

DIOCESE OF LIMERICK

VOCATIONS

SEPTEMBER 2020

"Whoever wants to be first
must be last of all and
servant of all."

Mark 9:35b
NRSV

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HONORING HERO PRIESTS OF THE PANDEMIC



As COVID-19 has changed so much about the way we live in 2020, the Church has remained an essential source of hope, inspiration and support. Heroic priests across the country have answered the chaos of the pandemic with extraordinary creativity and resolve to continue serving as a bridge between Christ and his people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has rocked the world, but many heroic priests have led Catholics through the crisis with ingenuity and determination to bring Christ to us in these difficult times. Whether coordinating drive-in Masses and confessions, blessing local neighborhoods with Eucharistic processions, learning to use new technology to share the Gospel and pray in community, or working with a team of volunteers to follow complex protocols for safety precautions at Mass, priests have responded and adjusted rapidly in order to share Christ's message in unaccustomed ways.

There's the priest who not only led a parish and school in adapting to the pandemic closures, but also continued to offer Mass online for his parishioners while battling COVID himself. There's the priest who hosted twice-weekly Facebook Live conversations to update parishioners and share spiritual reflections, and another who led his flock in night prayer each evening.

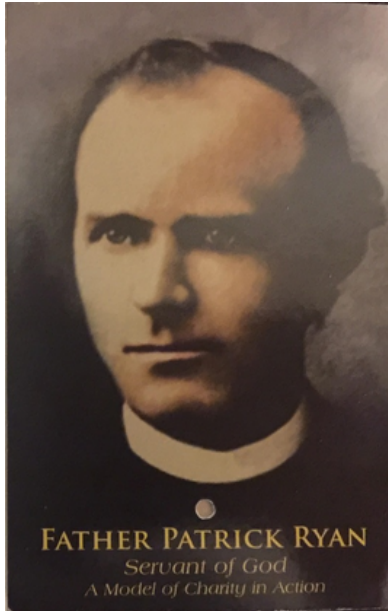
There's the priest who held drive-by confessions to give his flock ongoing access to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. There's the priest who carried the Eucharist in a one-man procession up and down every block in the parish, twice! "When we couldn't get to Mass, He brought Jesus to us, even in the snow and rain," one of his parishioners said in submitting him for the award.

Mundelein Seminary is collectively honoring these priests with our 2020 In Service of One Another Catholic Humanitarian Award. Check out <https://usml.edu/hero-priests/> for inspiring stories.

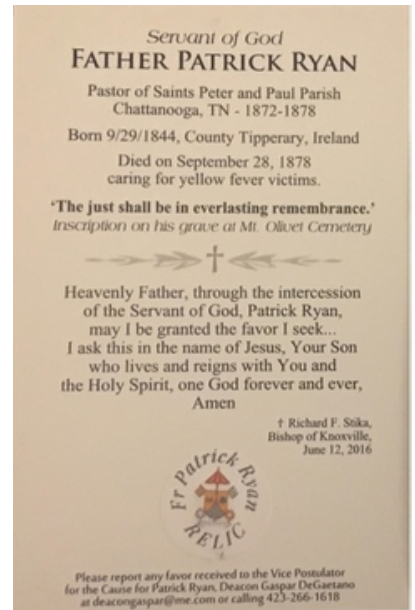
From: <https://aleteia.org/2020/09/13/mundelein-seminary-award-honors-hero-priests-of-the-pandemic/>

#HERO PRIESTS OF THE PANDEMIC

FATHER PATRICK RYAN



As Mundelein Seminary in Chicago acknowledges #HeroPriests of the Pandemic, it seems fitting to take a look at past hero priests from past pandemics. While our world may be amid a crisis, the likes of which we moderns have never seen, pandemics and epidemics were not such rare occurrences even a hundred years ago. During the late-1800's the burgeoning town of Chattanooga nestled in the south-eastern corner of Tennessee in the United States, saw an outbreak of yellow fever. Today, outside of sub-Saharan Africa and tropical South American regions, yellow fever does not pose a threat. Those traveling to these places have only to receive the highly effective vaccine to ward off illness and death.



Prior to the vaccine, however, most people fled areas of infection as yellow fever is transmitted by infected mosquitoes. Of course, there were many who could not afford to leave, and in 1878 Chattanooga that number came to roughly 1,800 people. Among those who chose to stay in the city was the parish priest Fr. Patrick Ryan. He was born 1844 in Co. Tipperary, but after the family were evicted from their land and home, they emigrated to the United States taking up residence in New York. Later the young Patrick Ryan would discern and answer a call the priesthood. After completing his studies, Ryan was ordained in 1869 for the dioceses of Nashville, at the time this encompassed the entire state of Tennessee. After serving in the mission field of rural Tennessee, the Bishop assigned him to the ever expanding and urbanizing Chattanooga in 1872. An effective leader, Fr. Ryan set up schools, expanded church buildings, built convents, and all of this while administering the sacraments to those in his parish and mission territory. The people of Chattanooga had a good shepherd who would not abandon them in their hour of need. When the epidemic hit "Ryan is described by an eyewitness as 'going from house to house in the worst-infected section of the city to find what he could do for the sick and needy.'" [1] His indefatigable efforts on behalf of his stricken people certainly provided hope in a dark time. On September 26, Fr. Ryan fell ill with the dreaded disease. Within 48 hours he had succumbed to the virus and died, what some deem a martyr's death; a martyr of charity and a martyr of fidelity to God and his flock.

Today, Fr. Patrick Ryan is hailed a Servant of God and the cause for his canonization is progressing. His witness as a servant of God's people and valour in carrying out his duties has won him the unfading crown of glory. Servant of God, Fr. Patrick Ryan; pray for us.

[1] "Servant of God Fr. Patrick Ryan," Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul, accessed September 24, 2020, <https://stspeterandpaulbasilica.com/fr-patrick-ryan>.

THE ART OF DISCERNMENT: HOW TO MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES

HOW TO MAKE THE BEST DECISION?

Buying a house, choosing the right school, making a commitment ... Among all the decisions we have to make, some are of little consequence, but others can change the direction of our entire life and that of our family as well. Once an unexpected situation comes up, we are forced to make a choice, that is, we must use our judgment to make the right decision. How should we do that?

BRING GOD INTO THE QUESTION

The first step is to clarify exactly what the terms of our choices are. When our heart is torn between several options, it depends on us to limit the number of choices we have. Sometimes it is necessary to stop and state what they are in a very precise way. If not, we risk wasting time with an overwhelming number of possibilities. As Father Bernard Mendiboure explains: "It is very important to make sure the question is stated in the right way, as a binary choice: either this, or that." The second thing to keep in mind is that choosing between the two options can only work if they are both morally acceptable and appeal to our sense of goodwill.



FOLLOWING THE WILL OF GOD CAN SOMETIMES BE A STRUGGLE

When we make a decision, we need to operate with the precision of a surgical scalpel to separate the good from the bad, the good motives from the false ones. Sometimes we might be afraid to do this. We see it in the Gospel where the rich young man leaves Jesus in sadness.



LIGHT UP THE ROAD TO DECISION

Learning to make decisions means learning to be free. "In managing the struggle of decision making, in managing our internal feelings of uncertainty," explains Father Bernard, "when we get beyond ourselves, we find true spiritual freedom." St. Paul (Ga 5) cites the rewards of good decision making: "Love, happiness, and peace."

DIOCESAN VOCATIONS SPOTLIGHT

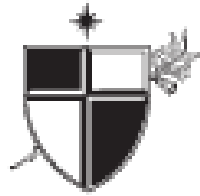
SISTERS OF LIFE



Congratulations to Sister Naomi Maria Magnificat, S.V. (left) from Abbeyfeale, who professed her Final Vows on 6th August 2020. We give thanks to God for her 'FIAT'!



RECEPTION TO THE HABIT



Dominican Sisters of
Saint Joseph,
Lymington, England



Congratulations to Sister Marie Dominic on the reception to the habit and entry to the Novitiate on 6th September 2020. Sister Marie Dominic (Lorraine Buckley) is known to many in the Limerick Diocese for her dedicated work in the area of faith formation, especially in her native Newcastle West.



IRISH DOMINICANS



Congratulations to Brother Seán Blackwell, from Askeaton, Limerick, who was clothed in the Holy Habit of Saint Dominic on 14th September, 2020 in St. Mary's, Popes Quay, Cork. We wish Seán and the three other novices every grace for their novitiate year of formation.

FILMS ON DISCERNMENT



Bishop Kevin Doran
Elphin Diocese



Bishop Robert Barron

RECOMMENDED READING



The Grace to Be a Priest

ROMANUS CESSARIO, O.P.

In this text, Father Cessario explains how the vocation to the priesthood comes to a man as both gift and mystery. God chooses priests to serve as both instruments of his will and spiritual fathers for his people. They fulfill this divine mission in various ways. Priests become chaste lovers, faithful friends, obedient sons, and shining lights in God's holy Church. Priests administer the seven Sacraments even as they follow the Christ who came to serve not to be served. Again, priests teach the truth with love even as they pray God for the salvation of all people. Drawing on the riches of the Dominican tradition as well as the general principles of Catholic theology, Father Cessario richly illuminates the nature of the priesthood with insights that will instruct priests, seminarians, and laypeople alike.

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SUPPORTING VOCATIONS IN YOUR PARISH?

Please pray for holy vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life regularly. Would you consider having regular Adoration for this intention? Do you currently have any events or initiatives in your parish or schools to support the understanding and promotion of vocations? Would you like to? If we can help to organize something for you, please be in touch!

DIOCESE OF LIMERICK
VOCATION OFFICE

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