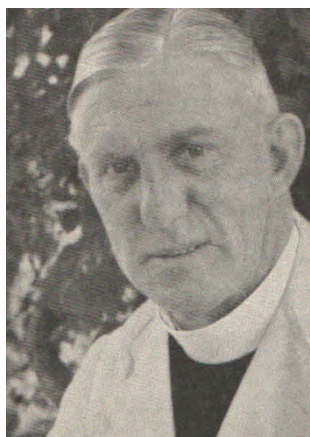


4 February

Fr **BERNARD WEAVER** 12 February 1894 – 4 February 1952



John (Jack), later Bernard, Weaver entered the Catholic Church from Anglicanism, with other members of his family, when he was seven. They lived close to the Benedictine Abbey of Stanbrook, near Worcester, and there was much contact with the nuns.

He entered the Society in 1912, three years after his brother Frank, and was ordained in 1926. During his early years of teaching he wrote a rugby handbook dominated by the theme of going ‘all out’ on the field and contemporaries felt it was a motto of his life. Eight of the class he taught at Stamford Hill became priests, one of them Cardinal Heenan. He also served at Beaumont under Chichester as rector and then went to Mount St Mary’s. In 1931 he went to St George’s where, as First Prefect, he went ‘all out’ to improve the manners, dress and behaviour of the boys. He introduced ‘bounds’ and ‘exeats’ to instil some control over them and developed a reputation for strictness which made him unpopular.

But he got results, first in boxing and later in rugby. Beating Prince Edward in 1935, made such an impact you’d imagine they’d won a war. He pushed hard in every area of school life but after five years he developed bilharzia which weakened him considerably and he took time to recover. When he did, he was made rector. They were short of money in those days but it did not seem to slow his energy: he built new dormitories and an infirmary block and kitchens, diverted the avenue and improved the playing fields.

We are allowed to wonder in hindsight why he did not use his great energy to address the question of the day; opening St George’s doors to the wider population beyond the whites. Those familiar with the thinking at the time say it would have caused a storm. Those familiar with the thinking of Pope Francis all these years later would say: roll on the storm! It is, of course, a luxury to judge our Jesuit ancestors and the only point of doing so is to alert us today that we are not avoiding our ‘questions of the day.’

In 1940, he retired exhausted and took up teaching in the college but soon developed trouble in his oesophagus with which he struggled for years. In 1951 Carcinoma was diagnosed and an operation in England, in Leeds, did not help. He lingered on for a year, visiting Lourdes and parts of England he knew in his youth and finally died in London in 1952.