



IN MEMORIAM

FATHER SAMUEL JOSEPH BOLAND, C.S.S.R.
1922 – 2011

With sadness, and sharing his faith in the Lord's fulfillment of Resurrection, we announce the death on February 4, 2011, of one of our former colleagues in the Redemptorist Historical Institute, Father Sam Boland.

Father Kevin O'Shea, C.Ss.R., the homilist at his funeral reminded us that Father Boland was sixty-four years a priest and not even two days past his seventieth anniversary of becoming a Redemptorist. O'Shea recalled that he was a historian, a church historian, a specialist in modern church history, an expert in Redemptorist history, and a living library of information about the beginnings of the Australian Redemptorists.

Born on February 10, 1922, in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, Sam was the fourth-born child of William and Edith (Frisby) Boland, both deceased. Of his siblings only his sister remains, Sister Norah Boland, of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, as the others, Marie, Bill, Peggy, and Father Tom Boland have all preceded Father Sam into eternity. (Incidentally, Father Tom of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, was also a noted historian).

As a young man Sam entered the Redemptorist novitiate in 1940 and made his first profession of vows on February 2, 1941. In 1946, nearly at the end of his studies at the Redemptorist seminary in Ballarat, Victoria, and close to his priestly ordination, he received the news of his mother's tragic death in an auto accident. A contemporary described him returning from his mother's funeral as «broken, with hair suddenly graying, and over-sensitive».

In mid-1948 the young Father Boland was sent to the Ballarat seminary to begin teaching Sacred Scripture. He quipped that his teaching was supposed to be «for two years – but two years ended forty years later».

The pursuit of a doctorate in Church History began for him when he was already in his mid-thirties. This doctorate was completed in Rome in the 1950s at the Jesuits' Gregorianum University. He then returned to Australia to teach at the Redemptorist House of Studies at Ballarat. Over the years his teaching ministry also took him to Yarra Theological Union in Melbourne, to Davao in the Philippine Islands, and to St. Paul's Seminary in Sydney.

By 1979 he was back in Rome, now as a member of the Redemptorist Historical Institute. This posting was to last until 1991 during which time he produced many articles and reviews for the Institute's publication, *Spicilegium Historicum*, and for numerous other historical bulletins and publications. Moreover in 1982 he authored *Faith of our Fathers*, the centennial story of Redemptorist presence in Australia, 1882-1982.

In 1986-1987 Boland produced his most important work, the 440-page *Dictionary of the Redemptorists*. This volume features small digest-histories of Redemptorist personalities, places, and events. Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., currently Secretary

for the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and until 2009 the Redemptorist Superior General, praised Boland «...as a dedicated historian and a true confrère», and then added, «I used to refer to his *Dictionary* at least once a week».

After he returned to Australia in 1991 Sam was still a *col-laboratore* for the Roman *Spicilegium*, regularly contributing lengthy articles to this professional bulletin, and for other such bulletins in Australia.

Still, there was another side to Father Sam Boland, as Father O'Shea reminded those who had gathered in Brisbane to bid him farewell and celebrate his life. «Sam» said O'Shea, «did just about everything Redemptorists dream about doing. He was a missionary, especially in the Italian missions, in North Queensland. He often helped out in parishes, especially in Western Victoria. He was twice Rector in Ballarat of a very large local community of almost a hundred professed men...always a calm, balanced leader.» In his life, continued the homilist, «...he did all this to make us all a bit more 'good news' for left-out little people, and he showed us what an intelligent and authentic thing it would be to get among these people and bring them more hope and more joy than they have ever heard».

As Father Boland aged, he accepted the fact that his powers were waning. He asked to go to the *Emmaus House*, a Care Center in Brisbane where his funeral Mass was eventually held. To go to *Emmaus House* was a big step for him, for it is believed that never before had he lived for any length of time outside of a Redemptorist house. Again to quote Father O'Shea, «The Congregation meant everything to him».

When Father Boland's death was announced in Rome, an Italian confrère who knew him well, spontaneously said, «*Che uomo e sacerdote! Genuino e gentile!*» Roughly translated: «What a man, and what a priest! Genuine and gentlemanly!»

We Redemptorists can only give gratitude to God for his example and his presence among us.

Gilbert Enderle, C.S.S.R.