

Don Bosco

To his Filipino Boys
BY REV. OSCAR DELTOUR, C.I.C.M.

My dear Boys,

Whenever the month of June comes around, I am gratefully reminded of my ordination to the Holy Priesthood. Indeed, in permitting me to spend my life as a priest among my beloved boys, the Sacred Heart of Jesus has given me an honor greater than any the world could give. I would not have traded the sacred joy of one day in the priesthood of Jesus Christ for all the pleasures and riches of the world, nor for the glitter of kingly thrones.

You will remember how as a young boy, I considered the priestly vocation as my highest ideal. It was as a priest that I wanted to devote and to sacrifice my whole life for the welfare of boys. Long and hard was my path towards my priestly goal. I was a poor boy; my dear mother could not afford to let me study. I had to earn my school expenses and worse still, I had to overcome the hostile attitude of my stepbrother,

who by all means wanted to prevent or stop my schooling.

Holy Priesthood was for me so sublime an ideal, that I was ready to sacrifice anything in order to attain it. I wanted to become a priest, and, thanks to Jesus and Mary, I became one. It was on the Saturday after Pentecost- June 5, 1841 that I was ordained a Priest of God forever.

Later, in preparing my boys for a suitable vocation, Holy Priesthood was always foremost in my mind and I am proud to say that during my lifetime nearly 2,500 of my boys have become priests.

One day a noble lady approached me and expressed her desire to adopt one of my boys. She would adopt him as her son and after her death leave her castle with all her riches to him. I called for the boy she referred to and in the presence of the lady I proposed to him the generous offer of the noble woman. The boy hesitatingly looked at me and said: "Don Bosco, when I will be with this good lady, will I be able to become a priest?" "Oh my dear," inter-

FATHER GAVE a beautiful crucifix to his little daughter, and said to her as he did so:

"Now tell me, what is the difference between the figure of Jesus on the cross as on this crucifix, and the Host which the priest holds up at the consecration of the Mass?"

The little girl did not hesitate a moment.

"When I look at the cross," she said, "I see Jesus and He is not there. When I look at the Host, I do not see Jesus, but He is there."

—*The Messenger of the Sacred Heart for India.*

rupted the woman, "I would prefer that you give up that thought and perpetuate in the world the name of my noble family." "Thanks, noble lady," answered the boy, "in that case I prefer to stay with Don Bosco and become a priest."

Another day, among the many visitors who came to me at Turin, there was a certain Countess, who came to ask my blessing on herself and on her four boys. I heartily gave her and her children my priestly blessing and requested them always to have confidence in Mary, our Blessed Mother. The lady rose from her knees satisfied. Then she asked me about the future of her boys. Laughingly I took them one by one in front of me. "This one is to become a great General; of this one we shall make a Statesman; our Henry here will be a Doctor, who will make people talk of him. . . ." The Countess, exulting in the glorious future of her sons, turned to them exclaiming: "Oh, my children, you are not the first of our family to take positions of honor in the ranks of Society."

Meanwhile, the fourth and youngest son stood before me. The mother anxiously waited for my words about the future of her youngest and dearest boy. Praying to our Blessed Mother, I placed my hand on the head of the boy and lovingly looked into his face. "And what shall be the future of the last one?" insisted the mother.

"The future of this boy will be most glorious, this little boy shall be God's priest."

At these words, the atmosphere became tense. The homely little scene was suddenly charged with an atmosphere of tragedy. The noble lady went pale and trembling with her excess of emotion and straining the boy to her breast as though

to protect him from some danger, she cried out indignantly: "My son a priest! I would rather see him dead!" I was deeply shocked with such language on the lips of a Catholic woman, and I rose to retire from the room. . . . "But why are you going?" the Countess asked confused. I answered her with great displeasure: "I feel that I ought to have nothing further to do with a woman who holds in such low estimation the Priesthood, which is more glorious and more noble than anything else upon earth. I am certain that God will answer your insolent prayer." The Countess tried to stammer some kind of excuse for her outrageous language, but I did not change my manner and the talk broke down.

On the following day the Countess returned to make further excuse. "Countess," I said to her, "you are despising the greatest gift God can make to you and to your family. Is it then disgraceful to be the chosen of God?" "I ask your pardon, Don Bosco: pray for me."

"I shall pray for you, but your own prayer was definitely answered by God from the moment you uttered it."

Some months passed. The boy became sick; his condition became alarming. A relative of the Countess requested me to come and to bless the boy who was dying. I went and entered the room of the sick boy. The poor little fellow took my hand and reverently kissed it. After a long silence, the boy made effort, and extending a transparent, wasted hand towards his mother, exclaimed: "Mama—you remember—there, in Don Bosco's room? . . . It is you. . . and God is taking me from you! . . ." The mother at this broke into loud weeping and sobbed uncontrollably.

"No, my child," she exclaimed, it was my love for you that made me speak as I did. . . . O my son, live for the love of your mama. . . . Beg Don Bosco, beseech him to cure you."

I was deeply moved and could not utter a word. Finally, however, comforting the poor woman, as best I might, I blessed the boy, and went my way. The decree of God, however, was irrevocable.

Oh my dear Boys, how I wish all fathers and mothers to read and to ponder this sad story. Too many among them think very lightly of Holy Priesthood. Wishing to prepare a bright and honorable future for their boys, they give but an indifferent thought to the most glorious of all vocations, the Holy Priesthood. They prefer their sons to become lawyers, physicians or engineers rather than to see them invested with dignity which even the angels contemplate in wondrous astonishment.

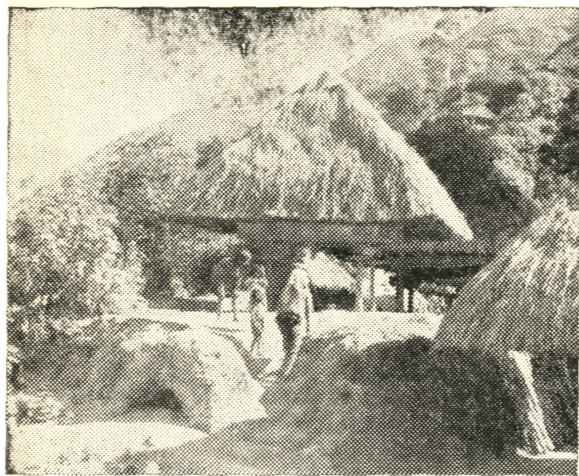


PHOTO A. LAMINEUR

It they only knew the glory of a zealous priest and the great privilege of a family that gives a priest to God.

My dear Filipino Boys, in the choice of your vocation, do not hesitate to consider also Holy Priesthood. and ask the advice of your Superiors and spiritual directors about it. This is the greatest gift our Divine Master can make to you and this is also what your beloved Country needs most. More than anything else the Philippines need more priests, more zealous priests. No matter how prosperous the Republic of the Philippines may be, it will be a success in the measure that its citizens achieve salvation.

God bless you all!

Affectionately yours,

Jac. Gio. Bosco —

BE GENEROUS

Be generous to Christ's
sad poor...

Your slightest gifts to
them endure

When marble towers,
kissing skies,

Shall crash in ruin
Never dies

The deed that helps
their miseries.

E.F.G. S.J.