

Bro Norbert Farrugia (R.I.P) 1924-2007

Br Emmanuel Sciberras

Christened Angelo, like John XXIII, he benefited from the Christian influence of his family and that of the Society of Christian Doctrine in his hometown, Zurrieq. This double grace affected not only Angelo but his brother Vincent as well: both made their way to the Brothers Noviciate. Providence lead Angelo and Emmanuel (now Bro. Louis Camilleri) to the Brothers school in Cottonera and, then well-known for the good preparation it gave working-class boys to enter him H. M. Dockyard as apprentices. Before long, both changed course and from De La Salle College, they headed for the novitiate in France in 1938: Avignon, Pibrac, St Maurice l'Exil, Rodez, Fonseranes, Béziers. World War II and the German invasion of France called for generous decisions; both the Zurrieq boys opted to remain in France, come what may. Fancy carrying a British passport and living and travelling in an occupied territory: there was to be no dearth of hair-raising escapes and encounters. Thank God they came safely through it all and returned to Malta in 1945.

Back in Malta, now bearing the religious name of Norbert, he plunged into his Apostolic labours at Stella Maris College, with periods of study in U.K. A very thorough teacher, with zest and zeal to see his students do well, and to find more generous souls to seek the Lord and to serve Him, he involved himself in all kinds of youth activities: rambler's club, Sodality of Our Lady, Vocation club, on top of his excelling as teacher of R.E., French and History.

Later, at De La Salle College, he spent some years as prefect of Junior Boarders as well as liaising with architect and contractors while an extensive extension was going up at the college.

A "restless Christian" if there was one, Norbert never let the grass grow under his feet. When already over 60, though teaching full-time, he spent his summer holidays on projects chosen by the District and led by Bro. John Deeney in later years: Togo, Kenya, Jamaica, India, Ethiopia, Ghana, capped by an nine-year stay in Kenya.

African Brothers as well as other Kenyan religious and lay students benefited from his teaching: French and English mainly, plus the library service he organised at the Nairobi Scholasticate and his generous support of the Vanessa Grant School, at Rongai, for children suffering from some disability. This school became the beneficiary of a personal bequest resulting from a family inheritance and from promoting its needs in Malta among friends, or even on radio. The Missions campaign, here in Stella Maris College, consisted of Norbert's visiting Junior classes, distributing "Malta Missjunarja" (the local missions magazine) and animating teachers to be mission-conscious.

Free-time: for him it was precious: he used it to embellish the college garden as well as to organise the Community Library, handling, cleaning, and repairing some 5000 books. This after using all the shelving available and entreating Bro. Dominic to provide several metres of new shelving.

As I write this, I recall today's reading from St Mark's Gospel "Amen, Amen, I say to you: he who receives one such child in my name, receives me". We hope and pray that this mutual recognition and welcome of the Lord and by the Lord took place on that 15th February morning in St Luke's Hospital.