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Salesian House,
Ballinakill,
Portlaoise.

December 1993

Dear Confreres,

In the early hours of All Souls Day a cherished member of our Community, Fr. Peter Hanna, died as he had lived, quietly, calmly, peacefully. While he had not enjoyed the best of health in recent years his death came unexpectedly: late at night he felt he was not well and within an hour of receiving the Sacrament of the Sick he died in the Lord, calmly and confidently. He was eighty five years of age and a native of Dungannon, Co. Tyrone.

Fr. Peter was born on the 15th April 1908 into the family of Richard and Sarah Hanna. He was one of a family of six. His brothers John and George and his sister Minnie pre-deceased him.

He received his early education in St. Brigid's Primary School, Brockagh and then went off in his teenage years to join the Congregation. He was ordained in Blaisdon on 16th July 1939. After ordination he returned to Copsewood to assume the difficult task of Bursar when, as the college developed, demands were increasing and supplies diminishing during the war years. He was a tireless worker and a great provider; his uncanny foresight and resourcefulness ensured that necessary supplies were to hand for the completion of the Agricultural College in 1945. The Province is much indebted to his devoted, self-sacrificing hard work.

During his long life Fr. Peter was Rector in Warrenstown and Ballinakill before his assignment as Chaplain to the Sisters of Mercy in Swanage, England. Twelve years ago he returned to spend his retirement in his beloved Ballinakill.

Fr. Hanna was one of Nature's gentlemen. Quiet and unassuming, he was totally dedicated to the interests of the Congregation and retained a bursar's keen eye to detail to the last. He was very appreciative and was quick to acknowledge the smallest service in Community and was most grateful to his good friend Fr. O'Mahony who facilitated his journeys northward.

He was a man of great religious conviction. His deep faith found expression in our traditional devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and in the honour he paid to Our Lady, Help of Christians. He set great store by the blessing of Our Lady which afforded him great comfort and consolation when very indifferent health was his constant companion.

Although most of his life was spent in Pallaskenry, Warrenstown and Ballinakill, his roots drew him back to Dungannon and Coalisland, especially the favourite loughshore areas of Brockagh and the Ferry. The 16th July 1989 was an occasion of great rejoicing when Fr. Peter celebrated his Golden Jubilee at home with his family, relatives and friends. It was a fitting tribute to him that so many of those same family members and relatives undertook the long journey to join his fellow Salesians and Ballinakill neighbours at the concelebrated Requiem Mass in St. Brigid's Church, Ballinakill on 4th November and the interment in the Community Cemetery.

Fr. Hanna has returned to the Father, his life's work completed. While saddened by his departure we are reassured by the promise of Scripture so aptly quoted by Fr. Ingoldsby in his homily: "Happy are those who die in the Lord. Now they can rest forever after their work, since their good deeds go with them".

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

Yours sincerely in Don Bosco

Daniel Devitt, S.D.B.

