

+ The Word of God became flesh

A TRUE DISCIPLE OF THE FOUNDER

Celebrating the life of Louis Borg (1925-2017)

Obituary

I have mixed feelings writing about Louis. On the one hand there is the sadness of losing a member and a genuine friend – but on the other hand the feeling that another member is now with God and the saints in the glory of heaven for which he worked so faithfully in his life. Louis went to meet the risen Lord and entered before us into eternity on Monday 8th May 2017.

Louis was one of the original group of three members sent by the Society to make a start and help establish an SDC centre in Brixton, London, way back in August 1988. In Malta he served in at least two SDC centres that I know of – Naxxar and Għargħur. In the 20 years he spent in London, he went through many things and so many experiences and was always a valuable member of the group.

Together with another two members he started his spell in London living in a communal house with a Jesuit priest and a group of students. This didn't last long and after about a year and a half they moved house to another suburb further south in Catford. During this time he continued to make the daily journey to Brixton to help out in different ways. In May 1990, together with his fellow colleagues he moved into the presbytery of the Rosary parish where he had to spend the next phase of his life.

It was at this parish that I got to know him when I arrived in London in December 1994. At the Holy Rosary parish, SDC led all the catechism groups for Holy Communion and Confirmation as well as a youth group. Louis was a key member of the SDC group and he was actively involved in a range of ways including leading assignment sessions, helping out with activities for groups of children and preparing the Cribs and other statues we give to so many children every Christmas. But Louis was also a valued contributor to the life of the parish in many ways, from cooking meals for us and the priest, and



doing all sorts of jobs around the house and parish church itself. He was very good with his hands - in his time he worked in the blacksmith trade and other manual jobs - and any time he was asked to help out fixing things he would do this in such a discreet way almost without saying a word about it and definitely without expecting any reward or even recognition. When in July 2008, due to his failing health Louis had to return permanently to Malta, the parish priest Fr Heaphy felt he had to write to him: His short letter illustrates Louis' character so clearly: *"Dear Louis, Now that the dust of your departure has settled, I want to write to you. Believe me, you have a permanent place in my heart. Of course you have given many years of service in this parish. There are many facts in the church and hall and house that speak of your constant care and maintenance. But there is also the memory of your patience and skill and advice. And your readiness to undertake something new, to find a new and better solution. I cannot easily explain to you how valuable and supportive I have found your presence. But I wanted you to be aware of how deeply I have valued all that you did. I feel sure that God will continue to bless you."* - a truly affectionate certificate of Louis' humble and unassuming character which although quiet and so modest didn't go unnoticed.

In our day to day interactions Louis always came across as a true gent and faithful member of the SDC society. As his superior in the SDC centre in London I can openly say that never I remember a case where he did anything that went against the wishes of the group or what we had agreed. It was a case of giving full and unwavering commitment to what he felt he was called to do. He was generous with his time, commitment, money and prayers.

When in 2006 the Society bought a house in Upper Norwood to serve as a residential house and SDC centre, we set a date to go and see what things we had to prepare or buy before we moved in. For this first visit I clearly remember Louis bringing a crucifix with him. When I enquired why bringing the crucifix on that day he said, 'It is so we can say that the Lord Jesus was the first one to enter this house!'

Apart from the serious and in some ways austere side, there was also a more friendly and cordial side to Louis' character. When you talked to him or worked with him you knew you were talking to someone so genuine, someone with only good intentions and without any ulterior motives. Many times he made us laugh by what he said about things that happened from time to time or when narrating events and incidents from the past including those related to the many jobs he did with various companies in Malta during his working life before he retired from work.

But one of the things that so clearly stood out in Louis was his close relationship with the founder. He himself would tell about many instances when he did jobs for Fr George especially in his house in St Venera, Malta. He also had the opportunity to be close to him shortly before he died in July 1962. His closeness to the founder doesn't end there. For those who knew him he was a most genuine and faithful 'disciple' of the founder. You could sense in him all the hallmarks we usually attribute to the founder, from the love of catechetical instruction, the virtues of humility and right intention, complete submission to the Church and its leaders, and so many other Christian virtues.



2007 - Louis demonstrating how he knelt for a blessing at Fr Preca's death bed in 1962.

In this year when we are commemorating the vision of St Vincent Ferrer to our founder, I won't be far from the truth in saying that in Louis Borg we had as good a reflection of the Founder's spirit as you can get. He was so imbued with and practised the virtues of poverty, simplicity, meekness, humility, love being despised and love others with great love that his quiet character was able to touch and leave a mark on everyone around him. May he rest in peace.

John Camilleri