

13 December

Fr DONALD JOHNSON

18 July 1917 – 13 December 1981



Johnny was a Londoner educated at St Ignatius, Stamford Hill. He entered the Society in 1933 and did his regency of seven years in Ireland (Mungret) and the Mount. The latter was an unhappy time for him as the superior loaded him with jobs and showed no appreciation. He felt it was a time best forgotten. He was ordained in 1951 and in 1953 he was at the seminary in Chishawasha and became the first rector there in 1958. The account in *Letters and Notices* says he found the theologians ‘difficult’ but someone has scribbled in the margin ‘inaccurate’.

From 1959 to 1973 he was at St Aidan’s where he was ‘an excellent teacher’. He made his subjects attractive to his students and took a particular care of the ‘lame dog’ (slow student). He could ‘fly off the handle and lose his temper but he recovered quickly.’ In 1960 he became Prefect of Studies and kept the school running smoothly even as the clouds gathered and moves were made to close the school. At the same time he was asked to be the diocesan director of Catechetics.

In 1966 Johnny became rector and his job was to hand the school over to the bishop who tried to find another religious community to run the school. Five ‘volunteer’ Jesuits would stay to run it in the meantime. But the bishop failed and enrolment dropped. The school was finally closed in 1973.

In 1974 he was asked to be the rector of the diocesan seminary at Hammanskraal, near Pretoria, but it only lasted a year and he moved to other tasks settling finally as a curate in Port Elizabeth where he worked on preparing a Scripture course for lay people and training married deacons.