

FIRST ABORIGINAL PRIEST ORDAINED

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Perth. — Hundreds of Aborigines from as far away as Alice Springs travelled to Broome on Saturday to see the first Aborigine ordained to the Catholic priesthood.

For Paddy Dodson, 27, a well-known and popular figure in the Aboriginal communities on the North-west and Northern Territory, the ceremony was the culmination of 14 years of study and preparation.

He first felt the call of the vocation when he began secondary school at a boys' college in Hamilton, Victoria.

The school is run by the Order of the Sacred Heart.

As the procession of Bishops and priests entered the crowded Broome Civic Centre on Saturday for the ordination, a choir of 25 young Aboriginal boys from La Grange Mission, South of Broome, clapped pairs of boomerangs and sang.

It was symbolic of the philosophy of the young priest who finds much in common with the spiritual traditions of Aboriginal people and those of

Rev. Fr. Dodson's father was white and his maternal great-grandfather was Irish.

Yet Patrick has always regarded himself as Aboriginal.

At the age of two he left Broome with his par-

ents and three sisters and two brothers and went to Katherine, in the Northern Territory.

His parents died in 1961.

In the North, his ambition is to help forge links of respect and un-

derstanding between his people and the European community.

He says the change from the close-knit tribal situation to a sort of laissez-faire situation had caused a loss of identity and feeling of alienation among Aborigines.

The Aborigines were not used to having the power to control their own destinies.

Aborigines must get out of the position of feeling hopeless and down-trodden, but the whites must learn more about Aboriginal culture and respect for the dignity of Aboriginal people, he said.

More than 1000 people crowded into the Broome Civic Centre which was decorated with posters depicting Aboriginal legendary figures.

And proudly sitting at the front of the hall was Patrick's 97-year-old grandfather. — AUP.

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