


Rev. Fr Patrick Furlong, C.S.S.R. (1835-1864)

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Father's native parish was Bannow, Co Wexford, Ireland. He was born on the 22nd of February, 1835. At the age of fourteen, he went to St Peters College Wexford, where he studied for some years. A Redemptorist Mission, which he attended, was the means of bringing his stay at the college to an end. During that mission, God's voice called him to the missionary life, and after a short interval the young student left all to correspond with his vocation. He entered the Novitiate at St Trond in Belgium, was professed October 15th 1856, and ordained priest in 1862 on 22nd of March, the day on which is celebrated the apparition of our Lady to St Alphonsus at Foggia.

Father Furlong proposed to himself nothing less than to imitate St Alphonsus, and to this end he copied the resolutions which the Saint had made for the guidance of his life as a priest, and carried them always in his Breviary. He was never without a book written by the Holy Doctor, whose writings, together with the rules and constitutions of the Congregation were the basis of his religious life. When the end came he was occupied in extracting from a new Life of St Alphonsus by Cardinal Villecourt, the Saints practice of the twelve virtues which the rule proposes to Redemptorists to exercise month by month.

Limerick was the destination fixed for him by the Superior He arrived in September, and at once set to work under Father Rector's direction, for he wished to have the seal of obedience on everything he did. He was never idle, and this spirit of industry accounts for the number of Sermons and Instructions which he had written during his short apostolic life. He took part in eighteen missions, and on these the children were nearly always entrusted to his care. His heart and soul were in his work, and God blessed his efforts. At home he was most assiduous in the confessional as well as in time of Mission.

Although weak in health he was ever ready to help anyone who asked his assistance. He never lost his joyous serenity. From boyhood, it seems, he had suffered from palpitation of the heart. This malady increased with his years. At length it grew so alarming that he had to leave a Mission and return to Mount St Alphonsus, never to leave it again. He got worse day by day, but as his body grew weaker his soul seemed to acquire new strength. No one knew him, during his illness, to have uttered one word of complaint, and he was for ever thanking those around him for their charitable services.

His chest became worse and the oppression he suffered was very trying. To get some relief he had to change his position frequently. At these times he would think how Our Divine Saviour remained motionless on the Cross, and how He suffered oppression in His agony. The day before his death he said to the Brother infirmarian: "We must love Jesus Christ much. I never before this understood what it is to die." His love for the Blessed Virgin was always great, and his confidence in her showed itself especially at the end. Then he would frequently exclaim, "Oh how good is our Mother, how good! Now I understand it." His brother, Rev. Fr J Furlong, OSA, came to see him. He was a younger brother and had been recently ordained priest. The Rector, Fr Plunkett, gave Fr Furlong the last Sacraments on the 15th of December, and on Sunday, the 18th, at 10 o'clock, fully conscious, he asked for and received absolution, then sweetly reposed in Our Lord, supported in the arms of his brother, with Fr Rector, and Brother Michael near him.

The chronicler writes; "The deceased won the affection of everyone, and in our house, he spread abroad the good odour of Christ and left a memory full of blessings. All remember his singular rectitude in his judgements, words, studies, offices, and in all he did." The Most Rev. Dr Butler, with the clergy of the city, secular and regular, assisted at his obsequies, after which his body was laid in the crypt. †