

Fr. Patrick Joseph Laws SDB

1.8.1934 - 6.12.2000

April 2001

Dear Confreres,

Early in the morning of December 6, 2000, after a brief illness, Father Patrick Laws passed very gently to his Lord.

In August 2000 Father Pat returned from Rome, and assumed duties as parish priest of St Margaret Mary's Parish, North Brunswick, a position that he occupied during 1996. He was welcomed back warmly by his former parishioners, and embarked upon his new duties with enthusiasm. However, it was evident from the beginning that he was lacking in strength and struggling to perform his duties.

After a brief bout of illness Pat entered John Fawcner Hospital for diagnostic tests, which after two weeks showed that he had liver cancer, of a variety difficult to heal.

Pat wrote to his family to inform them of his condition: *"I ask you to join with me in fully accepting God's will for me. I intend to pray for a miracle, but it is good for me to know how I will die, and that I probably don't have many years to live. My preparation for death will consist in continuing to work, and trying to become more holy than I am now. God is a compassionate and loving Father, and I know His Spirit will be with me in a special way. I understand this letter may cause you distress, but the best response is prayer and openness to God's will. May God be praised!"*

Pat began chemotherapy treatment on Sunday December 3, he was discharged from hospital on Tuesday December 5, the feast of Blessed Philip Rinaldi, a Salesian to whom he was devoted. Shortly after his return to Don Bosco Brunswick he experienced rather severe difficulties, which he endured bravely and patiently. After some hours he was admitted to St Vincent's hospital emergency unit, where, despite the best efforts of staff, he died about six hours later, the primary cause of death being septicaemia.

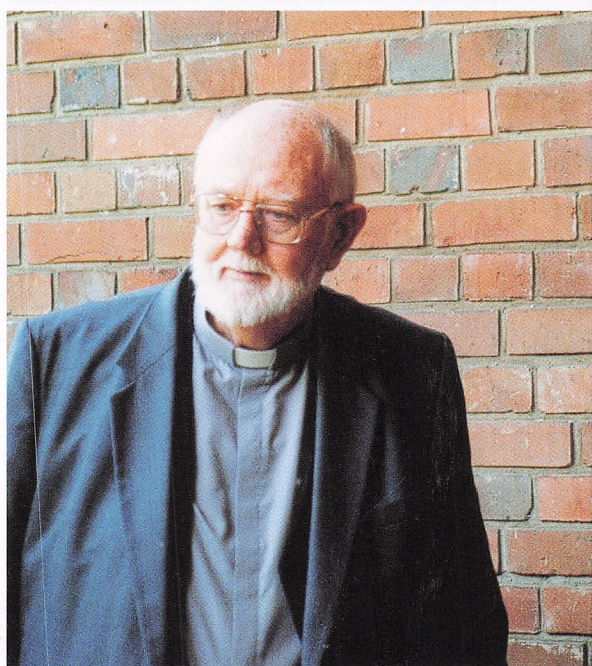
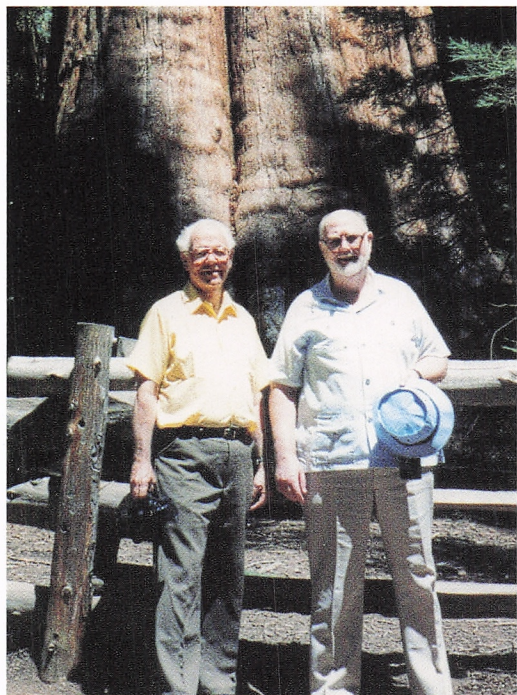
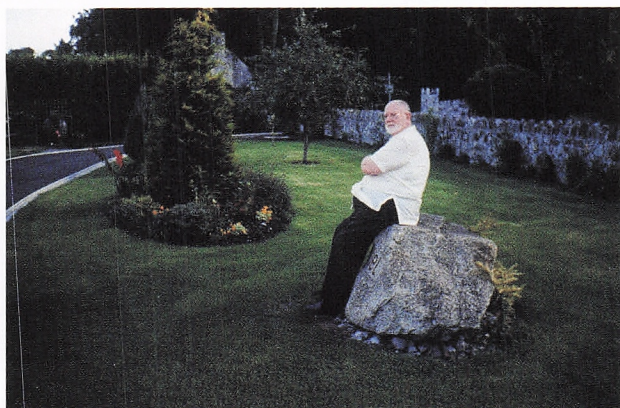
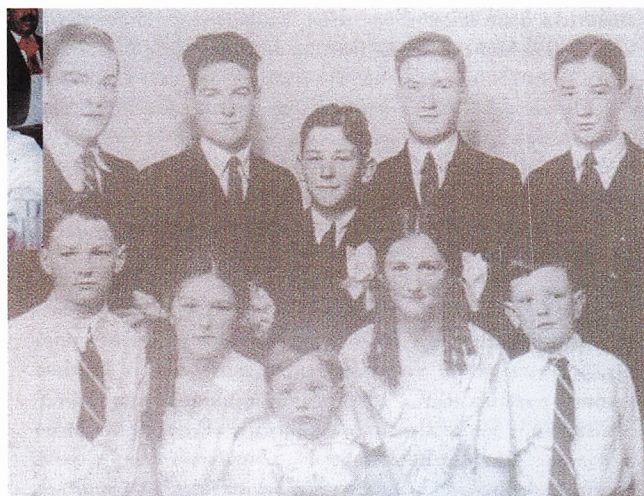
Patrick Joseph Laws was born on 1st August 1934, the tenth child of Hector and Mary Ellen Laws, and baptised in St Mary's Parish Church, Dandenong (Vic) by Father John Cerutti SDB. Family recollections affirm that after the baptism Father Cerutti "took the baby from his mother's arms, placed him on the altar and, raising him up, dedicated him to St. Joseph and Don Bosco. He returned him to his mother and said: "I claim this baby for Don Bosco and the Salesians". Father Cerutti remained a close friend of the Laws family until his death.

Shortly after Pat's baptism, the Laws family moved to Sale.

After Mass on one Sunday, the family was gathered outside the Cathedral with Bishop Ryan. The bishop enquired of Pat, a small boy not old enough for school, what he would like to be when he grew up. As quick as a flash young Patrick replied: "A bishop." The bishop pursued the matter and asked Pat what he would be before he became a bishop. Pat replied: "A Salesian."

Pat received his primary education from the Sisters of St Joseph and his secondary education at the Marist St Patrick's College Sale.

At the age of seventeen, Pat announced his intention to join the Salesians of Don Bosco. With the acquiescence and support of his parents and family, he commenced his pre-



Australian province in particular, has lost a most gifted and warm confrere, a very human one through whom the Lord was able to reach out to so many people."

From a confrere who lived close to him in his last months: *"He lived an exemplary life during the last few months of his life at Brunswick - a life of prayer, faith and total resignation to the will of God."*

From an English Salesian: *"One of my best memories of him is when I met him in Ireland some years ago when he had finished preaching the retreats there. .. We were both amazed and delighted when Pat, well supped, took up a book of Irish poetry which he had never seen before and began to declaim with great feeling and power. He was a man of many talents..."*

From another English Salesian: *"The memories of the visit in October 1999 are still very vivid in all our minds... Everywhere he won the love and admiration of all. A man who can lead a profound Lectio Divina for nearly one hundred people in the morning and the same evening remove his teeth to sing "Put a penny on the drum" and have people falling around with laughter is just one great man..."*

From an American Salesian: *"Our deepest sympathy goes out to you upon the death of "our" good Pat Laws. Pat is well remembered here in California. Pat belonged first to Australia but then to the world."*

From St Margaret Mary's North Brunswick Primary School staff: *"Dear friend and parish priest of St Margaret Mary's School Brunswick North, Father Pat, you will be remembered for your great gifts of compassion, gentleness, wisdom and constant support and encouragement. Remembered with much love by the Staff (your chalkies) and the children you loved so much at your school."*

From a fellow teacher from Engadine: *"From the start, this very human and pastoral approach imbued the school. He hired his teachers, sometimes to my annoyance, more for what he saw in them as loving and caring people rather than for their academic qualifications. However he was rarely wrong in his choices. His relationship with his students was such that they could become very close to him while still retaining respect. My picture of him rarely in the office, and constantly in the playground, inevitably drew the comparison with his model... The greatest praise that could be made of him would be to say that Don Bosco would be proud of him."*

We thank God for the gift of Patrick Laws, and we entrust him to His merciful love and to the intercession of Blessed Philip Rinaldi.

Vivat in Christo. May he live in Christ.
In Don Bosco,

Fr. Brendan Murphy
Rector
Don Bosco Brunswick

Data for the Necrology: Fr, Patrick Joseph Laws SDB.
66 years of age, 48 years of profession, 38 years of priesthood.

novitiate at Oakleigh in 1950 and his novitiate at Sunbury in 1951. He made his first profession on January 31 1952. He studied philosophy at Sonada, India from 1952 to 1954, and did his tirocinium at Sunbury from 1955 to 1958. He studied theology at Bollengo and Castellammare from 1958 till 1962 and was ordained a priest in Naples Italy on March 25 1962.

Father Pat's priestly ministry was chiefly in the field of secondary education, but also embraced, among other activities, the Cooperator movement and adult education in Salesian spirituality.

From 1963 till 1965 Father Pat was deputy principal of the Salesian studentate, Archbishop Mannix Missionary College, at Oakleigh. During this time he also directed the Don Bosco Boys' Club. From 1966 till 1968 he was deputy principal at Salesian College Brooklyn Park, South Australia. From 1969 till 1972 he was rector and principal of the same college. Father Pat spent 1973 in on-going formation at Oakleigh. From 1974 till 1977 he was director of Catholic education in the South Australian diocese of Port Pirie. In 1978 Father Pat was founding principal of Don Bosco High School (now St John Bosco Engadine (NSW) and occupied the position of principal until 1983.

From 1984 till 1986 he was province director of education and youth pastoral. In 1987 he was principal of St Joseph's Regional College Ferntree Gully, Victoria. From 1988 till 1995 Pat lectured at Catholic Theological College Clayton, and was province delegate for the Salesian Cooperators. In 1996 he was parish priest of St Margaret Mary's parish in North Brunswick, and from 1997 until August 2000 was world delegate for the Salesian Cooperators at the Salesian Generalate in Rome, Italy. Pat returned to Australia July 2000 and took up the position of parish priest at North Brunswick in August 2000.

Over many years Father Pat also proved himself a gifted preacher and retreat master.

The many memories offered and tributes afforded Father Pat after his death bear eloquent testimony to the high esteem and affection in which he was held by people in many different spheres:

From his family: *"... Pat was a normal boy and teenager. As a boy Pat 's hair was fiery red and when aroused or teased his anger could be as fiery as the colour of his hair. He loved sport, particularly football and more particularly the Tigers. He was blessed with a sharp wit. He was a deep reader. He loved a yarn. We recall with affection the family gatherings that Pat loved, the laughter, the stories, and the good times. He was proud of his parents and his brothers and sisters and loved to be with their families. He was Uncle Pat to his nieces and nephews and their children; At a family gathering he was a modern day piper surrounded by children."*

From a spokesman for the Italian Catholic community at St Margaret Mary's North Brunswick: *"...During his brief ministry in this parish, he showed himself a zealous priest, completely dedicated to the good of souls. He always gave of himself generously and with care to each of his parishioners, especially the more needy, the sick, the aged and those who suffered loneliness. He had no fear to be himself humble with the humble, poor with the poor, happy with those who rejoiced, and afflicted with those who were tried by sorrow. As a good son of Don Bosco, he took great care of the young, and many in fact were attracted to the Church through his manner full of gentleness and kindness."*

From an Australian fellow Salesian and friend of many years: *" The Salesian world and the*

