

Marian Shrine
Filors Lane
West Haverstraw
New York, 10993

March 17, 1992
St. Patrick's Day



Dear Confreres,

At approximately 12:15 a.m. on Monday, January 13, 1992, our confrere FATHER PATRICK J. CORCORAN, entered into his eternal rest. He had celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday on December 7th.

Father Pat arrived at Blue Gate on July 13, 1991, exactly six months before his death. Already in a weakened state, he grew increasingly disoriented as the weeks and months passed. His condition eventually deteriorated to the point that it became necessary for us to arrange to have him transferred to a nursing home where he could receive round the clock skilled care.

On December 18th, Father Pat was admitted to Good Samaritan Hospital in Suffern, New York suffering from bladder and kidney infections. As a result of medications administered to him, these specific ailments improved, but his overall general condition remained extremely weak. He was released from Good Samaritan on January 6th and admitted into the Ramapo Manor Nursing Center, also in Suffern. It was there that he passed away a week later. When I arrived at Father Pat's bedside early in the morning on January 13th, he appeared in death much as he had in life while at Blue Gate, lying peacefully on his back, a pair of rosary beads gently entwined around his hands.

The son of Irish immigrants, Patrick and Ellen (Quinn) Corcoran, the future Father Pat was born on December 7, 1906, in the Bronx, the youngest of five children only three of whom survived infancy. His father had developed a successful career as a silk merchant in New York City and as a result the Corcoran family was fortunate enough to acquire a

beautiful home in Rutherford, New Jersey. Patrick's prospects for a comfortable life were soon dashed, however, as tragedy struck the Corcoran family. The elder Patrick died at the age of 49, and his wife followed him three years later at 48, leaving the younger Patrick an orphan by the age of 10. He never forgot the funeral of his father in 1913, an event which etched itself permanently on the mind of the impressionable ten year old: the long, solemn procession; the horses draped in black pulling the hearse; the sheer length of the ceremony which lasted nearly half a day. From time to time Patrick would be plagued by feelings of insecurity and loneliness stemming from the early deaths of his parents, but those experiences had also instilled in him a deep compassion for others, especially the poor and downtrodden, a characteristic that he would exhibit throughout his life.

Entering the Salesian Novitiate in New Rochelle, New York, in 1925, Patrick made his First Profession there on August 5, 1926. His Perpetual Profession followed at Newton, New Jersey in 1931, and upon completion of his theological studies he was ordained a priest in St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York City, by His Eminence, Patrick Cardinal Hayes, on June 10, 1933.

For the next thirty-five years Father Pat labored in various schools of the New Rochelle Province: Salesian High School, New Rochelle, N.Y. (1933-41); Don Bosco Prep, Ramsey, N.J. (1941-45); St. Dominic Savio High School, East Boston, Mass. (1950-55); Sacred Heart Juniorate, Ipswich, Mass. (1955-60) of which he was founding Director; Don Bosco Technical High School, Boston, Mass. (1960-68). He served with distinction in all of these assignments.

Father Pat's life was to change dramatically in the autumn of 1968. On September 22, 1955, Holy Rosary Mission in Birmingham, Alabama, had been raised to the status of a parish and entrusted to the Salesians. Fr. Aloysius Trifari, SDB, the first resident pastor, worked zealously and courageously until his sudden death on June 22, 1968, making numerous converts among the black population and building St. Bernadette Church (now St. John Bosco Church) for them. As the then Provincial, Fr. John Malloy, SDB, searched the Province for a worthy successor to Fr. Trifari, his choice fell upon Fr. Pat Corcoran.

Although he had spent his entire Salesian career in schools and had no experience as a parish priest, Father Pat possessed two qualities which made him a logical candidate for the Birmingham mission: a deep spirit of prayer and a love for the poor. During his years in Boston he would stroll the Boston Common with a pocketful of quarters, ready to assist the poor and the homeless who frequented the area.

Arriving in Birmingham on October 10, 1968, Father Pat soon showed himself to be an exceptionally zealous pastor whose love for souls extended far beyond the boundaries of the parish entrusted to him. In fact, it was Father Pat's zeal for souls and seemingly unbounded energy which impressed the Salesians who lived and worked with him. A confrere, reflecting upon his several years with Father Pat, wrote:

"What struck me was his zeal. He loved shut-ins. Every Thursday with Brother Del (Bro. Adelard Labonte, SDB) as driver, he went to visit many shut-ins. These people, many times, had no one who came to see them. Father Pat would

console, advise, then confess them and administer Holy Communion and, if necessary, the Sacrament of the Sick. He also loved going to the V.A. hospital, where he served as chaplain for fourteen years. He never missed. His kindness and holy persistence helped many to change their lives. He would be ready every morning to go to Our Lady of the Angels Monastery, to Mother Angelica and her nuns, whom he loved very much. They, too, loved him."

In 1972, Bishop Joseph G. Vath of the Birmingham Diocese appointed Father Pat as Director of the Prison Apostolate in the Birmingham area. Father Pat celebrated Mass in the County Jail on January 3, 1973, the first time that the Eucharist was known to have been celebrated in any jail in the area.

Brother Del Labonte, who shared many experiences with Fr. Pat over the course of twenty-four years, recalls Father Pat's great love for the Holy Eucharist. "It was Father Pat's greatest joy to celebrate Mass," recalls Brother Del. "Each Sunday he would be present, either as celebrant or making himself available for confessions, at all five parish

Masses. In addition, he would spend three hours daily in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, recite the complete rosary, and make the Stations of the Cross." An ardent union with God was obviously the source of Father Pat's zeal and tireless energy.

A keen sense of humor, a fervent love of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and an intense spirit of prayer which manifested itself in a boundless zeal for the young and the poor -- these are the qualities which most characterized Father Pat Corcoran and for which he will be remembered. A Salesian can leave behind no finer legacy.

Fraternally in Don Bosco,

Fr. David Moreno, SDB

(Rev.) David G. Moreno, SDB
Director

Data for Necrology: Fr. Patrick J. Corcoran, SDB, born December 7, 1906, in the Bronx, New York, died January 13, 1992, in Suffern, New York, at the age of 85, after 65 years of religious profession and 58 years of priesthood.

