



Fr. Frederick J. Johnson, S.D.B.

Born: April 23, 1900

Ordained: September 18, 1938

Died: July 9, 1972

Don Bosco College
Newton, New Jersey 07860

Dear Confreres:

Death came quickly and quietly, though not unprovidedly, to Fr. Frederick Johnson on Sunday, July 9, at Don Bosco College in Newton, N. J. That morning he had celebrated two Masses, one for the Sisters and Novices at Sacred Heart Novitiate, the other for visitors at Camp Don Bosco in Newton. Then, feeling tired, he retired to his room to rest. Later that afternoon, realizing he had not gone to the Sisters for Benediction, a confrere went to call him and found he had passed away in his sleep. He died as he would have wanted. He had worked up to

the last moment of his life. As he lived, so he died: quietly, serenely, in the service of others.

Born in Chicago, Fr. Johnson spent his youth in Florida. His early experience was one of hard work at several trades: it was an experience he cherished and used ever as well as a religious and priest.

In 1918 an article in the Knights of Columbus magazine drew him to Don Bosco, and in September he went to the Salesian House in Goshen, New York. His was the first novitiate to be made in Newton, N. J., where he was guided by the saintly Fr. Binelli whom St. John Bosco personally appointed to be Master of Novices. He made his first religious profession on September 8, 1929. After teaching at Ybor City, Florida, he went to Turin, Italy, for his theological studies. One of his classmates and closest friends there was the future Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez. Ordained in 1938, he began his long apostolate in the New Rochelle Province, which he served in various houses as bursar, builder, and, as he used to say, handy-man, in addition to his total dedication to the priestly ministry.

Those who have known him are apt to total up his work in terms of the many building projects he undertook and carried out with driving energy; everywhere he went he built, repaired, renewed. But Fr. Johnson himself would reckon his successes in terms of the rosaries he recited every day, and his Mass and the many confessions he heard, particularly boys' confessions. To his mind, he was first and foremost a Salesian, and he felt he could express his Salesianity in service for others. That generous service is what he will be best remembered for.

In 1959, Fr. Johnson was assigned to Don Bosco College, where he served as assistant librarian. His exactness in the fulfillment of this

daily duty soon became proverbial among students and faculty members alike.

For many years Fr. Johnson served the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians as confessor and counsellor; for the past twelve years he was Chaplain at their Novitiate in Newton. Their spiritual welfare was his major concern. Either in his famous Volkswagen or on his homemade snowshoes, he crossed the hills between the College, where he resided, and the Sisters' Novitiate. "We will miss him in more ways than we can tell," sadly commented the Mistress of Novices on learning of his death.

When Fr. Johnson's death was announced to his beloved campers who had seen him offer holy Mass only five hours earlier, his life and ideals were summarized in one of those little mnemonics that were so dear to him: G - R - O - W

G — for God

R — for Rosary

O — for optimism

W — for work.

May this simple message that permeated Fr. Fred's entire life be with us all as we struggle towards our individual and communal renewal in these most challenging times.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Harry W. Rasmussen, S.D.B.,
Director.

