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15th November, 1976



BROTHER CHRISTOPHER HIGGINS

Dear Confreres,

Brother Christopher Higgins died on the Feast of the Transfiguration, 6th August, 1976. He was only 22 years of age and was just completing the second year of his religious profession.

Brother Chris was born on 13th February, 1954 and baptised in St. Anne's parish church, Fairfield, Manchester. He attended St. Anne's primary school from 1959-1965 and from there transferred to St. John the Evangelist's school 1965-1970 where he became Head Boy; later he attended Hollings Technical College 1970-1972.

He spent 1972-1973 as an Aspirant in Shrigley and from there he progressed to Crumlin, Dublin, Ireland where he made his first profession in 1974. He continued at Crumlin for another year studying philosophy. The last year of his life was spent at St. John Bosco's School, Aberdour, Fife, Scotland.

Brother Chris first came in contact with the Salesians when he was in primary school and at that time expressed the wish to be a priest. During his period at secondary school the idea of the priesthood seemed to have slipped from his mind, yet he remained involved with parish life doing his best to get to morning Mass during Lent and becoming a member of the choir etc. He was alert also to social problems such as Biafra, Anti-abortion rallies, helped in organising play groups for children on Saturdays and during holidays, organised outings for handicapped children and such-like. Then he met the Salesians again and came helping as a staff member on the Vocation Camps.

During the following year a sermon on vocations by an elderly parish priest made him think more seriously about his earlier ambition which had somehow faded away and he realised he must face it squarely and honestly. This Brother Chris did as he entered the Salesian novitiate in 1973 and went on to consecrate his life to God as a Salesian. When he died he had been just two years a Salesian, but he packed into these two years an enormous amount of good—kindness, joy, music and song and the biggest thing of all, the love of prayer that he spread around. Wherever he went prayer groups sprung up; whoever he met found themselves sooner or later praying, many of them joining prayer groups having captured from Brother Chris a radiance, a peace and a gentleness. This came across in his funeral Mass. In a packed church, 38 concelebrating priests and 20 Salesian brothers sang and prayed; his own family and his Salesian family praising and thanking God for Chris's life with us.

His young, generous life has been an inspiration to many. During his last week before being hospitalised he was not feeling well, yet he continued to carry out his duties as a member of the staff at St. John Bosco's. The last day of that week was Sports Day. He had been told to take it easy, but this he did by being with the boys, assisting them quietly as best he could. That evening he collapsed and was taken to hospital. He made a fairly rapid recovery and was discharged after about two weeks and returned to Aberdour. He was readmitted to hospital again however and died very shortly afterwards.

During his illness Chris remained very calm and resigned to whatever might happen to him. His attitude is best summed up in the words of Philippians I (20-21) which Chris used to express to people when asked about the possible outcome of his illness:

"My deep desire is that I shall never fail my duty, but that at all times, and especially right now, I shall be full of courage, so that with my whole self I shall bring honour to Christ, whether I live or die. For what is life? To me it is Christ! Death, will bring something even better."

May he rest in peace and may his young generous life be an inspiration to many.

Yours sincerely in Don Bosco,

H. O'BRIEN, S.D.B.