

University of Notre Dame
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"Bill, This Is The Best Sermon You Ever Preached."

Our Blessed Mother has a new happiness in heaven today. She loves to reward her friends, and she is busy now rewarding a true friend, her special friend and priestly son, Father William Scandlon, C.S.C., who died early Tuesday morning in the Students Infirmary.

Most of you may not have known him well. Some of you did. Last school year he was 4th floor prefect in Cavanaugh. . . last September, rector of Farley until his appointment as Vice President of the University of Portland, Portland, Oregon. A few days after assuming his new duties he underwent major surgery for a bowel obstruction, which, the surgeon discovered, was involved in a malignant growth.

Four weeks ago it was quite evident the malignancy was running its rapid course. A second operation confirmed the suspicion that Father Bill did not have long to live. When he was told this sad news, his only comment was, "I hope I can take it like Father J. Hugh." His reference was to Father J. Hugh O'Donnell, C.S.C., Notre Dame's World War II president, who died four years previously of a similar malignancy and who accepted heroically and for our everlasting edification the verdict that his days were definitely numbered.

Ten days ago Father Scandlon was brought home to the Notre Dame he loved with a touching, manly devotion. Here he wanted to die in the midst of fellow priests and religious, and near enough so that his devoted sister Mary and his relatives could visit him.

Many preachers may preach great sermons that teach us how to live. But it is not for all preachers to be blessed with divine aplomb to teach us what is by far much more significant. . . how to die. For his wholesome life God blessed Father Scandlon with a happy death, and left this example with us never to be forgotten. In his passing we can meditate on his virtue and pray that the memory of his saintly death will bear as much fruit as did his presence among us as a young, zealous, priestly priest.

He knew Our Lord was summoning him and he had to go. Mentally alert until the end he followed priests, religious, relatives, Sisters and nurse in the prayers for the dying. Without a word of complaint, without a trace of fear, frequently, ever so frequently, he kissed his crucifix whispering, "My Jesus Mercy. . . Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul. . . Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony. . . Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul to you in peace."

Monday evening we prayed the rosary kneeling around his bed. He prayed with us. After the last Gloria he blessed us, individually by name and collectively, with his priestly blessing, making the sign of the cross each time, pronouncing distinctly the formula of benediction. Time and time again he prayed for the Community, Notre Dame, relatives, friends. . . he begged God to make Notre Dame great, her priests and Brothers saints, because, as he whispered, "that's all that matters."

It was after he had blessed us and was very near death that his bosom friend and priestly companion rendered this beautiful tribute: "Bill, this is the best sermon you ever preached." Later he turned to his bedside watcher and said, "John, how am I doing? . . . He who stays faithful to the Blessed Mother, God will stay with him. . . You can't be on this campus of Our Lady and not catch her spirit. . . There is one grace God will always grant and that is the grace to suffer. . . "

If you are free tonight visit Corby chapel and say a prayer for Father Scandlon. If you have no 9 o'clock class tomorrow drop into the Main Church for his funeral. . . In your Masses and Holy Communions also kindly remember Brother Wilfred, an old Holy Cross Brother, whom we buried this morning. May God and Mary reward them.