



SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO

ST. JAMES',
CHESTNUT GROVE,
BOOTLE L20 4LX.

July 1990

Dear Confrères, Family and Friends,

On Friday 22nd June 1990, God called Fr. Tom Jennings to Him from Lourdes, the spot which he probably loved most in this whole world.

His long life began in August 1906 in Motherwell, in the bosom of an exemplary family which was to give a priest and three nuns to the Church. He qualified as a teacher with a special interest in extra-curricular activities. He had camped as a boy with Baden-Powell himself and was to take charge of the Catholic Scouts for the West of Scotland. He founded a swimming club which was to last 55 years and developed his knowledge of boxing which was to lead him, with his boys from Cowley, to the Albert Hall. It seemed as if God was preparing him for work as a son of Don Bosco.

In 1937 he went to the novitiate and after practical training and studies, was ordained in Blaisdon in 1946. After that, he spent 13 years on the staff at Cowley, Oxford, teaching P.E. and running a club for boys. He often boasted of a visitor, Fr. John Heenan, who came to watch the boxers training and was to become Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

After a year at the new school in Aberdour, as headmaster, he was transferred to Chertsey, Surrey, to help on the parish and visit the hospital. Then in 1969, he joined the Bootle community as confessor and assistant bursar. In those days, the community did a dozen or so 'supplies' each week and Tom was out a lot and got to know the area and the local clergy and looked forward to Don Bosco's Day each year when he had them as audience on his home ground.

He was a great talker and his prodigious memory provided him with many juicy anecdotes. His knowledge of Scottish history was wide and sympathetic. He loved the poetry of Robbie Burns and could quote at length to suit most occasions, but his greatest knowledge and love was of Mary. He had a phenomenal knowledge of the history and Geography of Lourdes and of Bernadette's family and this he was delighted to share for many years as chaplain and courier.

We shall miss him. He was a character and a man of great courage in the face of long and persistent illness. He was anxious to be as little trouble as possible and was grateful for the smallest service.

His strong Faith was uncomplicated. He loved his Holy Mass. He loved Mary and he loved St. Joseph, Patron of a Happy Death. He was anointed, at his own request, the day before he died and his passing leaves a gap in the lives of many residents and pilgrims to that hallowed spot in the south of France which he loved so well.

Fr. Michael Duggan, S.D.B.

For the Necrology: Fr. Thomas Jennings born in Motherwell, Scotland, 21st August 1906. Died 22nd June 1990 aged 83 years in the 53rd year of his Profession as a Salesian and the 44th year of his Sacred Priesthood.