

Blaisdon Hall,
Longhope,
Glos.

Dear Confreres,

The Community at Blaisdon, grateful for your prayers and condolences for

BROTHER EDWARD JOSEPH BARRON. S. D. B.

ask you to dwell with us a little on some thoughts about his humble and holy life.

When Jesus was approached by John's disciples and asked to prove He was from God he did not launch into a theological argument or give them a point by point proof of his authenticity. He simply said "Look around you and see what is happening: the blind see, the lame walk, the poor have the gospel preached to them." Those who are in need of love get it. Since Bro. Edward died these words have been a constant theme in my mind. The number of people who have come to speak of him, have written and have phoned, who have been helped, made happy, felt wanted because of him. Certainly they have made me sit up and look around and see what has been happening around this humble, holy, happy man. Perhaps the influence of his presence was put to me best by the local Vicar who told me that Bro. Edward was a force for unity in the village, in that loving him, people had been helped to love one another better.

Bro. Edward's supreme quality was that he could share his friendship with Jesus easily and familiarly with anyone he met. On his coffin we have put his well-thumbed prayer-book, the route to his intimacy with Jesus, his copy of the Devout Life, the source of his kindly nature, and Don Bosco's rule that really did govern his life. I was reminded last week how often one could come late into the chapel and find Bro. Edward sitting talking to his Friend.

Edward was born in March 1916 in Strabane. Here from his mother he first learned to love Jesus and when he lifted his eyes from her to God it was above the beauty of the Derry and Donegal Mountains. Amid this beauty he deepened his friendship with his Lord and grew in his native wit. His jokes became both legend and legion.

Like his master, as a young man, he learned to work with wood and then he decided to follow Him even more closely in the Religious Life. He went to Shrigley and on to the Novitiate at Beckford in 1938. He continued in his craft subsequently at Beckford and Ballinakill.

In 1948 a wonderful new experience opened up for Bro. Edward. He was asked to go to Rome as a guide in the Catacombs of St. Callistus. He engaged in this work with the quiet enthusiasm and thoroughness of a craftsman. The Catacombs and the Eternal City were to become the great love of his life. Here he was close to the Vicar of Christ, his friend, and so the two loves merged into one.

This period of Bro. Edward's life is a lesson of extraordinary witness. His humble devoted duty to every-day tasks may not at first qualify for the headlines "Light of the world", "City seated on a hill" – but read on the words of Jesus – "and seeing your good works they give glory to God our Father" Being the light of the world means a lot more than illuminating minds; it means touching lives. Lives are touched not so much by us as by Christ, using us. It was the most natural thing in the world for Bro Edward to share with others the familiarity and easy friendship he had with Christ. The Catacombs were Bro. Edward's opportunity for passing on to so many from all over the world, humbly, and with a twinkle in his eye, his experience of Christ.

In 1951 Bro. Eddy, as we all knew him, came to Blaisdon. During the following years he maintained his love for and contact with the Catacombs returning for periods most years to help out. He was also much in demand for slide shows and talks on Rome which gave him further opportunity for spreading the good news. It was during this period that Bro. Eddy deepened his commitment to Christ through service and suffering. Of him, as of his Friend, it could truly be said "I came among you as one who serves" In the company of Jesus he did for us with love and care those things which because they are earthly and monotonous often do not get done.

None of us will ever know quite how much he suffered quietly. On the night before he died, as he struggled with me through the Rosary, meditating on Christ's sufferings, I knew that Eddie's suffering was not wasted because it was joined to that of his Friend. In these days when the Church enhances the role of the layman in the life of God's people, Bro. Edward's life is a shining example of how Christ is witnessed to in everyday happenings and relationships.

He presented to the world's excesses of greed, permissiveness and power, Christ's radical alternatives of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, lived as they should be, freely, happily, because they are lived in his company.

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of our Lord and Friend."

Yours sincerely in Don Bosco,

Fr. J. Kavanagh. SDB.