

13E 34-2

Fr. Patrick T. COMERFORD, 65, IRELAND IRL NGA GB USW MEX
* March 28, 1933 Cahirciveen, Ct. Kerry + January 14, 1999 Dublin

After completing his secondary schooling at Blackrock, 1958-60, he made his vows on September 14, 1952, at Kilshane. His senior seminary studies at Kimmage were interrupted by two years of prefecting at Rathmines. On July 12, 1959, he was ordained in Dublin. Until 1963 he served at Kimmage, doing promotional work.

In that year he was assigned to the Onitsha archdiocese in Nigeria, doing evangelization and pastoral duties, notably in Adazi at St. Andrew's busy parish with a congregation of nearly 25,000. He was on leave when the Biafran War broke out in 1967 and spent two years in England and Scotland doing pastoral work. In 1969 he returned to what was called the Biafran Republic, but the collapse of the secessionist state later in the same year forced him to leave again.

Going to the U.S.A. in 1970, he worked with his American confreres at Immaculate Heart of Mary African-American Parish in Lake Charles LA until 1973. In that year he volunteered for service to the Indians in Mexico. The Huastaca Indians, who are the main object of this Mexican mission, had been without a resident priest for about two centuries in their remote mountain regions when the Congregation accepted to work in the San Luis Potosi State of Mexico. Yet the people had remained profoundly attached to their faith and to the customs taught to their ancestors in the sixteenth century. What they lacked was solid instruction in the faith and the presence of priests.

He was to serve there for most of the twenty-five years he worked in Mexico. We find him listed at the new San Juan Mission at Coxcatlan, San Antonio, in 1973. Its

church dates from 1530 and can be reached only by the climbing 483 stone steps up the hill on which it stands.

Resolutely he set to work among them, building chapels in outlying areas and providing instruction. Given the primitive conditions of life in these mountainous regions, travel to distant hills had to be done on foot, on horseback or on a mule.

In 1976 he requested and obtained his transfer from Ireland to the Province of U.S.A.-West as his "Province of Origin".

In 1979 we find him back in the States at St. Agnes Parish in San Antonio TX for a rest, followed by an assignment to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, a largely Hispanic parish in Indio CA, until 1985 when he was again in the Mexican mission and stationed as pastor at St. Miguel, Tancanhuitz de Santos. Four thousand people live there and an additional 16,000 dwell scattered over thirty-two villages. Its beautiful church dating from 1693 is a national monument. The pastoral team consisted of two other Fathers, seven Sisters and sixty catechists. He worked there with his usual zeal and efficiency until 1989.

His final posting was to Santa Anna Parish in Tanlajas. It may be interesting to record here that the mainly Indian people of that area had been without a resident priest for many years and were becoming desperate. So they asked Our Lady of Guadalupe to send them one. Our Lady, they claimed, answered their request generously when some weeks later no less than three Spiritans arrived to minister to them. The tiny center of Tanlajas counted only seven hundred people, but some 25,000 lived out in the mountains where the parish had fifty missions staffed by one hundred-fifty catechists. He spent his remaining strength there until 1998.

Worn out, he returned to Ireland, where he went to his heavenly reward in January of the following year. Interment took place at the Kimmage Spiritan Cemetery in Kimmage.

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