

11 April

Fr GEORGE LOSEBY

9 June 1913 – 11 April 1964



George Loseby's father was an Anglican vicar who moved to South Africa. George was educated at Stellenbosch High School and in 1930 started a six-year stint as an accountant. His mother became a Catholic in 1925 and all four children followed her. George was twelve at the time.

He entered the novitiate in 1937 and was ordained in 1946. From 1949 he was at St Aidan's but in 1953 his power of speech began to go/ Bulbar palsy was diagnosed but another doctor in Johannesburg, McLeish, said the diagnosis was wrong and put him on a different treatment (Prostigian tablets) which gave him back his voice until 1961 when the problem (Myasthenia gravis) resurfaced, this time further complicated by malignant Thymoma. An operation in Britain was partially successful for a while and in 1962 he returned to South Africa. He started light work but this brought on a coronary leading to cardiac failure and death.

So, for eleven years he suffered but it was noted that he never complained. He was a man of simplicity and essential humility. 'No one was easier to tease and no one enjoyed it more'. He was 'invincibly cheerful and would sing and hum to himself in a tuneless voice.' While at St Aidan's, he taught book-keeping and Afrikaans and was passionate about rugby and cricket. He was curious and constantly alert to what was happening in the school and in the world. In the South African environment he imbibed the 'nationalist' outlook but towards the end of his life he changed and became drawn to social justice, though he was not clear in expressing himself and was 'a prince of the unfinished sentence...' He ran camps for the boys and enlisted many in the preparations. He enjoyed all the banter and talk that went into the preparation of them. He loved companionship.

David Dryden recalls: 'To us boys, he was known as 'Goofy' because of his nasal voice. He was the kindest of Jesuit schoolmasters. When someone in the class overstepped the line, he would take out his notebook to order the punishment. But the whole class would appeal for the wrongdoer who would then be let off. He would often drive us up to the golf course outside Grahamstown in the old college truck, play golf with us and then take us back to school.'