

August 1978



*Fr.P.O'Donovan, S.D.B.*



Father Patrick O'Donovan, a cherished and esteemed member of this community, died, after a long illness, on 16th July, 1978.

Patrick O'Donovan was born at Ardfield, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, on 20th April, 1900. After his schooling, he joined the Agricultural Department of the Civil Service and played a major role in developing Agriculture in his native county in the early years of the new Irish state. It was during this period that he was the moving force in setting up local creamery cooperatives for which he is still widely remembered in that area.

He came to the Salesians in 1933 through the influence of Father Ciantar and went to Shrigley and Cowley (England) to revise his studies. It must have been quite difficult for a man of his age, who had been accustomed to manage and direct, to assume the role of learner, sometimes in the company of boys. However, he was soon able to make use of his expert knowledge, for in 1935-36 he was farm manager of the newly opened Blaisdon. Among his papers it was interesting to discover a postcard, dated 11th March 1935, in which Fr. Tozzi, the Provincial, consults him about purchases of cattle.

He made his novitiate in Beckford, 1936-37, where he was professed; then to Cowley for two years philosophy and back to Blaisdon as farm manager for a time before Theology there. He was ordained priest by Bishop Lee on 16th July, 1944. His first appointment after ordination was as confessor and farm manager to Shrigley where he remained until 1954, when he went as Bursar to the Novitiate in Burwash. In the following year he was appointed Rector there, a post he held until 1962. There are many confreres in England and in Ireland with fond memories of their Novitiate days under his genial regime.

In 1962 as his health was beginning to deteriorate he came to semi-retirement in Ballinakill, but there was no question of him retiring except in name. It wasn't long until he began to make his presence felt in the house and in the neighbourhood. He was confessor to the boys and he took charge of the garden and grounds ---- the widespread plantations of young trees which the visitors admire so much are all due to his foresight and good husbandry. Outside the house he was soon well known for his series of conferences in the many convents around and for his interest in local affairs. This interest culminated in 1969 in the establishment of a branch of the Credit Union in the village of Ballinakill of which he was the first chairman.

Some four years ago he experienced the first attack of the disease that was to close his life but after treatment in hospital he returned with a new lease of life. However, the illness reasserted itself in due time and early in June he went into hospital again. After treatment in Portlaoise and Dublin, he asked to be moved to his native Clonakilty. Here he died peacefully, sustained by the presence of two priests, on July 16th, the 34th anniversary of his ordination.

Although it was 45 years since he had left, he was still very widely known and esteemed in Clonakilty as the massive crowd at his funeral testified; they flocked to the Mass in the parish church there and people from Ballinakill were also there; they had made the 140 mile journey in the early morning to be present and then to accompany the remains back to Ballinakill for the Requiem Mass in the Parish Church there. Afterwards Fr. Pat was buried in the College cemetery surrounded by a monument most appropriate to him ---- his trees.

Everybody knew Father O'Donovan as a man of deep spirituality and a man who inspired confidence because of it. God alone knows how many hours he spent in chapel each day --- long hours with his rosary in his hands or in silent contemplation in front of the Blessed Sacrament. He was a power of good in the house and a source of strength. Please, in your goodness, keep him and all of us in your prayers.

C. J. Archer S.D.B.  
Rector.

