



# *Nouvelles Salésiennes* *Salesian News*

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## **Rev. James Jeffcoat, SDB, (1932-2006)**

After just a few weeks of his fighting a very aggressive form of cancer, Fr. Jim returned to Our Father's Home, in the early hours of Monday, March 20<sup>th</sup>. Since that day was the transferred feast of St. Joseph, the 19<sup>th</sup> being a Lenten Sunday, it is fitting to believe that it was Jesus' foster father to receive him into eternal life: Joseph, the meek and just man, the patron of the Church, of Canada, of our Salesian Province and of a happy death. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, surrounded by his Salesian confreres and a few faithful friends, he had received the Anointing of the Sick, fully conscious of his proximity to death. Two days later, he was transferred from his residence of Villa St. Joseph to the Fr. Lacombe Home, where he would receive special care, given his very weak condition. He was still receiving visitors Sunday afternoon. Toward the end of that afternoon, Fr. Provincial celebrated Mass at the foot of his bed. But I believe no one thought he would leave this world so soon.

I do not mean to write here a mortuary letter. Just a few impressions, a few notes about what Fr. Jim has meant to so many people in the course of his many apostolic commitments. He leaves behind scores of past pupils, families, friends, parishioners. He was 74 years of age and would have celebrated 45 years as a priest, the day following the funeral Mass, on March 25<sup>th</sup>

He was born in Tampa, Florida, of partly Cherokee parents. He was always proud of his Native American heritage, valuing its deep spirituality, its closeness to nature and its keen sense of the larger family. Unfortunately he was orphaned at a very early age, he and his brother. They were both accepted and educated by the Salesian Sisters at Villa Madonna and then by the Salesians of Mary Help of Christians School. As

Jim, at high school age, showed an interest for Salesian religious life, he went north, completing his studies in Newton, N.J., then entering the novitiate there in 1950. That is where we met for the first time, he, a novice, myself beginning high school as an aspirant. He followed the usual course of Salesian studies and apostolate: Philosophy in Newton, *tirocinium* in different houses as a teacher and assistant, Theology in Aptos, CA, and Bollengo, Italy. After his ordination in 1961, we find him in Sherbrooke, Canada, as vice-principal. He then served in different schools in the States: Tampa, FL, and Marrero, LA. His longest contribution was to Ramsey, NJ, where he served at different times as teacher, catechist and principal.

In 1983 he was invited to come to Toronto and he did so very willingly. He spent a dozen years at Don Bosco Secondary School. These past years he worked in parishes, first in Montreal, then in Edmonton. A year ago, he was named pastor of the Chinese parish of Mary Help of Christians, endearing himself to the youth, especially that of College and University levels. Although he considered himself not too well prepared for parish work, his innate sense of family and relations made him esteemed and loved. The teacher always remained a great part of himself. In spite of his many commitments, he had managed in the course of years to obtain a Master's degree in Physics, in Chemistry and in Biology. It was enough to ask him a question in those fields and as one of the young men told me in Edmonton, "he would go on and on, telling you much more than you wanted to know or that you could take in!" He was very much interested also in the study of Holy Scriptures, animating a Bible group at the Chinese parish, just as he had done previously at St. Dominic Savio parish.

To show how the young adults held him in respect and loved him, shortly after he passed away in the middle of the night (3:30 a.m.), a dozen or so

of them went to the Lacombe Home, kneeling around his bed, praying, singing, weeping, or just keeping a respectful silence, until the funeral home came to take the body away at about 9:00a.m. During the wake, on Thursday and Friday until the funeral Mass, two of them, alternating every hour, served as the guard of honour at the head of the open coffin, as numerous faithful filed by the mortal remains of Fr. Jim, resting in priestly vestments. The wake on Thursday afternoon was centered on the Virgin Mary and that of the evening on St. Joseph. The testimonies of young people - spoken in Chinese and in English - at the evening celebration were very moving.

The funeral took place at 1:00 p.m., Fr. Luc Lantagne, the Salesian Provincial, presiding. Archbishop Collins was represented by his chancellor; the day before, the archbishop emeritus of Edmonton, Joseph McNeil, had come to pray and offer his condolences to the parish community and the confreres. The presence of the Knights of Columbus and the 36 concelebrating priests showed the esteem and respect in which Fr. Jeffcoat was held. In his meaningful homily, Fr. Luc spoke of the man that Fr. Jim was, of the Catholic (in his youth he left the Baptist Church to become a Catholic) and of the good Salesian priest he always strove to be.

His mortal remains were taken to the Catholic Ukrainian Cemetery to be interred in the Salesian plot, awaiting the final resurrection in Christ. As everyone was leaving - the funeral home had put three busses at the disposition of the parishioners - a group of about twenty young adults encircled the tomb, alternating between vocal prayer and silence. I was told that some came back the next day to lay flowers at the foot of the monument.

I firmly believe that Fr. Jim had taken to heart the words of the prophet: *“You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.”* (Mi 6, 8).

R. T.

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**SURREY, BC.** Bro. James Zettel, SDB, joined us for the week of March 5<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> and certainly made a hit with his magic and speaking engagements throughout the week with OLGC school children, our CCD youth, both on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, plus an all day event at Holy Cross High School. The principal there gave James complete charge of the senior religion class where their questions were very open and sincere. He had an excellent report and was a great hit with everyone. His gratitude was expressed at all the Masses.

Fr. John Basso and Bro. Jerry flew to Edmonton on two separate days during the week of March 6<sup>th</sup> to visit with Fr. James Jeffcoat, SDB, at St. Joseph Villa. Jim thanked every one for their concern and requested our prayers. He was very appreciative of our visits, and expressed many thanks for the many acts of kindness offered on his behalf, and also displayed by the parishioners of his Chinese Community of Mary Help of Christians. Since that time, Fr. Jim has returned to his Maker, and four Salesians from our Surrey Community attended his wake, funeral and final farewell. May he rest in peace!

Spring break began in full swing here the week of March 13<sup>th</sup> with numerous parish volunteers cleaning the property, removing broken fences, tree stumps, old furniture, etc. OLGC School received a brand new roof.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> we welcomed back Most Rev. Raymond O. Roussin, S.M. to the diocese of Vancouver at a clergy noon prayer and luncheon meeting. He humbly shared his five month journey with us at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Coquitlam. He spent that soul searching and healing time in Larchmont, N.Y. under the spiritual guidance of Fr. Benedict J. Groeschel, C.F.R. The Archbishop has certainly lost a lot of weight in the ordeal, but openly shared his priorities for his flock. One goal is to spend a couple days just informally staying at each parish getting to know his priests and people.

Our Parish Lenten Mission got underway for three evenings beginning at 7 pm March 20<sup>th</sup> thru the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The mission director, Fr. Archie Gonsalves,

OCD, a Carmelite priest, teaches moral theology in a seminary in India. He has given many parish missions in Florida and New York, and is in high demand as a church speaker. The topics he chose for our parish Lenten Retreat included: *Prayer that changes lives* \* *Being sure about what God wants in a situation* \* *Faithfully using head and heart together* \* *Helping our "kids" make good moral decisions*. The 3-day event was well attended and included the Sacrament of Reconciliation on the Tuesday after his conference. His talks were given nightly after Holy Mass was celebrated. Certainly Fr. Archie's presence and experience led to the success of this Lenten journey together.

Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup> was a fun day event for all our youth. The Salesian Cooperators sponsored a 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament with face painting, games, coloring, treats and door prizes for the younger set. Over thirty-one teams, consisting of five members each, participated. The *Don Bosco Youth Center* was a bee-hive of activity with qualified, young adults refereeing the continuous games, while the OLG School Auditorium hosted the younger set with clowns, wheel of fortune, etc., and their favourite ice cream cones. Our Knights of Columbus along with the CWL supervised the property, and hosted the adults with coffee, tea and sandwiches. The numerous parishioners who volunteered in so many areas all helped to make the medal and award presentations, done by Mr. Herbert Fleming, coordinator of the Salesian Cooperators, and Bro. Jerry so worthwhile. A bouquet of gratitude goes to all, especially Mr. Paul Dumas, who generously spent many night hours in organizing, preparing, and planning this successful, family orientated sport event.

Very Rev. Tadeusz Rozmus, SDB,, the Polish Provincial from the Krakow province, arrived on March 28<sup>th</sup> to preach the Lenten Retreat to our Polish parishioners. He along with Fr. Tadeusz Goryezka, SDB joined the Jochlin family for a two day visit to Victoria. Last year he preached on "*The Holy Spirit's Gifts in Our Life*," which has been since printed in Polish and made into a pocket size booklet. Fr. Tadeusz brought copies with him to be distributed throughout this retreat. His theme this year will be on the Holy Father's recent encyclical on Love.

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**SHERBROOKE QC.** Le printemps est bien arrivé chez nous, au sud-est de Montréal; les pelouses commencent même à laisser percer un peu de vert. Un grand soulagement pour les gens qui ne goûtent pas particulièrement la saison des neiges! (Désolé! Comme j'écris ceci, je regarde par la fenêtre et constate qu'il commence à neiger!).

Aux ides de mars- de bon augure, cette fois- eut lieu au Salésien une conférence de presse, annonçant la saison du théâtre. Merci à *La Voie Salésienne* de mars dont je cite un extrait : « Sous la présidence d'honneur d'Ariane Bisson McLernon, finissante au Salésien en 2000, le festival des « *Coups de Cœur* » du théâtre dévoile sa programmation printanière...La 1<sup>ère</sup> pièce mise en scène, *Maboule*, présentée le 17 mars, est sous la direction de l'expérimenté metteur en scène Pierre Lafontaine, secondé par Manon Michel pour la technique et de Marie Ellen Janidlo pour la création des costumes. Le 31 mars, place aux élèves de 3<sup>e</sup> secondaire avec la pièce *Les Héros de mon Enfance*, de Michel Tremblay. Les comédiens de 4<sup>e</sup> et 5<sup>e</sup> secondaire seront sur scène les 21 et 22 avril avec deux représentations de *Un château de Cartes*. Ces deux pièces sont sous l'habile direction du metteur en scène Nicolas Duquette.»

Le 22 mars, 5 de nos jeunes se produisirent au Séminaire de Sherbrooke dans le cadre d'un spectacle de musique classique sous la direction de notre maestro Jean Paré. Il s'agissait de Julie Ann Mckeow Carbonneau et Pierre-Marc Jauron au piano, Karianne Chouinard au chant ainsi que David Echenberg et Marc-Olivier Béliveau à la guitare. Le traditionnel *Talent Show* aura lieu le 7 avril à la Salle Père-Décarie. Puis au Vieux Clocher de Sherbrooke, quelques élèves représenteront le Salésien au spectacle de la chanson française (dit en passant, les chansons du *Talent Show* sont généralement en anglais!). La présence de notre troupe *Starmania* est aussi assurée.

Je prends la liberté de piger encore de *La Voie Salésienne* (Merci, M. Lepage!) : « **Route Maya** : 18 élèves de 3<sup>e</sup> secondaire du S.S. ont participé, avec une dizaine d'élèves de l'école Richmond High School, à un voyage culturel et



