

Mr. Antony Montfort, known to us all affectionately as Tony, was born in October 1940. He was and remained proud of being a Wimbledonian, able to womble throughout his life. He was educated at Donhead and Wimbledon College, attended the church of the Sacred Heart, was a member of the scouts there, was proud of the All England tennis club and was able to spend the whole of his life in this delectable corner of London known to us all as SW19 4LR

After leaving school Tony trained in the catering business and would have been lost to the Society of Jesus, but for it having been discovered that he was allergic to flour when all his hair fell out. Tony was at that time very close to Peter Low who ran the senior scout group of which Tony had been a member. Peter recognized that in Tony Jesuit Missions would acquire a totally dedicated and loyal promoter of the work of the Society of Jesus in the mission territories. Tony was to be devastated when Peter Low was killed in a tragic canoe accident in North Wales - similarly too, when Bernard Darke, another of his scouting contacts in Wimbledon, was murdered in Guyana. After a number of Jesuits had been appointed Director of Jesuit Missions it became obvious that the man for the job was not a Jesuit, but one who had committed himself totally to the work of the Jesuits. From then on Tony became the generous host of all who came to Jesuit Missions. When the move from Spencer Hill to 11 Edge Hill took place, Tony's office and Tony's bedroom on the first floor were the centre of his life and Tony's whole life was dedicated to the care of those on the missions. This eventually led to two traumatic moments in Tony's life. The first was when he surrendered his room at Jesuit Missions to be given a flat of his own a short distance away. The second was when he retired at the age of 65 and had to leave 11 Edge Hill to the care of others. By this time Tony was already beginning to show signs of the illness that was to lead to his untimely death on the 26th June 2007.

When most of us think of Tony, I suspect that we think of him first as guest master. Nothing was too much for him to do for those who came under his care. In the early days it was Tony who welcomed you at the airport and who saw you off again at the end of your leave. When this became too much for him he made sure that you got VIP treatment by arranging transport too and from the airport. When you arrived at JM he was either there to greet you or a phone call was made to make you feel at home. For those in need of medical treatment, and this was often the case with missionaries, everything was arranged for you and you were aware that here was somebody who really cared. The house was kept tropically warm so that those from Guyana in particular would not feel the cold. For the healthy and the not so healthy, there was the evening sundowner and there was no policeman to determine that enough had been consumed. This generous hospitality often led to meals in the local restaurants where no expense was spared. Tony certainly enjoyed partying, but he liked above all to share it with others. What gave him most pleasure was giving others pleasure.

Jesuit Missions existed primarily to raise money for the missions. Appeals were made, a magazine published, stamps sorted, purchases for missions made and air tickets for new

missionaries obtained. But JM under Tony's leadership also provided a whole gamut of activities not normally associated with a mission office. All sorts of services were provided and they were not restricted to missionaries of the British Province or even to Jesuits. Many people have reasons to thank him for help well beyond the call of duty. Indeed as a result of Tony's availability to all the London office was known to many Jesuits and non Jesuits all over the world. Little things too were important. Tony would collect all your VAT slips for example and give you the money back on the spot. Indeed missionaries often abused this availability of his by leaving many things to the office which they could have and should have done for themselves. For Tony however it was another way of telling you that you mattered.

We have already mentioned Tony's commitment to and love of the Society. This is not to say that he was unaware of its shortcomings. Tony could at times wax quite lyrical about them, but for him it was an opportunity in his own way to do what the Society in his opinion should have done in a particular situation. When Tony felt that somebody had been treated at best inconsiderately or at worse unfairly, he did his best to make up for it. He provided the compassion that he felt had been lacking. Again in cases of the bereavement or sickness of our relatives, Tony often felt that he was doing what we ourselves had failed to do. Tony felt that he was the human face of compassion on behalf of the Jesuits and so he made a point of being at funerals and indeed of showing concern in many different ways to the relatives of Jesuits.

Tony was also very much a member of the Sacred Heart parish and of the club there. It was all part of loyalty to the church. He was Catholic through and through and saw his service to the Jesuits as part of his greater service to the church.

This requiem mass today and our presence here is a tribute to the debt that we all owe to Tony. He was not without his faults. We all saw with sadness his addiction to cigarettes and Scotch and the inevitable toll they took on his health. But what we will remember much more is his laughter and joy, his compassion and interest in everybody he met. The walls of Tony's office were filled with pictures of people and places that meant so much to him even though perhaps Malta seemed to take pride of place. Tony's mail was as large as his heart; so many people had grounds to show their appreciation. Maybe Tony's heaven will not be as Nigel described it – "a place where cigarettes grow on the trees and the streams are of whisky" but it will be a place full of friends already made and anxious to be with him again. And they will be not merely from Wimbledon, but from all the corners of this world.