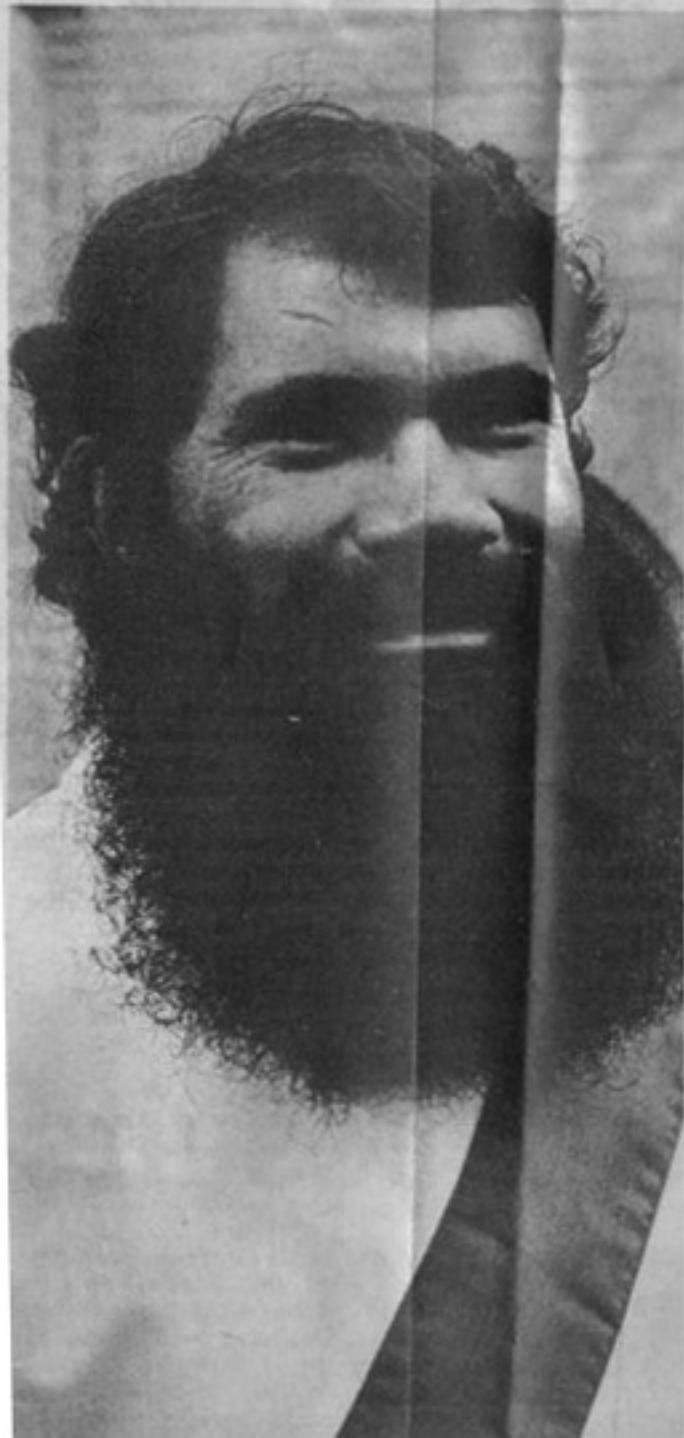


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Our first aboriginal priest



Australian Aboriginals are proud of Rev Patrick Dodson who will soon be the first member of their people to be ordained to the priesthood. The admiration shows in the faces of these teenagers from the Santa Teresa mission, near Alice Springs, as they stroll with Patrick Dodson through the grounds of the Sacred Heart Fathers' Monastery, Croydon, where he is a student.

The dark brown hands of Patrick Dodson flow gracefully as he tells of the past 10 months he has spent working as a deacon in north-west Australia.

Those same hands will soon be anointed by Bishop O'Loughlin, of Darwin, during an ordination ceremony that will make Patrick Dodson the first Australian Aboriginal to become a priest.

The 27-year-old bearded deacon speaks with a gentle voice as he talks about his people of the

His three sisters will be there, and his three brothers, including Michael, a final year law student at Monash University.

'Proud of my grandfather'

Patrick Dodson's parents are dead. But, his grandfather, Mr Paddy Djad-

mechanic working on the great development projects of the north.

But he gradually became aware of a drive to help his people more directly.

Drawn to the priesthood

He had made up his

By TONY RYAN

But, for Patrick Dodson the important thing is to be working for his people, who, he insists, have much to teach white society about the Christian life—"blessed are the poor in spirit"—and about people being loyal and helping each other.

"So much can be learnt from the aboriginal people