

## MARCH 14, 1867 Fr. Patrick O'Grady, CM

**Fr Patrick O'Grady** was born on 23 March, 1837, at Cong, which is in Connaught, in the west of Ireland. As a youth he wished to join the Vincentians and was sent to complete his secondary schooling at Castleknock (1856-1858). He was sent to Paris for his novitiate, but did not take his vows until 8 September, 1863. He was ordained to the priesthood on 6 January, 1864. The young Vincentian posed a continual problem for his superiors because of his bad health; he was already showing serious signs of tuberculosis. He was appointed to Sheffield in July 1864, but in December was appointed to Phibsboro; almost immediately this appointment was changed, for the superior at the house at Cork had invited him to live there. Fr O'Grady is found in a photograph of the staff of St Vincent's, Cork, in 1865 – he appears as a young man with a tall and bony figure, his big frame stooped. Perhaps also he spent some part of 1865 at Castlenock, since he is listed amongst their early staff. (From “The History of the Vincentian Fathers in Australasia” : D.F. Bourke, CM, page 16 – 18))

Fr Patrick O'Grady was the first Vincentian to come to Australia, and the first deceased confrere in the necrology of the Australian Province. He was the uncle of Sister Catherine Maguire, the leader of the first Daughters of Charity, who came to Australia in 1926. In 1866 he was sent by his superiors to Rockhampton, Queensland, for health reasons. Fr Frank Bourke, in his book, describes the voyage of Fr O'Grady to Australia on the immigrant ship, 'Rockhampton', which left Queenstown on January 28, 1866, and arrived at Moreton Bay on 30 May 1866. Fr O'Grady travelled as a cabin passenger. Of his fellow passengers, some were fleeing from disease, but they carried death with them in the ship. During the voyage, twenty-eight died of fever. The matron was the first fatality, and the ship's doctor died shortly afterwards. The ship did not proceed to Rockhampton, and the passengers were landed at the new quarantine station at Dunwich. Even there twenty-four more persons died, bringing the total to forty-eight deaths. Bishop James Quinn, concerned about the health of Fr O'Grady, sent him to a rest home at Cleveland. The young priest did not rally and he was finally brought to the Bishop's own residence where he died in the early morning on 14 March, 1867.

Fr Reg McDonnell, in “Vincentian Journal”, writes: “In 1867, at Longreach, the death of Fr Patrick O'Grady, aged 30.” He adds: “There is some confusion in Australian Provincial records concerning the burial place of this confrere. Until recently it was thought that Fr O'Grady died in Brisbane and was buried in Paddington cemetery there. This cemetery was resumed by the Queensland Lands Department in 1912, and after its resumption was filled up and constructed into a public park, known today as Lang Park. .... there is a Fr Patrick O'Grady – 30 years of age, from Ireland – but no reference to membership in any religious community – who in fact does still lie buried somewhere in a nameless grave under Lang Park today. The true story would seem to have been unearthed by confreres working in Queensland. It runs as follows. Fr O'Grady died at Longreach while he was relieving there during the diocesan priests' retreat. He was buried at Barcaldine by Mgr Patrick Bannon, later parish priest of North Rockhampton. Local tradition appears to bear out this version of the story.”

Is there still some confusion regarding Fr O'Grady's death and burial? It would appear that Fr Frank Bourke's account is the correct one. The final word comes from Fr Denis Martin, Catholic Archives, Brisbane, 3 March, 2004. He writes: “An early Vincentian was Patrick O'Grady who died in Brisbane in 1867. When you see a game of League played at Lang Park Oval (now “Suncorp”), they are playing over the remains of Fr O'Grady and many others on the site of an old cemetery closed about 1880. We recently put up a memorial mentioning his name and two other early Priests in the present Catholic cemetery at Nudgee.”