

Province of St. Andrew,  
San Francisco,  
California, USA.

Dear Confreres,

The last link that has joined the Province to the times of our Holy Founder has been snapped by the death of the dear venerable priest.

**FATHER PATRICK O'GRADY. S. D. B. (Aged 85)**

He was born on July 15th 1859 in County Sligo, Ireland. The love of his country, always associated with the faith of that country, was ever foremost in his heart, although, in fact, he was able in a long life to spend only a comparatively short time there.

At the age of 13, he was sent to France, for his Secondary School studies, until 1877, when he returned to Ireland. Five years later the zealous Archbishop of Toronto, passed through Ireland in search of vocations. Patrick, who was by then 24, offered his services along with others, all of whom, the Archbishop took with him to Italy, with the intention of receiving the Pope's blessing. However, they stayed first in Turin, to meet Don Bosco and four of them, including O'Grady, decided to stay with Don Bosco, leaving the Archbishop with the vague promise that Don Bosco would open a house in Canada, if these young men wished; however, they decided to stay in Turin. Don O'Grady recalls that the first words in Italian Don Bosco taught them were Mangiare (eat), Dormire (sleep), Giocare (play). Our good Father was always practical!

They all entered the Novitiate, made their first, and eventually, perpetual vows, to the Saint. However, at that time, the first Salesian Colleges in the Argentine, were in need of someone to teach English, then much in demand. So, Don Bosco called the clerics O'Grady and Diamond, saying, "Your patron saint St. Patrick was a great missionary... would you like to be missionaries?" They both agreed they would, and they were soon on their way to South America. At the College of St. Nicholas, O'Grady taught English and began his studies in Theology. Letters to Don Bosco he wrote in French, testify to his affection and esteem.

There, years later, on February 24th Patrick was ordained priest by Mons Cagliero at San Nicholas and the newly-ordained spent three more years there. The Memorie Biografiche (Vol. 18 p. 220) speak of a cholera epidemic in 1887, in which four Salesians, including O'Grady, fell ill but, fortified by a medal of Don Bosco all recovered.

Among the missionary areas entrusted by the Holy See to the Salesians, were the Falkland Islands, called by the Argentinians, Isole Malvine. For some year, an Irish priest, Fr. William Foran from Newcastle had been spending the Summer months out there; now that he was rather old and infirm, he wrote in Latin to Don Bosco begging him to send help to the inhabitants, who were all British. Don Bosco had undertaken to send someone as soon as he had English-speaking Salesians. Accordingly in 1887 he sent Fr. Diamond with two others; Fr. O'Grady took over in 1888 and stayed alone until the year 1900. In 1903 he was sent to Malta to start the work there at St. Patrick's Sliema, where he won the support and esteem of all concerned. He stayed there for sixteen years before returning to Ireland to be the Rector of the Salesian Agricultural College at Warrenstown, for the next eight years.

It was now 1928 and he had reached the age of 69. However, he agreed to go to Australia to help the work there, which was having various difficulties. He was Rector of the College at Sunbury and soon won the confidence of the authorities, civil and ecclesiastical. It was under his Rectorship that he started the Annual Eucharistic Congress, which at times attracted 40,000 people.

By 1936, Fr. O'Grady was now 77 and it was time for him to give up his responsibilities of office. He was offered by the Superiors, the choice of any Salesian House in the world and he chose to go to California. In fact, Fr. Diamond was then Parish Priest at the church of Corpus Christi in San Francisco and Fr. O'Grady thought it would be good to end their days together. However, Fr. Diamond died the following year, in 1937. Fr. O'Grady by no means allowed himself to pass his days in idleness. He spent his days, ever active, in translating Salesian lives, for the use of the Houses of Formation, in writing articles for magazines and Catholic papers, in conducting a wide correspondence with world wide friends.

In 1934 he made the annual retreat and he was asked to receive the renewal of vows made by some of the confreres. To one of the confreres, he remarked that, if he survived until August 16th, he would live one more year, for Don Bosco had told him he would die on his birthday – August 16th. In fact, when he was taken on a brief trip for pleasure, he was taken ill and asked to be taken to hospital. He realised that he was in danger of death and he requested the Last Sacraments, which were administered by the Chaplain. When asked if he would be happy to meet Don Bosco on his birthday, he gave signs of his happiness. He died 45 minutes after Midnight, thus on the important day.

His funeral, conducted by the Archbishop of San Francisco, Mgr. Mitty, was an imposing demonstration of his personal esteem and that of the Salesians, with large crowds of Clergy, Sisters and Laity. He rests with two of his companions of the Turin years with Don Bosco, Fr. Redahan and Fr. Diamond; the aspirants at Richmond say a brief prayer for these pioneers every day as they pass through the graveyard.

I commend to your charity the soul of this venerable Salesian, begging your prayers for the needs of this Province and for Your most affectionate confrere,

Don Albino Fedrigotti. S. D. B.