



# The Patrick Murphy Memorial Library

By Siobhan Foster

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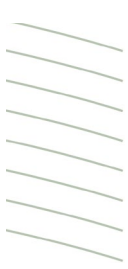
With reference to an article by Larry Nemer SVD (deceased) “Australian Divine Word Missionaries go to “the Missions”: the first Recruits” (Verbum SVD 52(1-2), 2011, pp.103-107 and a framed tribute to Patrick Murphy, unsigned, written shortly after his funeral.



Portrait by Roberto Abadilla, Philippines 18 July 1959.  
It hangs in the hallway near the library entrance.

The Patrick Murphy Memorial Library at the Divine Word Missionaries in Box Hill is named after one of our first Australian missionary priests, Fr Patrick Thomas Murphy SVD, 1927-1978.

Born in Sydney, Australia in 1927, he went to St Vincent’s Seminary in Marburg, Queensland in 1945. After one year as a postulant and two years as a novice he was sent in 1948 with three other Australians to the Major Seminary in the USA at Techny, Illinois, to complete his philosophical and theological education. Since he had already done some studies before entering, he was ordained a missionary priest in 1953, a year ahead of his companions.



He was first assigned to the English-Irish Region but never served there; he returned to Australia and his appointment was changed to “further study.” In 1955 he went to Rome to study for a Degree in Theology at the Gregorian University. His doctoral dissertation was: *The Motive of the Incarnation according to the Carmelite School of Salamanca*. After completing his doctoral studies, he was appointed Professor of Patrology at Christ the King Seminary in Manila. He taught there for one year before being assigned in 1959 to the Novitiate of the Divine Word Missionaries in Palda (Indore Region), India. He spent four years teaching in the Novitiate. It was a difficult time for him due to antagonism between the German and Anglo missionaries about formation, which he tried to reconcile.

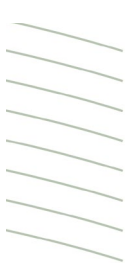
In 1962, Murphy was transferred by the Generalate to New Guinea for the purpose of developing the Major Seminary, near Madang. At the end of 1967, the Holy Spirit Regional Seminary was re-named Holy Spirit College and at his instigation was transferred to Bomana, near Port Moresby to be near the University of Papua and New Guinea.

That same year, the director of the Theological Education Fund of the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Charles Forman, visited the South Pacific and Papua New Guinea. This resulted in the consultation in Lae at the Lutheran Mission headquarters in 1968 on theological education in the churches’ seminaries of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. This led to the formation of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS) in 1969 and Fr Patrick Murphy was appointed the first president. It was the beginning of his involvement in ecumenical activities in the South Pacific.

In 1970, his resignation as Rector of the Seminary and President of the Theological School was accepted by the Generalate. He then found himself working full-time for the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Papua and New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, setting up the National Catholic Ecumenical Secretariat, even while continuing to lecture at the Holy Spirit Seminary until a replacement was sent. He liaised with the churches of the islands as well as London, Australia, Geneva, and elsewhere.

The Melanesian Council of Churches received the Roman Catholic Church in Papua and New Guinea into full membership in 1972. Murphy was present on this historic occasion. The Council speaks for seven member churches: the Anglican Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Wabag Lutheran Church, the United Church of PNG and the Solomon Islands, the Roman Catholic Church, the Baptist Church and the Salvation Army.

Thereafter, Fr Pat Murphy took a very active part in the Council. Because of his position in MATS he knew many of those engaged in theological education in the Pacific and after painstaking negotiations religious studies became an accepted part of the Faculty of Arts program of the University of Papua New Guinea. Murphy was appointed secretary to the Churches’ Council for University Religious Studies.



In 1975, he gave a lecture at the study institute of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools in Suva, Fiji. This introduced him to the Polynesian world of the South Pacific. He became very involved with the Pacific Council of Churches when the Catholic Church was accepted as a member in 1978, taking on the role of coordinator for the PCC Church and Society Program which addressed justice issues.

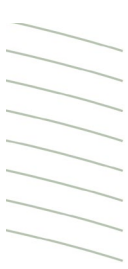
Sadly, Fr Patrick Murphy SVD died on 12 December 1978 from brain damage due to a road accident in Port Moresby. He was just 51 years old. At his funeral in Port Moresby, wonderful tributes were paid by all the Christian Churches on account of the great work he had carried out, bringing the Christian Churches together: “that all may be one in Christ.” The funeral service and mass in Bomana was a very moving ecumenical worship experience. After the funeral, Fr Walcott wrote to the Superior General of the Divine Word Missionaries about the funeral: “You may perhaps have heard that the funeral was attended by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Michael Somare and his wife, and several government ministers and that he was buried in a coffin covered in Tapa cloth in the manner of a Polynesian chieftain. He was the only expatriate working for the Pacific Conference of Churches and he was appointed by the entire assembly at a meeting in Port Moresby in 1976. There is no record of the number of people at his funeral Mass and burial, but someone counted 150 vehicles.”

Another tribute to Fr Patrick Murphy says: “How could this Australian boy, born in Sydney in 1927, trained as a priest in the United States, professed as a missionary in the German Society of the Divine Word, prepared for service in the Philippines and India, have become such an influential actor in the drama of Papua New Guinea’s birth as a nation? ... While he worked in and for Papua New Guinea Pat responded marvellously to initiatives of the Second Vatican Council and the World Council of Churches. His tireless love summoned us all to deeper unity and greater hope.”

About his personality, it goes on to say: “We think of this wiry, persevering man, with his unwearied realism and love, as calling us to repentance and great change. His words and actions could be as penetrating as a sword. They could unsettle us all, from bishops to atheists. He taught us all must change: the liturgy, to belong to the Pacific; our understanding of scripture and tradition, to scourge the evil rich and raise up the afflicted poor; our attitude to each other; our appalling ecclesiastical starchiness; our thin veneers of respectable racism.”

And in conclusion, the tribute paints this lovely portrait of Patrick Murphy: “Pat went about in sandals. His door in Port Moresby was ever open, his coffee-pot ready. He detested the bomb tests of the time and urged us to join the great modern popes who have said, “stop all tests” for the sake of God and humanity.”

Regarding the date of the library being named after Patrick Murphy, no one seems to know exactly, but the Dorish Maru College was officially blessed and dedicated by Archbishop Francis Little on 15th



November 1988, and a library was transferred from the SVD community at Essendon forming the basis of the Divine Word Missionaries library.

The Dorish Maru building commemorates the tragic strafing by American planes of the "Yorishime Maru", a Japanese ship near Wewak, PNG on 6th February 1944 which killed seven Divine Word Missionary priests, twelve religious brothers, and twenty-seven Holy Spirit sisters. Bishop Wolfe and others died later of their wounds. The missionaries of the time came to know the ship as the Dorish Maru. Our building is built in the shape of a ship. The complete story can be found at <https://www.dorishmarucollege.org.au/item/37-death-on-the-dorish-maru>



## Dorish Maru College

"His Mission is our mission"

The library supports the theological and pastoral training of the Divine Word Missionary seminarians and members of the community. The collection is housed at Dorish Maru College, the SVD House of Studies, on the Yarra Theological Union campus. It consists of approximately 10,000-12,000 books and journals covering general theology, with strengths in missiology, history of mission, SVD mission history, Melanesian religious history, and interreligious dialogue. Until 2022, many of the mission research print books were housed in St Paschal Library for easy accessibility of YTU and University of Divinity students. Nowadays, students can also access electronic books and journal volumes and a range of other online resources on the UD Library Hub.