

## **SALESIAN HIGH SCHOOL**

P.O. BOX 95,  
MANZINI,  
SWAZILAND.



Dear Confreres,

On the evening of Monday, 18th March 1985

### **FATHER PATRICK LUKE BOYLE**

died of a heart attack while being taken in an ambulance from Ficksburg to Bloemfontein in the Republic of South Africa.

He was 48 years of age

The previous day, St. Patrick's Day, his Feast Day, he had said his last mass in the chapel of the Salesian Sisters at the mission of Maputsoe in the Kingdom of Lesotho. He had spent the last few days of his life in Maputsoe, where he had gone to rest and recuperate from a previous heart attack, in the care of the Salesian Sisters whose convent is close to the Salesian House.

The final illness of Father Boyle commenced on Sunday, March 3rd., when he complained of chest pains, while in recreation with some of the novices and students of the Salesian Studentate adjacent to the Roma University, Lesotho. Father Boyle had recently helped to found this new community which provides for the novices and students of philosophy of the Salesian Delegation of Southern Africa. In the evening of the same day he was admitted to the little local hospital in Roma, and was administered the Sacrament of the Sick. On Tuesday the doctors advised his immediate removal to the Universitas Hospital in Bloemfontein, across the border in the Republic of South Africa, where there is an up-to-date cardiac unit. Here after some tests he was placed in the intensive care unit, to his own surprise as well as to that of Father Michael Connell who had accompanied him to the hospital. He protested that he was feeling very well, and indeed had been in quite good form even during the journey to the hospital. As Father Connell was leaving Luke requested the blessing of Our Lady Help of Christians.

He also asked that Father Provincial in Ireland and the Community in Manzini be told of his condition. However, wanting to spare his parents and family worry, he was unwilling to have them informed immediately of his hospitalization. For the remainder of that week he was cared for with great attention by the staff of the hospital, until on Sunday evening he left hospital with Salesian Sisters, Carmel and Patricia, and Father Michael Connell. The Salesian Sisters generously suggested that he should go to Maputsoe rather than to Roma, so that they could help give him the care and attention he would need while he waited to return to hospital for the By-pass recommended by the Specialists in Bloemfontein.

His companions on the journey home to Maputsoe recall his joyful spirits, chatting away, joining in the rosary and so obviously enjoying the break for a cup of tea at the roadside. At Maputsoe he received a really warm welcome from the Sisters and the confreres. In the evening he had the joy of speaking on the phone to his parents in Donegal and thus of reassuring them.

Father Luke was to stay in the loving care of the Salesian sisters in Maputsoe through the week until Monday, 18th, when his condition suddenly deteriorated and necessitated his removal to hospital in nearby Ficksburg. On his arrival there an ambulance was immediately detailed to take him back to the cardiac unit in Bloemfontein. Father Timothy Leahy of the Salesian Community in Maputsoe accompanied Father Boyle in the ambulance, praying for his confrere and generously offering his own life to God for that of Father Boyle. At about 5.30 p.m. when they were about 60 km from Bloemfontein the nurse called for the ambulance to stop so that oxygen could be given to the patient, as he was showing signs of severe distress. Five minutes later the ambulance had to stop again, as it became evident that Father Boyle was dying. As he died Father Leahy administered the last rites, and then the ambulance returned to Ficksburg hospital where the death of our dear confrere was confirmed. Father Leahy remembers with great consolation the serenity that suffused his face in the moments after his death.

In Ficksburg on Wednesday, 20th March, all the confreres of the Salesian and Servite communities of Lesotho and the Salesian sisters, as well as very many of the friends Father Luke had made during his brief sojourn in Lesotho, attended the removal ceremony before the remains set out for Pretoria to be prepared for the journey to Ireland. Even in the short time that Father Luke had spent in Maputsoe and Roma his friendly approach to people had endeared him not only to the members of the religious communities, but also to the local people who further demonstrated their appreciation by their prayerful presence at the memorial mass in the large new Salesian church in the Maputsoe Mission on Sunday, 24th. March.

At home in his own community at Roma Father Luke's confreres gathered on Tuesday, 26th March to offer a mass of thanksgiving for his holy, priestly life and for the graces which enabled him to live his consecration to the end. It was the first mass to be offered in the little community chapel just completed under the direction of Luke, himself. He often expressed his anxiety to have the Blessed Sacrament present in the community residence as soon as possible, so that the community living could be complete in its Salesian devotion. He bestowed much time and care on the planning and furnishing of the chapel. The celebration gathered together the various religious communities resident in the environs of the Roma University. They had all got to know Luke very well and to value his cheerful friendly presence in their midst.

The earthly life that ended so unexpectedly on the road between Ficksburg and Bloemfontein had its beginning in a very different setting, half a world away, in Ireland, in the lovely hills of County Donegal. The magnificent scenery in which he grew up, and the warmth of its people remained a lasting and precious memory with Father Luke. Though he gave himself whole-heartedly to his mission apostolate, he never lost interest in the events of home, and one of the rare regular pleasures he allowed himself was to retire to his room for an hour to read his weekly "Democrat" and then to charm the community with a summary of the recent happenings. No doubt his love for the people and scenes of his youth was a measure of the depth of his willing and generous sacrifice in his missionary vocation.

Generosity he had indeed learnt and practiced as a young teenager. As a boy he left a very happy family and home, so that he might commence the long and demanding course of studies that leads to the Priesthood. The first phase of that course was completed in the Salesian boarding school in Pallaskenry. Then with six happy and successful years of secondary school behind him, he generously left his beloved Ireland to cross the sea to England. His happy years at Pallaskenry had convinced him that God was calling him to a life of dedication to youth with the Salesians of Don Bosco. Even if that call demanded a temporary exile, he was ready to make the sacrifice.

Thus on 25th August 1955 he commenced his novitiate in Burwash, England, and made his first vows on Our Lady's birthday, 8th September, 1956. The three formative, happy and fruitful years of the Studentate of Philosophy were spent in the tranquil rural setting of Beckford, in an ethos of prayer and community sharing. They slipped quickly by until he found himself deeply immersed in the wonderful and eminently Salesian work for poor boys in Saint Patrick's technical school in the sunny Mediterranean island of Malta. There he passed three more very happy years, relishing the spiritual joys that Jesus promises to those who leave all, even family, friends and homeland to work with him for the poor and needy.

With this marvellous experience of the Salesian work in Malta as a preparation, Luke entered the next and final stage of his long journey to the priesthood. Now a mature Salesian he commenced his theological course at the Salesian Studentate in Messina in the neighbouring island of Sicily. In the beautiful tranquillity of this house, perched high on a hillside and enriched with a wonderful panorama over the historic straits, Luke, as a member of a genuinely formative Salesian community, had every help to raise his mind and heart to God in a motion that was to have its sublime term in his initiation into the Priesthood of Christ. Here too the young student widened his Salesian experience in the Salesian festive oratory in the town's poor quarters. In Messina Luke made himself ready for his priestly ordination, and for the years of priestly ministry which have given such joy and encouragement to all of us who have shared with him his active Salesian apostolate. He was ever grateful to God for his time in Messina.

Luke's enduring devotion to his daily holy mass so reverently and faithfully celebrated was in itself an earnest of the joy that suffused his soul on the glorious day of his Ordination, 6th March 1966 in Messina. For that day he had striven and prayed from his boyhood. It was for him a day that the Lord had made. A day of Joy. A joy shared with his loving family and especially with his dear parents.

Father Luke's first priestly assignments brought him back to his native Ireland, as teacher in the colleges of Pallaskenry and Ballinakill, where the classrooms and the sports fields gave ample scope for his youthful energies. In both venues the bonfires often blazed in the late evening to lighten and enliven the victory celebrations of the teams that owed their success in no small measure to his enthusiastic and relentless coaching. The recently ordained priest immersed himself fully in the school apostolate, an enthusiastic teacher, constantly in the midst of his boys, part of their games, always available to them and interested in them. Indeed the school apostolate was his first love. Many times he quietly remarked that he would love to be back again in the classroom. It would seem that he needed to call on the reserves of his religious spirit to accept with interior joy the obedience to move to the area of community administration.

It was to fill the administrative post of Bursar that he joined the Salesian Community here in Manzini in 1978, bringing to his missionary assignment considerable experience, for he had already filled the same post in the Studentate at Maynooth and in the Agricultural College of Warrenstown.

In Swaziland he settled down quickly to a very fulfilling apostolate, feeling very much at home in the verdant Swazi landscape which must have often reminded him of the green hills of his youth in Co. Donegal.

The post of Bursar in this large school campus is a demanding one, and Luke carried that burden with dedication marked with singular kindness and generosity for seven years. When the long and arduous day in the office was finished, he still found time and energy for the every growing

circle of friends and acquaintances who frequently called for help or advice. Even the meagre free time at the week-ends was utilized for an apostolate dear to Don Bosco. His zeal for souls urged him to part with much of his well deserved rest to pray with and evangelize the inmates of the local prisons, where his ministrations were highly appreciated and looked forward to by catholics and non-catholics alike. Only the Lord, himself, knows the extent of the good Father Luke has done, materially and spiritually, for God's people of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

On Friday morning, 22nd March, the staffs and pupils of the Salesian schools gathered on the High School lawn to pay tribute in a celebrated holy mass to the priest who had for so long been a dynamic force in the schools' life and development. The Salesian confreres were consoled by the almost total representation of Servite priests and brothers, of the diocesan clergy, of the Dominican and Servite sisters, as well as by the presence of many of Father Luke's Swazi friends.

Monsignor Ndlovu, Administrator of the diocese, concelebrated as principal Celebrant, and in his homily paid a splendid tribute to our confrere, at the same time challenging the youth of Swaziland not to let the memory of his life and dedication fade, but to find inspiration in it to come forward to carry on themselves the torch of faith and christian love. Monsignor Ndlovu singled out for special emphasis Father Luke's exemplary spirit of religious obedience in accepting without reservation from his superiors his recent and last assignment as Bursar to the new Salesian Studentate in Roma. He recalled with gratitude the many services through which Father Luke benefited the diocese of Swaziland in addition to the exacting duties as Bursar of the largest Catholic school in the country.

The Salesian confreres of the Southern African Delegation, especially those of the Roma and Manzini communities, read with gratitude the accounts of the homecoming and the moving welcome with which the remains of Father Luke were received in Ireland, and especially in his home town of Ardara. Father Eugene Hennessy, Provincial Delegate, and the Salesian confreres in Southern Africa thank sincerely the local clergy, especially Monsignor McDyer, Very Reverend Father Joseph Harrington, Provincial, the religious and friends; all who helped to make the occasion of the homecoming a consoling event for Father Luke's family and especially for his old parents for whom his early death is such a great loss.

Father Luke has left us. No more shall we hear his cheery greeting, and for long we will feel the natural sorrow at his passing. That is indeed only natural, as it was natural to Jesus who, before restoring to life the widow's son, first shared the tears of the mother. John Donne aptly expresses our sentiments:

"No man is an island, entire of itself.  
Any man's death diminishes me, because  
I am involved in mankind."

Humanly speaking, Luke's death diminishes us in that area of our lives most dear to us, our mutual sharing in the mission of Don Bosco to the young. But faith comes to salvage our joy. We know that Father Luke does take part of us with him into Christ, our hopes and aims, for our strengthening and encouragement. In life his friendly and concerned presence was our enrichment, but now in Christ his service is more efficacious.

"There's one less place at our table.  
There's one more angel in heaven.  
There's one more star in the sky."

Coming as he did from an Irish home where the rosary was a nightly family commitment, and formed in so many different Salesian communities, Luke's devotion to Our Lady was deep and filial. She was a vital inspiration in his life.

Our brother has been called to the Divine Presence, a joy that awaits us all, and for which we daily pray and plan. We can be strengthened in our own striving by the memory of his faithful priestly life and friendly, considerate personality. With Our Lady's help we too can be confident of remaining faithful to the end.

Father Luke will be remembered for many years to come in the Salesian communities of the Kingdoms of Swaziland and Lesotho, and with him his dear parents to whom we extend our deepest sympathy. As Salesian parents they are privileged sharers in our missionary apostolates and in the rewards foreseen by Saint John Bosco. They will always have a special place in our Community prayers.

Luke will be a loss to the Salesian work in Southern Africa, especially in the vital area of priestly and religious formation. We remember with admiration how during his busy years as Bursar in Maynooth and Warrenstown he studied for and gained the Degree of Bachelor of Divinity and a Higher Diploma in Education. Thus with his scholastic preparation and his wide Salesian experience he was well fitted for the new responsibilities assigned to him in the fledgling community, the studentate of Philosophy and Novitiate in Roma. This is a venture in which the Salesian Congregation has placed much trust and hope for a new Salesian Pentecost in this part of Africa. The youth of Southern Africa has need of the charism of Don Bosco, incarnated in many local young apostles, for whom a rich harvest awaits. Please join us in prayer to the Lord of the Harvest for vocations worthy of that special, evangelical commitment under the patronage of Our Lady Help of Christians and Don Bosco.

*Michael Hicks, S.D.B.*

#### **FOR THE NECROLOGY**

Sac. BOYLE PATRICK LUKE born on 14th October 1936 in Ardara, Co. Donegal; died on 18th March 1985 in Ficksburg, South Africa in the 48th year of his age.