

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

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Father John E Boll, Diocesan Archivist

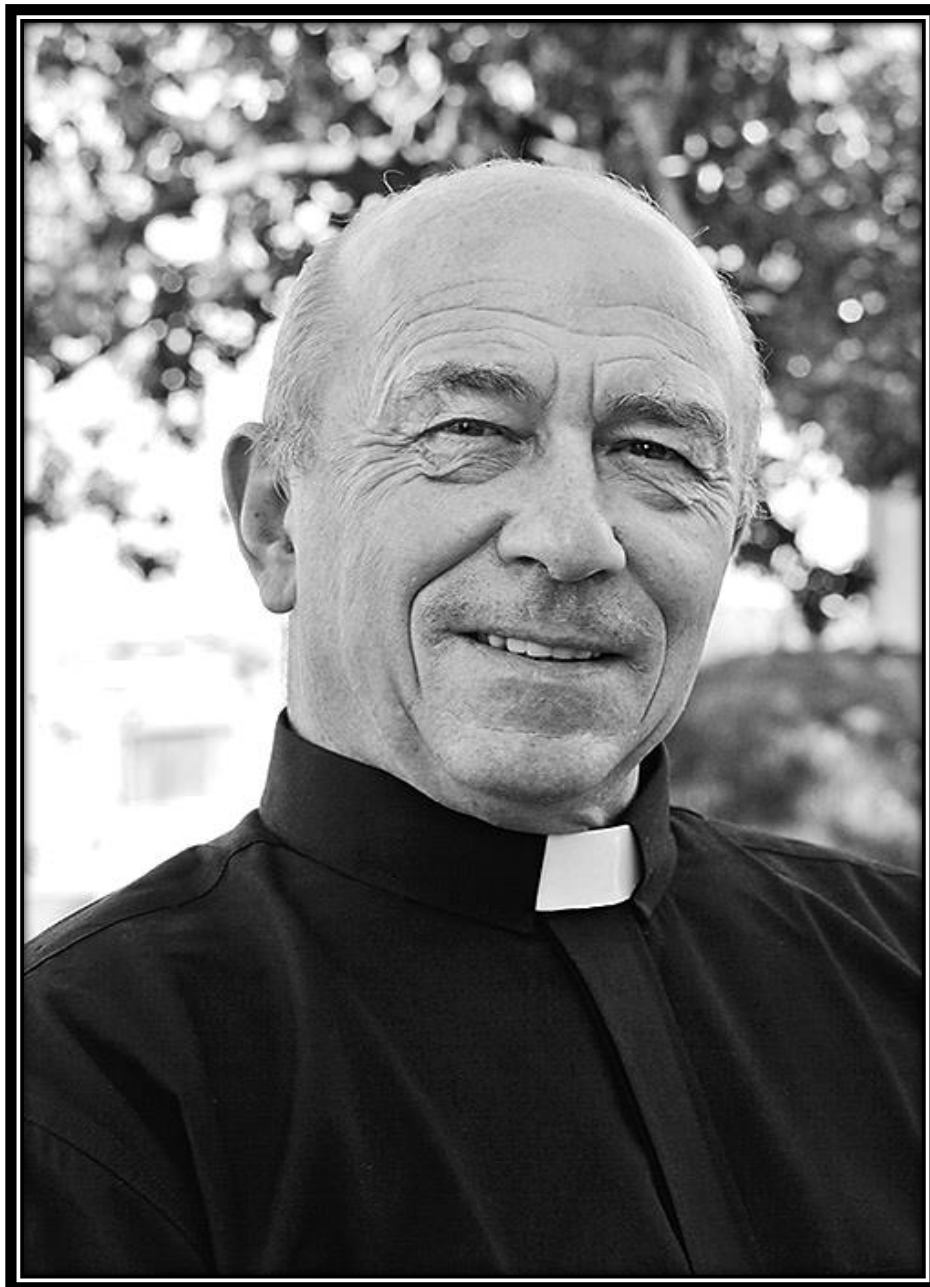
No 14

Father Patrick Joseph Lee

Native of Ballinalee, County Longford, Ireland

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

January 14, 1943 -- April 17, 2016



Patrick Joseph Lee was born on January 14, 1943 in Ballinalee, County Longford, Ireland, the eldest of three children born to James and Margaret Lee. His two sisters are Kathleen and Peggy. He grew up on the family farm where he helped with daily chores. "It was a wonderful experience to grow up that way," he said. He earned a scholarship to attend high school and college.

DISCERNING HIS VOCATION

While a vocation to the priesthood did not flash through his mind as a child, it was in his junior year of high school when the discernment process became serious. Pat says it was the example of his teachers, priests and several men he knew who went on to the seminary that were key factors that encouraged him to enter the seminary. He attended Saint Patrick Seminary in Carlow, Ireland for his training in philosophy and theology.

FATHER LEE ORDAINED FOR THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO



Photo taken from the St Patrick Seminary website

St Patrick Seminary, Carlow

Patrick Lee was ordained to the ministerial priesthood on June 8, 1968 at the Cathedral of the Assumption in Carlow, Ireland. He was invited to serve the Diocese of Sacramento that same year and he accepted the invitation.

FIRST ASSIGNMENTS

After arriving in Sacramento, Father Lee's first assignment was as associate pastor at Saint Peter Parish in Sacramento where he served from 1968 to 1972. He recalled that the enthusiasm with which he was received from parishioners overwhelmed him.

OTHER ASSIGNMENTS AS ASSISTANT PASTOR

His subsequent assignments were associate pastor of Holy Spirit Parish, Fairfield; Saint Thomas More Parish, Paradise; and Saint John Vianney Parish in Rancho Cordova.

FATHER LEE APPOINTED PASTOR OF WESTWOOD

In 1981, Bishop Francis Quinn appointed Father Lee pastor of Our Lady of the Snows Parish in Westwood and he served there for nine years until 1990.



Photo by John E Boll 2014

Original Church of Our Lady of the Snows, Westwood

Bishop Quinn next appointed Father Pat as pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Marysville. Saint Joseph Church is the historic first cathedral of the Vicariate of Marysville when Bishop Eugene O'Connell was appointed to be the founding bishop of the newly created Vicariate in 1860.



Photo by John E Boll 2014

Saint Joseph Church, Marysville

Father Lee served as pastor of Saint Joseph Church for five years but stepped down from that position in 1995 due to health issues. After receiving treatment he returned to ministry serving

as pastor of Saint John the Evangelist Church in Carmichael, then as parochial vicar of Saint Joseph Parish in Auburn and finally as chaplain at UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento.

COMMENTS BY PARISHIONERS

In an interview with Father Lee when he retired, the *Catholic Herald* interviewed parishioners who knew him. Bunny Collins, a member of Saint John the Evangelist Parish in Carmichael, said she had left her church for a time prior to Father Lee's arrival at the parish in 2004. She was a pro-life activist and appreciated that Father Lee spoke out from the pulpit in support of unborn children. She said "it was his spirit that made many of us feel so good he was leading us. He was so compassionate and has total unconditional love for people."

Doreen Wood, a member of Saint Joseph Parish in Auburn where Father Lee served as parochial vicar from 2004 to 2005, called him "a great priest." She fondly recalled the time when her daughter was hospitalized in Sacramento with a serious illness. He was so concerned about her that he traveled from Auburn to Sacramento to see her. She went on to say "Father Lee is a really steady priest who always remembers us. It is nice to have that level of caring."

COMMENTS BY FATHER LEE

Father Lee told the *Catholic Herald* that the most vital attribute of a priest is "being able to relate to people in human terms. Making oneself available is very important." He then added with a note of sadness that he regretted having abused alcohol over the years. "I was in the grip of a deadly addiction and would like to ask for forgiveness of all the people who were disappointed in me."

FATHER LEE RETIRES

Prior to Father Lee's retirement from active ministry in 2008, he worked as Catholic chaplain at UC Davis and helped in parishes that needed a priest for Sunday Masses. He also spent time working in the pro-life movement in Sacramento.

ONGOING MINISTRY

For a short time, Father Pat resided at the Priests' Retirement Village in Citrus Heights until Father Jeremy Leatherby invited him to come to Presentation Parish to live in residence and help him in the parish. He accepted the invitation and moved to Presentation Parish where he celebrated Mass and ministered to the local convalescent hospitals. He also served as chaplain to the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus and the Legion of Mary at the parish while continuing his work promoting pro-life issues.

FATHER LEE BECOMES ILL

Father Pat became ill and was in and out of several hospitals from October 2015 until his death. After being released from the hospital, he returned to Presentation parish and continued his ministry until he had to return to the hospital again.

The doctors discovered that Father Pat suffered from a rare blood disease that was attacking the vital organs of his whole body. His condition was terminal and the hospital released him to return home for hospice palliative home care.



Photo by John E Boll 2012

Interior of Presentation Church, Sacramento

A retired nurse from Presentation Parish provided the care Father Pat needed in her home during the last few days of his life. Father Pat's two sisters, Kathleen and Peggy, were notified and they flew from Ireland to Sacramento to be with their brother. A few days after leaving the hospital, with his two sisters and a few friends by his side, Father Pat left this world on Sunday, April 17, 2016, the Fourth Sunday of Easter. He was 73 years of age. Patrick Joseph Lee returned home to God to join with his parents and all the saints in praising God in joy and peace for all eternity.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN BURIAL

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Father Lee by Bishop Soto, the priests of the diocese and the people of God at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Sacramento. Father Bernardin Mugabo, pastor of Saint John the Evangelist Parish in Carmichael, was the homilist.

After the Funeral Mass, the body of Father Lee was taken to Saint Mary Cemetery, Sacramento, where it was interred in the priests' section of the cemetery to await the resurrection.

ARCHIVIST'S COMMENT

Father Patrick Lee served the people of Diocese of Sacramento as a priest for forty-eight years. As he began his ministry at Saint Peter Parish, he was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of the people who welcomed him.

Father Pat no doubt experienced the loneliness that comes when one is assigned to a mountain parish far away from his personal support group. As he stated in the *Catholic Herald* interview published in January 2008 as he was preparing to retire from active ministry, alcohol addiction plagued him during his life of ministry.

But Father Pat was loved and admired by many people and he dedicated himself to work for the protection of the unborn from abortion. All of us are earthen vessels in the loving hands of God. The Lord looks upon Father Pat with love and sees only the good he has done in the lives of so many people. He continued in ministry to his last breath of life. Now Father Pat is free of all struggles and God embraces him joyfully with divine love and peace.



Grave Marker of Father Patrick Joseph Lee, Saint Mary Cemetery, Sacramento

Rest now in Peace, Father Pat!