



This history of Servant of God Father Patrick Peyton, CSC, is in his own words as it is taken from his autobiography, All for Her.

Courtesy The Holy Cross Family Ministries: <http://hcfm.org>

Early Life

"My getting to know Mary began in that little home in the west of Ireland where I was born and raised, and learned to pray the Rosary."

I was born on January 9, 1909, in a picturesque valley in County Mayo in the west of Ireland. On one side were the Ox Mountains, on the other was the Atlantic Ocean.

From my earliest memories, I saw my father with the Rosary beads in his hands and my mother holding hers. My older brothers and sisters and I knelt around them, praying. Father began with the Sign of the Cross, then the Apostles' Creed, the Our Fathers, the Hail Marys, the Glory Be's. What impressed me most was the voice of my mother talking to Mary: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

For the first 19 years of my life, this was our daily practice as I grew from childhood to boyhood to my teens. In good times and bad, in sickness and health, in poverty and hard work, we ended each day speaking to Jesus and His Mother, offering them the greatest tribute that could possibly be given, making the greatest act of faith, and honoring Mary above all the angels and saints. Because of the daily family Rosary, my home was for me a cradle, a school, a university, a library and, most of all, a little church.

In May 1928, my brother and I emigrated to Scranton, Pennsylvania, to join our three older sisters. A day or two before we left him forever, my father asked me to kneel before a picture of the Sacred Heart. He addressed Our Lord with an intensity from his heart as he entrusted me completely to His



care and protection. Then he said words, which were engraved on my heart: "Be faithful to Our Lord in America."

At the railway station, I saw my mother for the last time. She waved her handkerchief until the train disappeared from sight. My heart was crushed with sorrow, and tears blinded me.

Not in our wildest imaginings did my parents or my brother or I dream what Our Lord had in store for us in America. He called my brother to the priesthood from the coal mines of Scranton. He called me from being the janitor in St. Peter's Cathedral. In the fall of 1929, we entered the seminary at Notre Dame, Indiana. There, we continued the family Rosary with our new family, the priests and our fellow seminarians.

Early Priesthood

Two years before my ordination, I was stricken with a serious illness. I was forced to leave the seminary. In the infirmary at Notre Dame, I learned the three lessons that have directed me on my journey.

The first lesson was my total dependence on my neighbor—the doctors, nurses and their assistants. How I learned that famous line from literature: "No man is an island." We are all one family, all one in Christ, all members of His Body. We form with Him a Mystical Body that is closer even than the branches and leaves of a tree are to the trunk that gives them life.

The second lesson was about the precious gift of Jesus' mother, given with His dying breath on the cross. In the infirmary, I deteriorated until the doctors said, "Try prayer. Our remedies are useless." One of my former teachers heard the bad news and hurried to visit me. He saw me at my worst—discouraged, depressed, hopeless. His words were the most important ever spoken to me. "Mary is alive," he said. "She will be as good to you as you think she can be. It all depends on you and your faith."

That night, he activated my dormant faith. It was like setting a match to a haystack sprinkled with gasoline. Thanks to the family that always prayed the Rosary, I had come to know who Mary was and that Jesus Christ, her Son, had entrusted me to her



love and care. I asked her with all my heart and soul to pray to her Son for my cure.

Like the dark night that is replaced by dawn and the dawn by the sun, she brought me back to life. I was certain Our Blessed Mother was taking part in my healing. I am not describing a miracle. I'm giving witness to the power of Mary's intercession and the quiet, unsensational way she works. I begged the doctors to examine me once more and received their report in a letter. Like a prisoner waiting for the verdict of the jury, I opened the letter and saw my freedom, my new lease on life, my second spring.

The first words I spoke were, "Mary, I hope I will never disgrace you."

My superiors sent me back to the seminary. On June 15, 1941, I knelt beside my brother in Sacred Heart Church on the campus of Notre Dame and was made a priest. I remembered my father's words on seeing a photograph of us both wearing priests' garments: "I cry with joy to see what God has done for our two boys."

Founding of His Ministries

Into the World and Hollywood

How could I pay back my debts to Our Lord, His Mother and my family? I prayed for an answer. Seven months after my ordination, while on retreat, God gave me the answer: the Family Rosary Crusade.

It was frightening. It was impossible. How could I do it? I spoke these words to Our Lord in a small chapel: "I can't do it. But My Lord, you can, and I ask You to do it." It was the best prayer I ever uttered. I had learned my third lesson: "Without God, I can do nothing." I took that lesson to heart.

And God answered me in a way I would never have dreamed: He sent the most famous Hollywood stars to do the work. These artists of stage, screen, radio and television used the mass media to make the world a village where families of all faiths and of none could come to know that "the family that prays together stays together™" and that "a world at prayer is a world at peace®." Human reason and wisdom would never have set the Family Rosary Crusade on the course it took in those beginning years. To Our Lord must go the credit for inspiring the best and only way to go: the mass media.



In 1945, the Mutual Broadcasting System, the largest radio network in the United States at that time, made available a half-hour to broadcast the Rosary. This was the opportunity of a lifetime. The program had to be good. It had to prove the Rosary for all its worth. To whom could I turn for help? Naturally, to Our Lady. She came through:

- * Invite the most famous, loved and revered family to pray the Rosary;
- * Ask the most famous Hollywood stars to join them;
- * Have the most influential people in the US Church speak; and
- * Choose the most fitting day to have the majority of Americans listening eagerly to a religious broadcast.

All of that happened:

- * The day was Sunday, May 13, 1945: Mother's Day, Fatima Day and a day of thanksgiving for victory in Europe.
- * Cardinal Spellman of New York was lined up to speak.
- * The Sullivan family of Iowa, whose five sons had gone to their death together on a battleship that sank in the Pacific, led the Rosary.
- * Bing Crosby agreed to participate.

The following day, the broadcast was acclaimed as the most touching program of all, and the Family Rosary Crusade was launched. What Bing Crosby did, others would do. Hundreds of them, Pat O'Brien, Loretta Young, Grace Kelly, James Cagney, gave their names, fame, time and talent to glorify the Rosary and dramatize its mysteries on film, on the radio and on television.

In 1947, the Diocese of London, Ontario, pioneered the diocesan crusades. From pulpits, classrooms, the media, giant rallies and house-to-house visitations, families came to know who Mary is and about the saving power of the Rosary. At the rallies, the outpouring of people was a measure of their hunger for the message. The multitudes reached the hundreds of thousands. In Manila in the Philippines, a million people came together to pray the Rosary. It happened again and again: in Bogot ... Bombay ... Johannesburg ... Madrid ... New York ... San Francisco ... Nairobi.

Unprecedented were the endorsements and encouragement given to the crusades by several popes and the Second Vatican Council. In 1987, Pope John Paul II said, "May the Rosary once more become the accustomed prayer of ... the Christian family."



Later Years

The Final Years

Every day, God gave me the grace and strength to continue the work He entrusted to me. We collected millions of rosaries for families in Russia and its neighboring countries. At Family Theater, we produced programs on Christ's Passion, the Annunciation and the Rosary.

In the summertimes of my childhood, the Ox Mountains in Ireland were a blanket of purple flowers, majestic and changing with each season. In the winter of my life, I watch the Pacific roll onto the shore each day, majestic and changing with every tide.

What a lesson. No matter how mighty and powerful, things change with the season and the tide. I pray that families will be able to survive the seasons and tides of life. I know that Mary will always be with them, especially through the Rosary.

Father Peyton died on June 3, 1992.

His work continues through Holy Cross Family Ministries

Sainthood

In June of 2001, Bishop Sean O'Malley, of the Diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts, announced the opening of the Cause of Canonization of Father Patrick Peyton, CSC. Upon notice from the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, Father Peyton now has the title, "Servant of God."

Hundreds of testimonies to Father Peyton's holiness of life have been recorded. Tens of thousands of prayer cards containing a prayer for a favor through his intercession are in circulation. Hundreds of favors have been reported.