

On one of the last days of January 1954 a small freckled faced 10 year old boy dressed in a smart new suit (yes it was summer) walked nervously down Croydon St into the yard of St John's Lakemba where there seemed to be hundreds of similarly dressed boys. But he didn't know anyone. He was frightened...no he was terrified as he hadn't been to a Catholic school before and didn't know what to expect. He was soon to find out. The shrill of a whistle went and everybody seemed to freeze and then the boys were told to line up and were sorted into classes. A rather tallish man in a black robe and white collar (rather frightening for someone from the public school system) with white or silver hair came along and sensing hesitation said "what is your name" and I replied "Richard King" he said "I am Brother Anselm and I am your teacher" and so began 51 years of friendship, very close friendship. I think that one act epitomises the man. **His care and concern for others.**

Anselm was a very private person who had many illnesses during his life. His first major sickness came in 1958 and he spent 1959 recuperating. He was very close to death's door (I recall quite vividly the prayer marathons that the Brothers in training were engaged in praying for his recovery) and Anselm himself credits his recovery from that illness to the intercession of St Benildus. On many occasions during his life Anselm reflected to some Brothers that St Benildus was a guiding force during his periods of sickness. Despite recurring illnesses he was forever faithful to his duties without a word of complaint. When you look at his tour of duty he travelled far and wide but there are a couple of places where he found great happiness. One was at Blenheim in New Zealand. And the other was New Plymouth where he was a constant companion for Brother Oliver O'Leary; a friendship that they had developed many years earlier at Burradoo.

As a teacher he was highly organised. His lessons were meticulously planned and students and parents from a number of schools have commented how effective he was as a teacher. As students we were in awe of him. (For the first 2 weeks I was terrified of the men in black) Anselm had such a inspiring presence. But in a strange sort of way a very calming influence. He was very firm but also a very fair disciplinarian and as such earned the respect of parents and students. In community he showed a genuine interest in the Brothers with whom he lived especially the younger Brothers.

Country NSW communities were also high on the list of his most enjoyable communities. The country communities of Orange, Bathurst and Lithgow held a special place in his heart and old collegians of those colleges remember Anselm as a man of great kindness and integrity. At Lithgow Anselm met up with fellow novice Brother John Corkeron and the two spent many happy hours together. The Brothers who have lived with him have said that Anselm was a very humble and obedient man, his simplicity of life had to be admired and his set routine and early rising and the smell of early morning toast were part and parcel of his lifestyle.

Whilst at Burradoo, Anselm served as gardener; general handyman; chauffeur for novices on their catechetical assignments in the local school and also for household purchases at the local supermarket and above all as a model of patience in accepting the limitations imposed by his physical condition.

Despite all his ailments, Anselm never complained. When visiting him he seemed more concerned about how you were; he tended to deflect the conversation away from his problems. When I visited him in his latter years, if the conversation drifted back to the good old days at Lakemba and Big Jack you were on a winner; you had to admire his wry humour.

Recently Sister Antoinette wrote *“of late he has developed some dementia and a heart problem. He is bemused by this - it is 'new' for him. Whatever else was wrong his heart has always been strong. The other day when I was visiting and trying to explain about his heart he said 'I think God might be tapping me on the shoulder'. I asked him what he thought God wanted and he replied 'I think he is saying it is almost time to go'. I then asked how he felt about that and he said he was pleased. After a moments silence he went on 'but not quite yet, it is my sister's 90th birthday on Sunday and she has arranged for all of us to be there and my nephews have arranged to pick me up. So I cannot spoil that for her. I will need to wait a while longer. I am very tired but I will go to her party even if just for 10 minutes.'* This is how he has lived his life - always thinking of others.”

I would like to conclude with a reflection....With all the memories of Anselm that we have we can't escape from our present feelings of grief, loss and sorrow. There is an emptiness inside that will hurt for a time. But if it helps I would like to share with you this image.

Picture yourself standing on a dock watching a mighty galleon lying silently and quietly waiting for a great wind to fill its sails and set it in majestic motion. Finally a strong wind comes up and all spring into action. The captain shouts orders, the sailors hoist the great sails, the wind catches them with a strong puff and the ship slowly moves like a giant sea serpent on the waters. But by and by it appears to become smaller and smaller as it eventually becomes but a speck where the sea and the sky meet on the horizon. Someone on the dock shouts the traditional cry, “there she goes!” and everyone waves goodbye and goes home.

But the question is “Goes where?” The ship which has become a little dot on our horizon, is just as big and mighty, just as laden with cargo and people as it ever was on the dock. The difference is in us. The difference is that it has merely receded from our sight and disappeared, that's all. But somewhere, as it moves to a foreign shore, that tiny ship invisible to us, becomes larger and larger. And there are people on that foreign shore who are about to set up a new cry. They shout, “Here she comes!”

Right now we are like those people on the dock. We've seen Anselm go. He has moved from the horizons of death and we remark with sadness and grief, "There he goes" and we know that our lives will be empty and painful without him. But I remind you that the change is in us. Anselm is still as large as life and larger than life, for Jesus stands on the other shore with all of Anselm's deceased relatives and friends. Together they shout, "Here he comes!" And as Anselm comes forth Jesus steps out to meet him. They instantly recognise each other. Jesus dries his eyes and turns to the crowd and says once more as he has done so many times before, "Set him free!" And then he turns to Anselm and says, "Welcome home, friend."

Anselm WELCOME HOME YOU WILL BE IN OUR HEARTS FOREVER.