

PROVINCE OF MARY, HELP OF CHRISTIANS.
OAKLEIGH. AUSTRALIA.

24th September, 1978



Dear Confreres,

At 5 p.m. on Sunday, 10th September

FR. JOSEPH KRASOCKI

passed to his reward, assisted with loving care by the Sisters of St John of God in their Hospital at Ballarat. He had entered Hospital about a fortnight previously to have a cataract removed from his eye and to have some other minor surgery. The doctors thought that both operations were fairly successful but Fr. Joseph seemed to have felt that the Lord had called a halt to his earthly activities and simply let life slip away from him.

The priests of the diocese, the Polish community and the parishioners of the Cathedral parish celebrated his entrance into eternal life at a Concelebrated Mass on Tuesday 12th. The Vicar-General, Mons. Fiscalini, in the absence of Bishop Mulkearns who was overseas, was the main concelebrant and was assisted by the retired Bishop of Ballarat, Bishop O'Collins. Mons. Fiscalini also preached the panegyric. The body was taken to our College at Sunbury the following day and, after a Concelebrated Mass, was laid to rest in the grounds of the College.

Fr. Joseph Krasocki's life was no ordinary one and, if we are to gain courage and inspiration from it, some details need to be given.

Joseph was born at Irtutsk, Siberia, on the 24th April, 1905. His parents belonged to a Polish community which had immigrated there in search of work. He was the second son born to this family. He was barely a year old when his mother died and his father, finding himself unable to care for him, had him placed in a local orphanage. This was the last time he was to see either his father or brother or any close relation. His father died in 1912.

Together with a group of other orphans, Joseph was put on a ship which, sailing around the North Sea, through Bering Strait, around China, Malaya, India, the Suez Canal to the seaport city of Odessa on the Black Sea. Quite an odyssey! His brother remained behind in Siberia. Joseph was placed in an orphanage conducted by nuns and there he was to stay until he was 17.

In 1922 the Sisters apparently decided to transfer their charges to a more stable environment than that which Russia presented in those days. They set off for Rome. It was whilst he was there that Joseph met a Salesian Polish priest to whom he confided that he wanted to become a priest but that seemed to be an impossible dream. To his joy he found that it was not so impossible. His newly-found friend asked him would he be prepared to go to the land of his parents, Poland, and finish off his secondary studies and, then, if that was the Lord's will, to become a Salesian. Joseph did not hesitate — it seemed too good to be true. He was put on a train and joined a group of lads with similar ideas at Oswiecim in 1922.

In 1925 he finished his secondary studies and asked to be accepted into the Salesian novitiate at Czerwinski. It was here that he made his first profession in July 1926. After his early priestly studies at Cracow, he was appointed as a teacher to the Salesian College at Rozanstok where he took his perpetual vows in 1929.

He completed his priestly studies at Cracow and was ordained to the priesthood there on May 19th, 1935.

Joseph must have thought he had found a permanent home at last and settled down to work in Salesian Houses in the country of his parents. This was not to be. Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and Fr. Joseph found himself one of the thousands of refugees, wandering throughout the country — homeless, hungry and exhausted. Eventually he found himself in the neighbouring country of Lithuania where he was once more able to carry on his priestly duties but once more in a strange land, struggling with a new language and having to adapt to a new way of life. Here he worked until the end of the war.

In 1945 he followed the hordes of Polish refugees who were being gathered together in camps throughout Germany and Italy where he was able to bring them the consolations of their religion. He shared their plight, their life, their joys, and their expectations. His own life had taught him how much suffering was involved in being uprooted from one's own land and separated from one's own family. This life he was to share with his people until 1949.

As the Camps began to clear Fr. Joseph felt that his help was no longer desperately needed but letters from friends in such distant places as Canada and Australia made him aware of another calling. It meant uprooting himself once more; it would mean adapting himself to a country so different from any he had lived in so far but zeal for souls was for him a force that could not be neglected because of some personal inconvenience.

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In 1949 he requested permission to join one of the migrant ships leaving Rome for Australia. He asked for no privileges except permission to minister to his fellow migrants. He landed in Melbourne on January 30th, 1950, contacted the Salesians and was welcomed into our House at Oakleigh for the feast of St John Bosco.

He immediately requested permission to work among the Polish people who were like sheep without a shepherd. Thus began the final phase of his life. Both from Oakleigh and, after two years, from Brunswick he ministered unselfishly to his flock.

His experiences in Europe had inflicted upon him a deep wound; he was concerned that the Polish government was keeping a close watch on him and that his very life was in danger. This fear grew so pronounced that, in 1969, he asked permission to transfer to a country diocese where he would be left in peace to work. No amount of discussion would convince him that this was not necessary.

He went to work in the Ballarat diocese and the warm welcome and acceptance from the Bishop and clergy made him feel at ease immediately. These final nine years were to be the happiest of his life. To be present at a Requiem Mass concelebrated by over sixty priests was a striking proof of how much he was loved and appreciated.

Fr. Krasocki was one of those privileged souls with whom Christ chooses to share His cross in a singular fashion. He was asked to bear the cross of being denied the warmth of belonging to a natural family. He was asked to live out most of his life in a land that was not his own — he was never to return to Poland because he feared the consequences of such a visit. His shy disposition prevented

him from making many close friends. The sadness enveloping his life made it difficult for him to share any memories.

This life lived with the crucified Christ influenced his life and his work.

—He understood better than most the preciousness of souls bought with so much suffering. He spared no labour or sacrifice in bringing souls back to Christ, in keeping souls in close relationships with Christ, in bringing the healing power of Christ to souls bewildered and distraught.

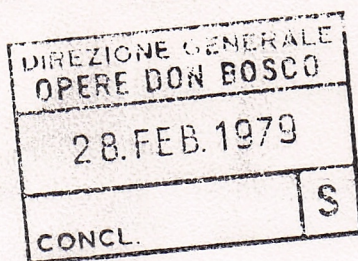
—He had a special devotion to the Mass, the re-enactment of that supreme sacrifice. He had to be very sick to miss this daily celebration and no trouble was too much to bring the Mass to others. People often remarked how they liked to partake in his Masses since he was so evidently aware of what he was doing.

— He had a special understanding of the little ones of Christ's flock, of those who had been also asked to share the Cross in a special way. Hundreds of families can testify to his charity: to one some clothing, to another some groceries, to another some money to pay the rent, to all his loving concern.

May his gentle, kindly soul rest eternally in peace.

In Christ,

Wallace L. Cornell, S.D.B. Provincial.



For the Necrology

Father JOSEPH KRASOCKI, born at Irtutsk (Siberia) on the 24th April, 1905. Passed to his reward at Ballarat (Australia) on the 10th September, 1978, at 73 years of age, 52 years of profession, 43 years of priesthood.