

## News

# The author of the popular book *Is-Salib tal-Fidda*



**Fr Hermann Duncan**

**F**rarry Born was born in Kalkara on 23 May 1910 and was baptised at the Kalkara parish church. He attended primary school at De La Salle College, run by the La Salle Brothers, and then went on to study at the Lyceum in Valletta. In 1926 he joined the Order of Preachers better known as the Dominicans, where he took the name of Augustine as was the tradition then. After completing his novitiate he began studying Philosophy and Theology at St. Thomas Aquinas College in Rabat, Malta and was ordained a priest in 1933. Although Fr Born was very intelligent, he could not continue his studies abroad, due to his ill health. He did, however, obtain his PhD by correspondence in 1965.

Fr Born was one of Malta's best play writers for Theatrical and Radio shows. Over a thousand episodes of series were broadcast on Rediffusion when he worked between 1953 and 1975. Fr Augustine had a phenomenal capability where he managed to teach people and entertain them at the same time.



**Fr Augustine Born OP**

He used to direct his own plays at the De Porres Hall in Sliema where he also became Hall Director. Among the plays and

comedies he wrote, we find *Il-Familja Maltija* (1952), *Fuq is-Swar taż-Zonqor* (1956), *Wara l-Hitan tas-Sejjieh* (1958), *Spiru*

*Cefai, wata l-Gwerra* (1962), *Il-Festa tal-Inbid* (1963), *Maltin f'Art ir-Risq* (1965) and *Haddem Rasek u Imla Bwietek* (1972).

Fr Born was a prolific writer. Among his writings we find biographies, such as *Il-hajja ta' San Tumas Moore* written in 1935. He also wrote many novels including the famous *is-Salib tal-Fidda* (The Silver Cross) that was published in 1935 and became a student text book in Maltese schools, *Mard bla Fejqan* written in 1962, and *Mhux il-Faqar* written in 1972. In his novels, he had a realistic attitude. He used simple language and always tried to teach readers by incorporating his Christian values in his literature.

Fr Augustine would regularly write journals and articles for local newspapers.

He also taught at St Edward's College in Cottonera and St Albert the Great College in Valletta. He edited a periodical called *The Maltese Rosary* which was taught in schools where he taught.

In addition he also wrote philosophical books in English such as *Emphasis on the Human* and *Meme Grech*.

As a priest, Fr Born showed great courage in the Second World War. He was a Military Chaplain between 1941 and 1961, where he completed his career to the rank of Major. He was also considered to be a very good preacher. His ability to deliver his point through original ideas made him very popular, so much so that the Dominican Order bestowed upon him the title of Preacher General.

He passed to eternal life on 21 August 1986 at the age of 76. I'd like to end this short article with a quote by the poet Guze Bonnici on Fr Born's book *Is-Salib tal-Fidda* considered one of his greatest works. Guze Bonnici wrote "Fr Augustine Born, with *is-Salib tal-Fidda*, is adding his name to the masters of Maltese writing. He showed great ability drawing two young hearts separated from their social class, and thrown, by virtue of sad events, under one roof, side by side, at one table. But they could not, not be drawn to each other and be bound with a pure love, forbidding and ashamed which in these vibrant pages you feel the undecidedness boiling and refrained, overflowing and hiding, about whether they should break away from all constraints and lean out powerfully into the light or remain hidden in the outermost shelter of their souls."

I hope that in the future someone will conduct a profound study on Fr Augustine Born OP, as he was a man who brought Maltese literature forward in great strides.

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