

Salesian College,
Pallaskenry,
Limerick.

Dear Confreres,

The sudden and unexpected death of

FATHER JOHN HOWATT. S. D. B.

on the 10th April 1980 came as a great shock to the community, to his family and to his many friends and acquaintances.

Fr. Howatt was born in Belfast on the 24th August 1906. His parents were John and Anne Howatt. His father, a non-Catholic, was killed in the first world war in 1918. Anne Howatt was a good Catholic mother who valued her faith. After her husband's death she ensured that her six children became Catholics. Her influence was clearly visible in the case of John who, after he became a Catholic in 1926, was seen to practise his faith with great fervour. He became a daily Mass-goer, and from this daily contact with his Lord, there grew a strong desire to serve God in the Priesthood and Religious life.

At the age of twenty-three, in 1929, he went to Cowley, Oxford, as an aspirant. He studied there until 1932 when he entered the Novitiate. He was admitted to first profession in September 1933 and here he remained for his philosophical studies until 1935. Philosophy completed, he was asked to go to St. Patrick's Malta where he spent three years as a teacher and assistant. He came to Blaistown in 1938 to begin his theological studies and he made his final profession there in July 1939. Three years later, on the 19th July 1942 he was ordained a priest.

In 1943 Fr. Howatt returned to Malta, where he spent the next five years as Catechist in St. Patrick's. He came to Warrenstown in 1948 and worked there as the confessor and accountant until 1953. In 1953 he moved to Bolton as Bursar and two years later to Ingersley again as Bursar. He was sent to Pallaskenry in 1958 as Confessor and Accountant and he remained here until his death on the 10th April 1980.

From the time of his ordination up to his death Fr. Howatt served the Congregation in two important roles, those of Confessor and Accountant. As Confessor he was a true pastor of souls, always available to the confreres and boys and ready to spend hours in the confessional, if necessary. He had a great love for the liturgy, and particularly for the celebration of the Eucharist. He would never miss out on visiting the Blessed Sacrament a few times each day. On the day before his death he went to the sacristy, took out all the sacred vessels used for the Holy Mass and cleaned and polished them. As far as he was concerned, only the best was good enough for God. In his own life-style however one could easily recognise a simplicity and keen sense of poverty. He retained nothing more than the basic minimum for his own needs and work. His personal needs were few and easily satisfied. He was an exemplary religious, ever strong and firm in his commitment to the service of God and to the extension of God's kingdom in a Salesian way.

Fr. Howatt will be remembered especially for his outstanding service in the Province as an accountant. He took great care to keep the books in order and up to date. No item of expenditure or income would escape his notice or fail to be recorded. He was always at his post and faithfully carried out this wearisome task with a flair that was obvious to those who knew him well.

Fr. Howatt was a staunch member of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association. At the beginning of each school year he would explain to the new pupils at Pallaskenry the aims and ideals of the organisation and he always succeeded in enrolling new members in it. His apostolic influence extended also into the Legion of Mary. He was Spiritual Director to the local adult Praesidia for many years at Pallaskenry, where he inculcated a strong devotion to Our Lady.

Truly we can say that Fr. Howatt was a man of God, dutiful in all things. Even though he was seventy-three years old and had slowed down a little in the past year, he continued to get through the same amount of work as before, when he was a younger man. However at no time did he speak of retirement or complain of any ill-health. His peaceful passing from sleep to his eternal reward on the morning of 10th April came therefore as a great shock to the confreres who lived with him, and to all who knew him.

His remains were removed to the College Chapel on the 11th April. On the following day there was Concelebrated Requiem Mass at which Rev. George Williams, SDB, Regional Superior of the English-speaking region, presided. More than thirty priests concelebrated, including Salesians from every house in the Province, and also from Malta. After Mass the remains were interred in the Salesian cemetery nearby.

While we mourn Fr. Howatt's loss, we cannot but take consolation from the thought that his peaceful passing, without any fuss, reflected his priestly life, lived out in humility, simplicity and fidelity. We pray that he is enjoying in Heaven the well-merited reward of his exemplary life and fruitful ministry.

As you continue to pray for the repose of his soul, pray also for

Yours devotedly in Christ,

Val Collier. S. D. B. (Rector)