



Father Harold COWEN
(1920 - 1993)

*Died 27 November 1993, in Burnley (England)
aged 73, with 48 years of Religious Profession.*

Father Harold Cowen was born on 10 July 1920 in Burnley (Lancashire). He received his secondary education at Montfort College, Romsey, and in 1939, just as the second World War broke out, he began his novitiate in France at Chézelles. That year the novices numbered 22: eleven French and eleven English. Everything went well until the month of June, when the German armies invaded France. Father Cousseau, the superior of the novitiate, took the initiative to have the English novices leave in the direction of England, but the Montfortian authorities in Saint-Laurent sent them back to Chézelles. On their return, Father Cousseau tried to console them with the words: "You are quite safe here!" ... and just a few weeks later, on 6 August, the German soldiers arrived to collect them and take them away into a captivity that would last four years. The irony of history: the two General Assistants who had opposed their departure, and had opted for Candaian citizenship, shared their fate!

Harold was deeply affected, both physically and morally, by those four years spent in a barracks at Saint-Denis, to the north of Paris. Nearly all the prisoners were religious (in particular the members of the "Fraternité sacerdotale", all Canadians), and they were able to develop a certain spiritual and intellectual life. Despite everything, only three Montfortian novices persevered (among others, Father Cannon, who, being of Irish descent, was freed after six months). Harold returned to England in August 1944. He had to complete his novitiate (an indult gave him permission not to repeat the whole year), and on 26 January 1945 he made his first religious profession. He was ordained priest on 29 June 1949, at the end of his third year of theology. In 1950 he stayed on at the scholasticate, while changing status: from being a student of theology, he became professor of philosophy. In 1955 he became a teacher at Romsey, and in 1970, after one year's absence, when he acted as a curate in Accrington, he returned to Romsey as the Superior. In 1973, he was made Superior in Liverpool, and in 1976 was appointed assistant novice-master; then in 1979 he began the final stage of his life in the General House in Rome, as a translator.

He spent 14 years in Rome, with regular seasonal migrations which allowed him to experience the delights of Christmas in his own country, and to escape the heat of a Roman summer. He boasted of the "temperate climate" of his own England, and if occasionally he made some pleasant comments on Italy, it was for France that he reserved the sharpest of his humour. For the past few years his health had become weaker, and in the course of the last summer he had to have a surgical operation. He seemed to be recovering bit by bit, and we hoped that we might see him again in Rome in January. The Lord, however, decided otherwise: a renewed attack struck him down in the afternoon of Saturday 27 November, and, shortly before 6 o'clock in the evening, he died. We will not easily forget the happy moments we spent thanks to him in the General House, and we pray the Lord to repay him a hundredfold for all the joy he gave us.

MAY HE REST IN PEACE