



Fr. Patrick Smyth, SDB

On March 1st the Community of Salesian House, Crumlin, was shocked and saddened by the sudden death of one of its most hard-working members, Fr. Patrick Smyth.

Fr. Pat led a very full and active life to the end, giving himself in true Salesian fashion tirelessly to the welfare of others, especially the young. Only on the last morning of his life, when he felt unable to say Mass for the boys of C.B.S., Ballygall, did he reluctantly withdraw from his apostolic mission to consult a doctor. Within a few hours he had a massive heart attack and the Lord called him to Himself.

In 1941 the whole Salesian world was celebrating the centenary of Don Bosco's ordination. The third Sunday of July that year was certainly a joyous occasion at the Salesian theologate in Blaisdon, Glos., when a goodly number of Salesians were raised to the priesthood. Among them was Fr. Patrick Smyth, the first Shrigley boy to become a Salesian priest. For Patrick it was the beginning of a wonderful apostolate in the ministry of Christ. At the same time it was the end of a period of preparation in which he recognised the call of Christ and determined to follow that call, come what may.

Salesian House,
St. Teresa's Rd.,
Crumlin,
Dublin 12.

20th., April, 1983.

Patrick Smyth was born in Believe, near Bailieboro in Co. Cavan on 4th September, 1912. Having grown up during some of the most dramatic years of Irish history, he went to Salesian College, Warrenstown, as an agricultural student in 1928. It was while he was there that he formed the resolution to follow the call to the religious life and the priesthood. Accordingly, the very next year he enrolled as one of the very first students at the newly-opened aspirantate at Shrigley.

EARLY SALESIAN DAYS

A contemporary of his, Fr. Dan Lyons, recalls: "I remember well the day he arrived. It was a wild rainy day in October, 1929. We were coming out from lunch when this quartet arrived off the morning boat in Liverpool. They had come from Warrenstown. Paddy Smyth was the only one of the four to become a Salesian. A name-sake of his, Willie Smyth went back to the family farm near Castlebar; another, Joe Treacy, went to farm in Galway; the fourth, Teddy McEvoy from Tyrone, went home to look after his mother and was later ordained in the Salvatorians. He is now a sick man, and Fr. Pat frequently visited him."

The course of formation took Patrick to various parts of the Province: Cowley for novitiate and philosophy, Shrigley and Bolton for practical training, and Blaisdon for theology. Then, as a young priest, after a short period in Battersea and Warrenstown, he was assigned to Pallaskenry as teacher of Latin. He excelled in this task and many Salesian and other priests of the 1942-47 era at Pallaskenry will remember with gratitude the sound grounding he gave them in the Latin language, so vital to them in those days.

In 1947 Fr. Patrick was transferred to Salesian College, Thornleigh, Bolton, where there was need for his services as a teacher. Apart from one short period at Cowley, it was at Thornleigh that Fr. Pat was to spend the greater part of the remainder of his Salesian life until he retired from teaching and returned to Ireland in 1975. During these years at Thornleigh the brilliance of his performance as a teacher was much appreciated. The many students whom he prepared for public examination can vouch for this. Of course as a Salesian his activity was not confined to the classroom, and his

involvement brought him into many areas of culture and recreation. He was an authority on chess, and was much sought after because of his expertise in conchology.

The twentieth General Chapter called for a new look at the organisation of Salesian Cooperators, "as the opportunity of realising the great project of Don Bosco - the union of all those who work with him and in his way for youth". Fr. Smyth was actively involved with the Cooperators movement in Thornleigh in response to this appeal. Many of the letters reaching us now testify to the profound influence he had on their spiritual life and the cherishing of the Christian family. After he retired from teaching he retained his interest in this section of the Salesian family in Warrenstown, where a flourishing branch of the Salesian Cooperators now plays a vital role in the large and varied apostolic undertakings of the Salesian family there.

CHAPLAINCY WORK FOR BOYS

In 1978 he was appointed Chaplain to Shanganagh Castle, a state-run open detention centre for young offenders. Work for this type of boy was of high priority with St. John Bosco, and Fr. Pat gave it his full attention and energy. An example of his enterprise was his ability to organise a pilgrimage for a group of these boys to Our Lady's Shrine at Knock. Unfortunately, during this period too, his health began to give cause for concern, and for the first time in his life he had to enter hospital. After this he had to relinquish this work for the boys of Shanganagh.

In 1980 he took up residence in the Provincial House at Crumlin. Fr. Pat, however, was never one to remain unoccupied for long and he expressed his desire to be given some light task. About that time a request was made to Fr. Provincial by the parish of Ballygall for a priest to help at weekends and act as chaplain to the

local Christian Brothers School, St. Kevin's. This assignment went to Fr. Smyth, and he accepted it with great joy. He was especially pleased that the work enabled him once again to work for boys. It was while he was engaged in this work that the Lord called him. It could certainly be said of him that as a Salesian "he died in harness!" He would not have wished it otherwise.

The Superior of the C.B.S. wrote: "The death of Fr. Pat stunned us all, students, staff and community. Never again will we meet the very familiar smile as he moved among us here at St. Kevin's. His influence was immense and he had his own particular way of getting the maximum return from his students."

The words of Article 122 of the Constitutions have a particular aptness in the case of Fr. Patrick Smyth: "Death to a religious is not sad. It is full of the hope of 'enter into the joy of the master' and 'when a Salesian dies working for souls, the Society has won a great triumph'."

Please pray for the repose of the soul of this good confrere, and also spare a prayer for the house of Crumlin, with its provincial community, its pastoral workers and its novices.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Denis Corcoran, S.D.B.
(Rector)

DATA FOR NECROLOGY:

Fr. Patrick Smyth. Born 4th September, 1912 in Believe, Co. Cavan, Ireland. Died 1st March, 1983 in Dublin, aged 71 years, in the 51st year of his religious profession and in the 42nd year of his priesthood.