

# Rev. Fr. Patrick Travers, SS.CC.

## 1937-2023

When Jesus saw the hungry his heart was moved with compassion. The same was true of Fr. Patrick Travers. When they saw a need they did something about it. Fr. Patrick Travers, and the students that I brought to Tijuana, was to build over 110 houses, nine churches, and two community centers. Five times a year we would also bring food and other necessities. If I had gone to what would I be doing? Probably the same things, but I thank God I am here.

Fr. Pat was born in Ballon, Co. Carlow Ireland on June 13, 1937, and baptized on the same day. He was the youngest of ten, three of whom died shortly after birth. His father was a farm laborer; his mother was a homemaker. He attended local elementary and secondary schools before entering the Sacred Hearts Novitiate in Cootehill, Co. Cavan where he professed on August 15, 1956. He was then sent to Queen of Peace Seminary in Jaffrey Center, New Hampshire. He was ordained on June 24, 1962, and was assigned to teach at Damien High School. La Verne, CA. He was handed two books and told to go and teach. He took that order seriously. For the rest of his life, with and without books, he taught us to live like Jesus.



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Pat spent 49 years at Damien. During almost all those years, he taught Geometry to thousands of students. He also served as the athletic Director, the Dean of Discipline (he hated it), the Dean of Studies. He was Principal of Damien High School from 1980 to 2010. During his tenure he developed academic programs, built student enrollment, oversaw the construction of two classroom buildings, a swimming pool, tennis courts, artificial turf on the football field and a new athletic center, which bears his name.

Fr. Travers remarked, “In 1987 I started the Tijuana Outreach Ministry. On Saturdays I would take the students to help at orphanages. Upon seeing the terrible poverty, we started food runs. Eventually we built houses involving the young men of Damien along with their fathers. Many of them also brought significant amounts of used clothes. We then founded Galilei Center in Coachella Valley which had an extensive outreach to migrant workers.”

After Fr. Pat left Damien as President in 2011, he became the Pastor of Holy Innocents Parish in Victorville where he worked together with Fr. Paul Murtagh, SS.CC. He called this a super great assignment.

In 2020 he contracted a severe case of COVID before the development of vaccines. He returned to the Damien Residence in very poor health. With strength of will and fierce determination he worked tirelessly to regain his health so that he could continue to serve the people of God.

While his name is written in stone on a building, his living legacy is forever infused in the hearts of thousands of students whose paths crossed his. He was a beautiful, tireless, available disciple of Jesus. Like Saint Damien, he was a builder, who gave blessings and became one for others.

In the last few days of his life, as students and friends stopped by to see him, they could see he was no longer able to build, bless, or bandage. It was time for him to let go and time for them to pick up and continue in his name, and in the names of Jesus and St. Damien, the journey of compassionate responses to the needs of the poor, the hungry, and the homeless.