



Salesian House,
Maynooth.

Dear Confreres,

On 11th May, 1984, at 5.45 p.m. our beloved

FATHER PATRICK HORGAN

died peacefully in the Hospice of the Little Company of Mary at Milford, Limerick. At his bedside were three of his Salesian confreres, two of the Salesian Sisters with whom he had worked for so long, and the Sister of the Little Company of Mary who had nursed him in his last illness. Although he had been ill for the greater part of his life, and his last illness was long and painful, his passing was calm and peaceful.

Patrick Horgan was born in Ashford, Kent on 15th December, 1904. His parents hailed from Co. Cork. Patrick went to school at Salesian College, Battersea, London and from there to the Novitiate in Cowley, Oxford, where he made his first profession on 16th September, 1922. He enjoyed his novitiate, the first time in his life, he said, when he went a whole year without a box on the ear! Immediately after his first profession he left England for South America, as secretary to a Chilean Bishop. He studied philosophy as one of a class of two. The other half of the class reached Episcopal rank, as did the professor! Patrick was destined for greatness of a different kind. He went to Turin, Italy for his Theology studies and later took a doctorate in Theology.

His ministry as a priest brought him to many parts of the world. After his ordination in July 1930 he went back to South America for a further five years. He then returned to England and in 1936 he was appointed teacher of Theology in Blaistown, Gloucestershire, a task he was to return to later in Melchet Court, Hampshire. He spent some time in other Salesian Houses in England and also a number of years as Chaplain to the armed forces in Germany. In 1961 he went to California where he taught Theology for two years and then worked in a parish for one year. In 1964 he returned to England, this time as Chaplain and teacher in the Novitiate of the Salesian Sisters at Ilminster on Thames.

In 1966 the Novitiate moved to Terryglass, Co. Tipperary, a beautiful spot on the shores of Lough Derg, and Fr. Horgan moved with it. For a total of eighteen years he taught and ministered to the Salesian Sisters and Novices. He used to recall that these were the happiest years of his life. The sisters appreciated his talents and they readily acknowledge their debt of gratitude for his kindness and the unselfish way he shared his gifts and learning with them. His lectures and homilies are treasured still, on tape and in script.

In August 1982, the Sisters' Novitiate was transferred from the quiet charm of Terryglass to a busier bustling location at Morehampton Road, Dublin. For Fr. Pat it meant a change from the peace and calm of his little wooden house in the country to the hub-bub and excitement of a large student community in Salesian House, Maynooth. Even at the age of seventy seven, he adapted marvellously. His ready wit made him instantly popular among the young confreres, whilst his kindness and understanding endeared him greatly to them. He helped them in many ways - a cheerful word or smile, a crystal-clear explanation of some abstruse philosophical or theological problem, not least the love and peace he ministered in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

In summer, 1983, he went for his customary visit to relatives and friends in England. He always looked forward to this visit as he greatly valued their friendship and kindness. During his holiday he became ill and had to go to hospital for a stomach operation. This was nothing new for him as his health had never been good - he had lost count of the number of operations he had undergone. He spent five weeks in hospital in London, where he was visited and well cared for by the Salesians of Battersea. Our sincere thanks to them. He returned to Ireland at the end of October and after a mere three weeks in Maynooth had to return to hospital in Blanchardstown for another operation. During this time, he spoke often about death and seemed almost to have his mind set on dying for the feast of the Immaculate Conception. However, his condition improved and, to his own great happiness and the joy of all of us, he was able to return to the community for Christmas. From Christmas to early March was a time of great

happiness for him and for us. He was happy just to be with the Community, almost as if he felt he was on borrowed time, and he brought happiness to us by his wonderful cheerfulness and humour, his friendliness and interest in us all, his words of advice and encouragement - veritable gems of wisdom, and his great faith and nearness to God. Like St. Francis of Sales, he asked for nothing and refused nothing. He appreciated everything that was done for him and showed his appreciation by generous words of thanks. He was especially grateful to the priests who said Mass for him.

During this time, the Salesian Sisters from Auxilia, Maynooth looked after Fr. Pat with a kindness and love that no words of mine could describe. They visited him many times a day, brought him his meals, administered his medicine, tidied his room and laundered his clothes. Even these chores were small by comparison with the warmth of love and kindness they showed every time they came. To dear Fr Pat they brought great comfort and consolation; to the rest of us they were a magnificent source of inspiration and edification. The same can be said for the many other Salesian Sisters from other communities who supported him by their visits and prayers and their many kindnesses. May the good Lord reward them abundantly.

Alas, there was to be still more suffering. On March 11th, Fr. Pat fell in his room and broke his leg. This meant a return to hospital, a cruel blow to a man whose great wish was to end his days in his Salesian Community. Still, he faced this further trial with the same strong faith he had always shown. He remained cheerful despite considerable discomfort and showed remarkable courage in undergoing physiotherapy to enable him to walk again. This time he spent one month in Blanchardstown Hospital before moving to the Hospice of the Little Company of Mary at Milford, Limerick, where he was to spend exactly one more month before his death. At Milford he was cared for in a most wonderful way by the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary, and by the doctors and nurses. He was visited frequently by his confreres from the adjoining nursing home and from the nearby Salesian House, as well as the Salesian Sisters.

About seven o'clock on the morning of Friday, 11th May, he took a sudden bad turn and appeared to be dying. Two Salesian priests rushed to his bedside. Mass was celebrated in his room by the hospital chaplain. He rallied somewhat and remained conscious of all that was going on around him. Salesians and Salesian Sisters were at his beside all day. He lingered on until 5.45 p.m. when he passed away very peacefully.

His remains were brought to the beautiful chapel at the Salesian College, Paliaskerry on Saturday 12th and on Sunday 13th he was laid to rest in the College Cemetery. It seemed appropriate that this holy man, who had spent so many years working with the Salesian Sisters, who loved them so much and was so loved by them, should be going home on the Feast of St. Mary Mazzarello. I am sure she had a very special welcome for him.

We remember him with great affection. Men like Fr. Pat are not easily forgotten. We still see him smiling, rubbing his nose as he thinks up another funny story. His constant cheerfulness was a parable of holiness.

It remains only for me to say thanks - to God for the gift of Fr. Pat Horgan, a gift which enriched so many in the Church and in the Salesian Family; to the Salesian Sisters for their outstanding kindness to him; to the confreres in the Maynooth community for the love they showed him; to the doctors and nurses who cared for him here in Maynooth; in the Kingston Hospital, Surrey; in James Connolly Memorial Hospital, Blanchardstown and in the Hospice of the Little Company of Mary, Milford. Our thanks are best expressed in the Eucharist. Let us remember him and each other whenever we come to God's altar.

Please continue to pray for the happy repose of the soul of our dear Fr. Pat. Pray also for the young men of this community who are preparing for the priesthood and religious life, that they may be men of faith, filled with hope and joy, and urged on by love like this great Salesian priest who has gone before us.

Yours sincerely in Don Bosco,

Michael Smyth, S.D.B.