

# SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

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Father John E Boll, Diocesan Archives

No 26

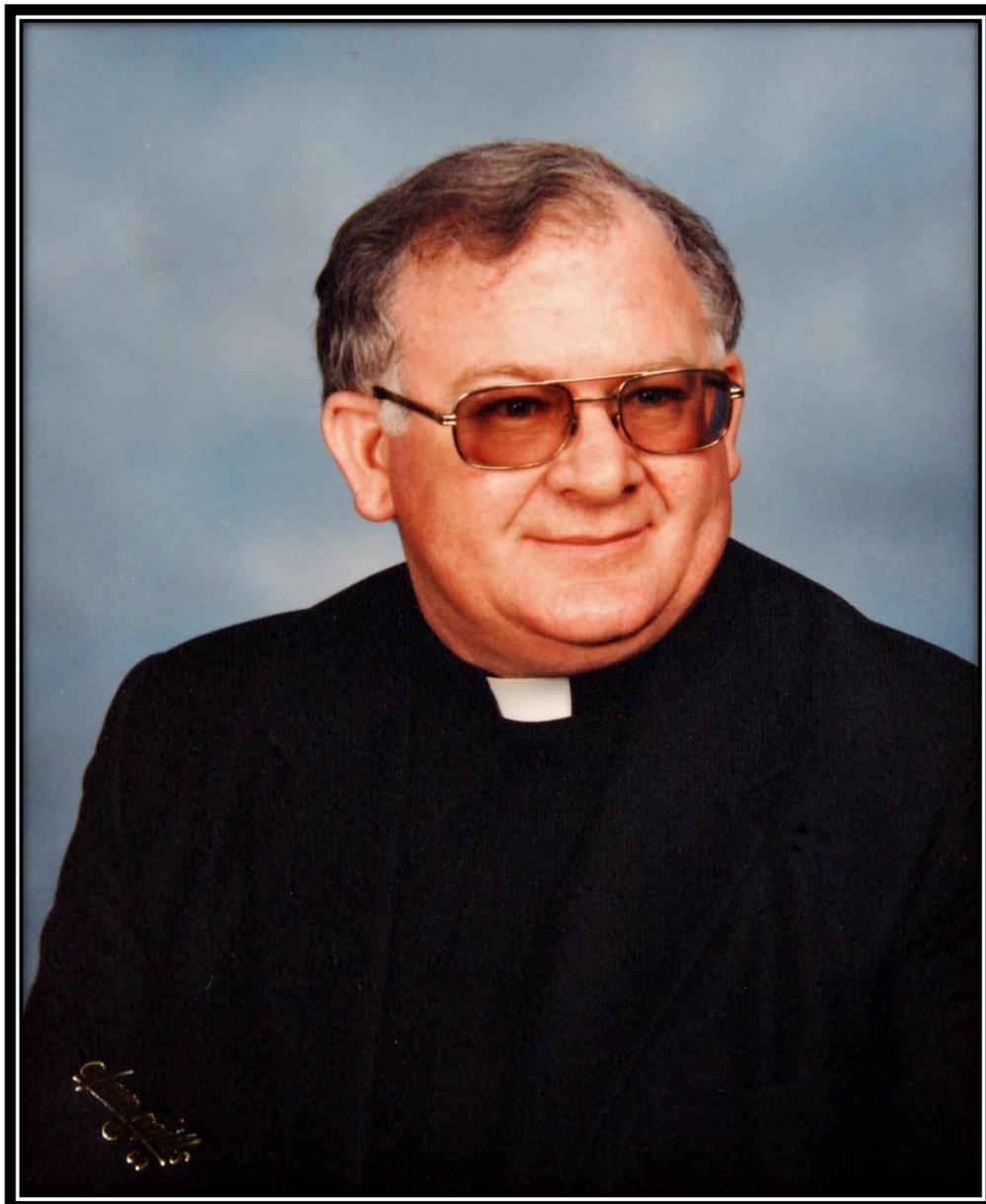
## *Father Patrick Joseph McGrath*

Native Son of Cahernory, County Limerick, Ireland

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor Emeritus of Saint Joseph Parish, Rio Vista, CA

September 1, 1940 – July 13, 2009



***Patrick Joseph McGrath was born on September 1, 1940*** in Cahernory, Limerick, Ireland, the son of Michael McGrath and Josephine O'Brien. Pat began his education at Donoughmore National School from 1945 to 1953 and then transferred to Saint Munchin College in Limerick from 1953 to 1959. In 1959 he began his theological studies at Saint Patrick College, Thurles and was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Sacramento on June 13, 1965 by Bishop Thomas Morris, Archbishop of Cashell.

### **BEGINNING MINISTRY IN THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO**

After arriving in Sacramento, Father Pat was given a short assignment at Saint Mel Parish in Fair Oaks as an assistant pro-tem. He then received an assignment to Holy Spirit Parish in Fairfield where he served as an assistant from 1966 to 1969.



Photo by John E Boll

**Holy Spirit Church, Fairfield**

### **GRADUATE SCHOOL**

In the summer of 1969, Father Pat began his post-graduate studies, first at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC from 1969 to 1970, and later at the University of San Francisco, completing his master's degree in Marriage and Family Counseling in 1977 and his doctorate in 1982.

### **ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE**

Father McGrath served as associate director of the diocesan office of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine from June 1970 to February 1974, and director of Priests' Continuing Education

from 1974 to 1996. He also served as director of the Cana Conference, a marriage preparation program for engaged couples, from 1976 to 1996.

#### **RESIDENCE IN MANY DIFFERENT PARISHES**

During his years in the Office of Religious Education and later as full-time director of Clergy Education, Father McGrath resided in various parishes. For a short time in 1970 he lived in residence with the Christian Brothers in Sacramento. From 1970-1974, his residence was Saint John the Evangelist rectory in Carmichael. He then lived in residence at Our Lady of Lourdes rectory from 1974 to 1980. Next, he lived in residence at Saint Philomene rectory from 1980 to 1982 and then moved into the vacant Bishop's Residence on Fair Oaks Boulevard until it was sold in July 1983. He then lived at Presentation Parish rectory. For five months he served as administrator pro tem of SS Peter and Paul Parish in Rocklin while Father Michael Dillon was on sabbatical. He also served as administrator pro-tem at Saint Anthony Parish in Walnut Grove.

#### **NAMED PASTOR OF RIO VISTA**

On September 1, 1996, Father Pat was appointed pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Rio Vista and served in that role until June 1999.



Photo by John E Boll

**Saint Joseph Church, Rio Vista**

### **COMMENTS OF PARISHIONERS**

The former mayor of Rio Vista, Marci Coglianese, a member of Saint Joseph Parish, recalled that Father McGrath was dedicated to young people. “He strengthened the youth program at the parish and never missed a single football game or swim meet. He was particularly good working with teenagers,” she said.

### **A LOVER OF IRISH HURLING**

Father McGrath loved to keep up with current events in Ireland, says Father Gerald Ryle. “In many ways, he was a man who never left his homeland, particularly his home county of Limerick.” Father McGrath was an avid follower of Irish hurling, “even to the point of driving to certain locations on Sunday and parking his car where the reception would allow him to catch the game on his radio,” Father Ryle recalled. “He was always delighted when his team won.”



Photo from Irish Hurling Website

### **All Ireland Hurling Finals 2015**

### **ESTABLISHED THE MAT PROGRAM**

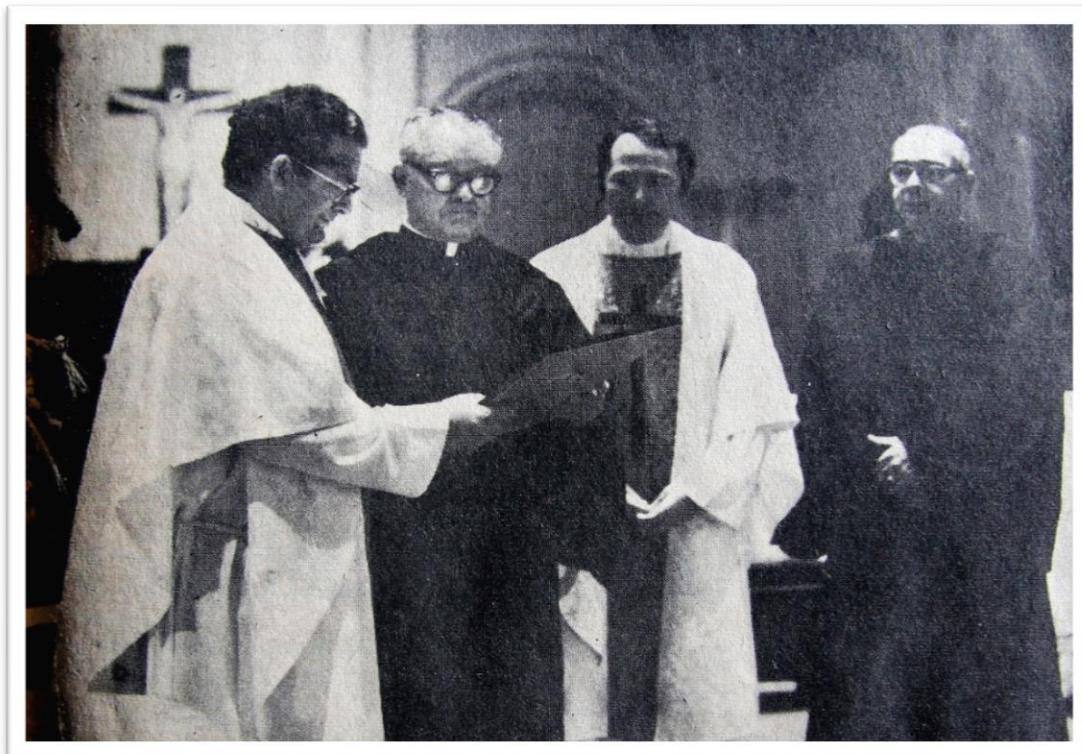
Perhaps the most memorable and important program Father Pat helped to create was the Master of Arts in Teaching degree program from the University of San Francisco. The MAT program, as it was called, was created through the persistent efforts of Father Frank Murphy from the University of San Francisco and Father Patrick McGrath, who was then the associate director of CCD for the Diocese of Sacramento.

It was Father Pat's conviction that ongoing education for clergy in the post Vatican II church was essential. He worked with Father Frank Murphy to begin a dialogue with the University of San Francisco to see if the University would be willing to partner with the Diocese of Sacramento to provide an accredited theological and teaching program for the priests and religious of the diocese. The plan was to create an extension program from the San Francisco Jesuit University in Sacramento. The professors would travel from San Francisco to Sacramento to teach the weekly class.

Working with Father Murphy at USF, Father McGrath spent hundreds of hours with many different entities – the University of San Francisco, Bishop Alden Bell, the Priests' Senate and the clergy and religious of the diocese before this program became a reality. Paying for the program was a joint venture: 1/3 paid by the diocese; 1/3 by the parish or diocesan department; 1/3 by the priest.

The course of studies was nearly two years and classes were held once a week at the Sacramento Newman Center. Priests who served in the more remote areas of the diocese had to drive to Sacramento each week for class. This entailed a great commitment for travel time and car expenses but these dedicated priests made the sacrifices necessary to complete their course of studies.

#### **FATHER PAT GIVEN A DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD**



*Photo by the Catholic Herald*

**Father Patrick McGrath Receives a Distinguished Service Award from USF**

The MAT program concluded on December 28, 1973 with a Graduation Mass at the Cathedral in Sacramento. At that Mass, the University of San Francisco presented Father McGrath with a distinguished service award for his work in spearheading the creation of an on-site master's degree program for the priests and religious in Sacramento.

In part, the citation given to Father McGrath read: *"An authentic far-sighted priest, he has devoted many, many hours of his valuable time to ensure the validity of the Program which is essential for the continuing education of clergy and religious. His real concern and contagious enthusiasm have been indispensable ingredients to the success of an educational experience which will be a model in the University's apostolate of service to the Church in other dioceses."*

### **FATHER PAT RETURNS TO IRELAND**

While Father Pat was visiting his family in Ireland in 1999, his brother Tony died suddenly. Father Pat was very close to his brother Tony and his death was a devastating blow to the whole family. Father Pat decided to remain in Ireland so he could be of support to his brother's family. He requested to retire from the Diocese of Sacramento and asked Bishop Weigand to write a letter to Bishop Donal Murray of Limerick to see if the bishop would accept him for temporary ministry in Limerick. This would allow him time to give support his sister-in-law and her children after the death of his brother.

### **MINISTRY IN IRELAND**



Photo from St Munchin website

### **Saint Munchin's Church, Limerick, Ireland**

Bishop Murray gave Father Pat a temporary assignment at Saint Munchin's Parish in Limerick as a curate. His work with the youth of the parish was a positive influence on many. He had a great

interest in politics and social issues. One Sunday in 2004, Father Pat gave a homily at Saint Munchin's Church and made reference to the Prime Minister. Every time a priest mentions politics from the pulpit he is sure to offend some people. It happened that someone reported Father Pat to the bishop. There was a difference of opinion between the bishop and Father Pat and as a consequence, Father Pat's temporary assignment ended and Bishop Murray did not renew his assignment. Father Pat was forced to retire from parish ministry in Ireland.

### **RETURN TO CALIFORNIA**

In February 2005, Father Pat returned to California to visit friends living in San Diego. After his flight from Shannon to Los Angeles, he stayed in a hotel for two nights near the Los Angeles airport so he could rest. During the first night he had a diabetic attack and it was not until the second day that he was found unconscious in his hotel room. He was rushed to the hospital where he lay unconscious for 25 days on life support.

Through a combination of willpower, grace and luck, Father Pat miraculously managed to pull through this crisis and recovered from his critical illness. His classmate, Monsignor Clement Connelly of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, was alerted that Father Pat was in the hospital and he did everything possible to help Father Pat on his path to recovery, even finding a care facility where he could recover. Later, Father Pat remarked, "I am being kept alive today by batteries and wires."

### **RETURN TO IRELAND**

After his recuperation, Father McGrath returned to Ireland and rented an apartment in Limerick. He said he had "moved on" and while he would have enjoyed a full-time ministry in Limerick, he was happy to work quietly in the community, visiting the sick and counseling the bereaved.

### **FATHER PAT CELEBRATES HIS 40<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION IN 2005**

Father Pat celebrated his fortieth anniversary of ordination in 2005. Mayor Marci Coglianese of Rio Vista, a parishioner of Saint Joseph Parish in that town, sent a letter of congratulations to him on behalf of the City of Rio Vista for his dedicated work in the parish and his ministry to youth of Rio Vista when he was pastor there.

Bishop Francis Quinn also sent a letter of congratulations and thanked Father Pat for his many years of ministry in the diocese and for the courageous outreach he had given to so many people in the Church of Sacramento. The letters of Mayor Coglianese and Bishop Quinn follow.



## CITY OF RIO VISTA

One Main Street, Rio Vista, California 94571

December 14, 2004

City Council  
Mayor Coglianese  
Vice Mayor Woodruff  
Council Member Bhakta  
Council Member Jones  
Council Member Kelly

Rev. Patrick McGrath  
3 Glenview Terrace  
Farranshone  
Limerick, Ireland

RE: Congratulations on Your Fortieth Anniversary!

City Website Address  
<http://ci.rio.vista.ca.us>

Dear Father McGrath:

City Manager  
One Main Street  
Rio Vista, CA 94571  
707/374-6451  
707/374-5063 Fax

I send you the heartiest of congratulations on behalf of our entire city on the occasion of your fortieth anniversary of service to God as a priest. Your many friends in Rio Vista wish that we could join you in person for the celebration.

Community Development  
One Main Street  
Rio Vista, CA 94571  
707/374-2205

We want you to know how much you are missed here and what a lasting impact you have had on our young people. Your constant presence at their athletic events and your strong encouragement motivated them to strive to achieve their goals. I attribute the recent championships won by our swim and football teams to the winning attitude that you helped instill.

Finance  
One Main Street  
Rio Vista, CA 94571  
707/374-2176

Another place you have left a mark is in the changing of attitudes among our youth regarding substance abuse. If they want to participate in sports and extracurricular activities, young people can't use drugs. Your effort in this area goes on through a community-wide committee that works to prevent youthful experimentation with tobacco, alcohol and drugs.

Fire  
350 Main Street  
Rio Vista, CA 94571  
707/374-2233-Business  
707/421-7090-Dispatch  
707/374-6324 Fax

Please be sure to contact me when you next visit America. I would love to see you again as I know would many others in the community and at St. Joseph Parish.

Police  
50 Poppy House Road  
Rio Vista, CA 94571  
707/374-6366-Business  
707/374-2300-Dispatch  
707/374-6217 Fax

Public Works  
789 St. Francis Way  
Rio Vista, CA 94571  
707/374-6747  
707/374-6047 Fax

Yours truly,

Marci Coglianese  
Mayor



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

2110 Broadway • Sacramento, California 95818-2541 • 916/733-0200 • Fax 916/733-0216

December 27, 2004

Reverend Patrick J. McGrath  
3 Glenview Terrace  
Farranshone, Limerick  
Ireland

Dear Pat:

I am grateful and very much in admiration of your ministry in the Diocese of Sacramento when the two of us served there together. You performed inestimable service to the priests of the diocese, both as Director of Clergy Education and on the formal ministry to priests programs. I believe we had the most comprehensive program of continuing clergy education among the dioceses of California.

Additionally, you did exceptional work as Director of Family Life. The priests and I marveled at how much you could accomplish in so many fields. I know also it was your intention, if you had enough time, to establish the first Catholic university in our diocese.

I treasure now, as then, your personal friendship.

May God continue to give you His abundant graces and blessings, Pat. As we used to say in the old days, "Oremus pro invicem."

Fraternally in Christ,

Francis A. Quinn  
Bishop Emeritus of Sacramento

*Congratulations and prayerful best wishes, Pat, on your 40 excellent years of priestly ministry.*



At the mayoral reception for Fr Pat McGrath, Marian McGrath, Brian O'Halloran, Cynthia Brian, Fr Pat McGrath, Mayor Diarmuid Scully, John Leonard, Martina McGrath, Tom McGrath, Martha McGrath, Cllr Jim Long, Canice McGrath and Cllr Kevin Kiely

Mayor Diarmuid Scully of Limerick honored Father Patrick McGrath for his achievements in the parish and community as "a rock of sense, stability and spirituality for the community of Saint Munchin's."



*MASS OF THANKSGIVING*

*18<sup>th</sup> June 2006*

*The future  
of Humanity  
Lies in the Hands  
of those who  
are strong enough  
to provide  
coming generations  
with reasons  
for living  
and hoping.*



*The Church Today*

*St. Munchin's Church,  
Limerick*

### **FATHER PAT LOOKS BACK ON HIS MINISTRY IN IRELAND**

Looking back on his five years as curate of Saint Munchin Parish, Father Pat said he found the feedback he received from people on his sermons to be the most inspiring aspect of his ministry. Father Pat was a powerful preacher and inspired the people of the parish in a way few others ever did. He celebrated his final Mass at Saint Munchin's Church on June 18, 2006 at the 11:30 AM Sunday Mass. He said he planned to begin writing his memoirs and also to write a book on how to resolve conflicts creatively.

### **DEATH OF FATHER McGRATH**

Father Patrick McGrath died on July 13, 2009 at the Mid-West Regional Hospital in Limerick, Ireland from complications of his heart condition. Father Michael Dillon who had just arrived in Ireland for vacation was asked by Father Pat's brother Tom to preside at Father Pat's Funeral Mass on July 18 at Donoughmore Church, Limerick, where Pat had been baptized as an infant in 1940. Joining Father Dillon at the altar as concelebrant was Father Thomas Dermody. Some sixty priests from the Dioceses of Limerick and Sacramento joined in the concelebrated Funeral Mass. Bishop Donal Murray of Limerick was also present for Father Pat's Funeral Mass.

On October 6, a Memorial Mass was celebrated for Father Pat at Saint Mel Church in Fair Oaks by the bishop and priests of the Diocese of Sacramento.

At the time of his death, Father McGrath was survived by his two brothers, Canice McGrath of Melbourne, Australia and Tom McGrath of Knockainey, Ireland.

### **IN MEMORY OF FATHER PATRICK McGRATH**

Father Pat had a passion for education because he saw it as the key to opening doors to new visions and possibilities in the church. He believed that ongoing education was essential for the priests of the diocese in the post-Vatican II Era. Because of this conviction, he willingly worked long and hard to establish an extension program in Sacramento for the priests and religious sisters of the diocese through the University of San Francisco. He accomplished that goal through his incredible focus, tenacity, drive and determination.

For nearly twenty years, Father Pat headed up the Cana Conferences in the diocese for engaged couples who were preparing to celebrate their marriage in the Catholic Church.

The 45 priests and religious sisters of the Diocese of Sacramento who received their MAT degree are most grateful to Father Pat for establishing the Sacramento extension program of the University of San Francisco. Through his forty-five years of priestly ministry in the Sacramento Diocese and in Limerick, Ireland, Father Pat spent all his energy to bring the Gospel of the Lord to the People of God. The Lord called him home after a life of labor done in love for the Kingdom. May Father Pat be now at rest from his labors in God's Holy presence.



*Well done, good and faithful servant;  
Come now and rest from your labors.  
Learn from me for I am gentle and  
Humble of heart.*

*Eternal rest grant unto Father Pat, O Lord;  
May his soul and the souls of all the  
Faithful departed through the mercy of God  
Rest in peace.*

