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Fr. Joseph G. TOBIN 79 IRELAND NGA USA MEX

*November 20, 1919, Mitcheltown, Cork

+November 17, 1998 Dublin

After completing his junior seminary studies at Rockwell, 1935-37, he made his vows on September 10, 1938 at Kilshane. His senior studies were interrupted by three years of prefecting at Rockwell. Having earned a B.A. at the University College in Dublin, he did his theology at Kimmage and was ordained a priest on July 13, 1947, in Dublin.

The following year he traveled to Nigeria, where he worked for nearly two decades. We find him listed as teaching at the junior seminary in the Onitsha vicariate in 1949, as an assistant at Obowo in the Owerri diocese in 1952, as principal of the Madonna High School at Ihitte in the Umuahia diocese in 1961 and as principal of the Our Lady High School at Nnobi in the Archdiocese of Onitsha in 1967. His educational competence was so highly regarded by the government that it paid him an annual salary then equivalent to \$30,000 plus fringe benefits for his work, which then was twice what the average university professor was getting in the U.S.A.

At the start of the Biafran War in 1967 he came to the U.S.A. and did parish work in California for four years. In 1971 he joined his American confreres first at St. John's in Tucson, AZ, and then at St. Catherine's, Riverside, CA.

Two years later he volunteered for the challenging ministry among the Huastacan and other Indians in the San Antonio region of the San Luis Potosi State of Mexico. It was there that he would spend the twenty-three remaining years of his active life.

We find him listed at Coxcatlan, together with two other Irish Spiritans, the Frs. Patrick Comerford and John Cassin, in September 1974. Fr. Cassin's stay did not last

very long as he began ailing soon after arrival and had to leave the country, but the other two stayed in the Coxcatlan area, which embraced also El Pugal and Tantobal. After 1978 Fr. Tobin was mostly in the San Antonio and Tanlagas area.

He did not limit himself to building chapels and instructing the people in the faith, but also provided medical assistance to the isolated and dirt-poor Indians, who never saw a doctor. It began when Dr. Coker, a friend of his in his California days, arrived for a few weeks to take care of the sick. The doctor was so enchanted by his exhausting work that he decided to come back, year after year for his "vacation". His stays became longer and longer until his money ran out, and he jokingly said that he should return once in a while to California to earn some. The doctor himself paid for the medicines he prescribed, as the Indians could not pay for them. Other doctors followed his example for their "vacations", including a dentist and even a plastic surgeon to operate on people with cleft lips.

Father also started what he called a vocational pastoral ministry to attract candidates to the priesthood or the religious life, and he was happy when several candidates went off to test their vocation.

Exhausted by his ministry, he retired to Hemet, CA, in March 1996. His stay there did not last very long, for the following year he returned to Ireland, where he died in 1998.

We may conclude this brief sketch by pointing out that, as soon as Father arrived in California in 1968, he got in touch with the Provincial Superior of the U.S.A.-West and established very friendly relations with him. He greatly admired what his American

confreres were doing and not only joined them in their work from 1971 on, but also obtained the transfer of his "Province of Origin" from Ireland to USA-West in 1994.

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