effort; through all the years, with almost no contact along the way, it was still important to me to be with him and, in those last days I was privileged to glimpse more clearly in him just what it was that had attracted such enduring affection....

"One day he said to me: 'When I die I wonder if God will let me see the great stack of good which He expected from us, and then show us the tiny heap of good that we have actually done?' As he asked himself that question, he asked it very peacefully and with a quiet sorrow and repentance which moved me deeply and made me wish for such repentance in myself. I remembered the words of Jesus as He began His teaching in Galilee, 'The time has come; the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the Good News.'" (Mk. 1: 15)

"In the brief moments that I was with him I was aware that his faith had an abiding certainty which touches everything. Faith reveals our own sinful unworthiness but sets it beside the infinite majesty of God's love for us and so brings us both to repentance and to peaceful trust. This clear-eyed faith touched me again in the way he spoke of the Chaplain's frequent visits and of the many times he was able to receive His Lord in Holy Communion. These precious moments with Jesus were very big events, he let me see that. The afternoon before he died the Chaplain took him down to the Chapel, so that he was able to

concelebrate Mass for the last time. It was the final exercise of his priestly ministry, sharing in this great mystery of the love of Jesus less than twelve hours before he left us to be with God. We were being allowed to see in him the very truth of all that Jesus promises us in our Gospel reading.

Fr. Hall, through all the struggles and vicissitudes of life had reached that happy state. The many people for whom he worked in Edmonton, Canada, had experienced it. I experienced it, but he did not seem to be aware of it. He just went on doing it right to the end and so he was ready to meet our God Who is Love; to be swallowed up in that Love, like into Like, for all eternity.

"As we offer this Holy Mass for him let us all bring that same spirit of repentance, of faith in God's love and in the mystery in which we share, and which so filled Fr. Henry's last days among us. I know that in his humble realism he would want me to ask you to pray much for him now and always, and for myself that will be a joyful act of gratitude. We also pray for his sisters and for all his own family who today suffer so deeply at their loss. We pray that God will be close to them and comfort them and that in their faith they will experience God's loving presence and the comfort and the peace that God alone can give."

In your charity remember me and this Provincial Community,

Fr. Mario Mich, SDB, Director.
San Francisco, CA
March 26, 1996

Father Henry Joseph Hall, SDB

Born: Battersea, London, England
August 4, 1908

Professed: Cowley, England
September 12, 1925

Ordained: Southwark, England
August, 15, 1934

Died: Oxford, England
July 1, 1982



Salesians of St. John Bosco

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