

# *Salesians of Don Bosco*



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OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL

December 2, 2013

First Sunday of Advent

Dear Parishioners of St. Theresa Parish in Leeds,

We Salesians of Don Bosco in the St. Philip Province join with you in mourning the death of our beloved confrere and your beloved pastor, Fr. Jim Naughton, S.D.B.

Over the past two months, we have been one with you in praying for our dear friend. As you well know, Fr. Jim's sufferings in the last few weeks have been severe. As he himself said, "The Lord is putting me to the test."

We Salesians are grateful to the parishioners of St. Theresa for accompanying and serving Fr. Jim in these final weeks, days, and hours. He loved being with you here in Leeds. He loved living his Salesian priesthood in serving you. Knowing that you were here with him in the final moments was very consoling to him. He always wanted to pass to the Lord with his boots on and surrounded by loved ones. I am grateful to God and to you for making this dying wish come true.

I am grateful to our confreres, Frs. Tony D'Angelo, Ken Germain, and Paul Chuong Ngyuen, for accompanying Fr. Jim Naughton during his stay in Alabama, especially during his final illness. In you, we have seen faithful witness of the vitality of the Salesian Family in times of great trial.

To Fr. Jim Naughton, I offer my gratitude for his personal witness of a life spent serving God and His people in the simplest and most humble of ways. For Fr. Jim, no task was too mundane or earthy for him to dig in and carry on Christ's mission with young people who were most at risk. In these last few days, Fr. Jim's ministry consisted in carrying the cross of the suffering Christ.

In Fr. Naughton's obituary, we can see the vocational journey of one who was called to follow Christ in reaching out to those who were not born into privilege or ease. As one who shared those humble beginnings, Fr. Jim worked tirelessly and faithfully to give the less advantaged a chance to fulfill God's call to fullness of life and holiness.

As we grieve the loss of our friend and pastor, Fr. Jim Naughton, through the next few days, let us remember that we are called by Baptism to carry on the mission of Christ in this parish. Like Fr. Jim, we are called to follow Christ along the path of holiness of life and efficacy in serving the poor in our midst. During the past few weeks, Fr. Naughton was put to the test. From the criteria of last judgment parable in Matthew 25, we believe that Fr. Jim passed that test with distinction. What remains for us who remain behind is to pass onto those who follow this same witness of holiness and service in imitation of the Lord Jesus.

Sincerely yours in the Lord Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Thomas A. Dunne".

Fr. Thomas A. Dunne, S.D.B.

Provincial