

# HISTORY OF THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

In 1850, the city of Sacramento was a mission of the Church of Saint Francis, in San Francisco. Today, it is the See city of the Catholic Diocese of Sacramento, comprising 42,000 square miles of territory.

On August 10, 1850, Father Peter Anderson, OP, celebrated the first Mass in Northern California, in a private home on 5th and L Streets, in the city of Sacramento. Anderson was a Dominican priest and a missionary. He had been sent to California by his provincial, Father Joseph Sadoc Alemany, OP, who later became the first American bishop in California.

Included in the congregation of that first Mass was the Honorable Peter Burnett, the first governor of California. He was so convinced that Catholicism had come to Sacramento to stay that he gave Father Anderson a plot of land on 7th and K Streets. It became the future site of the first of four churches named after Saint Rose of Lima, the patron saint of the seminary at which Anderson studied in Kentucky.

The first of the four churches was a simple wooden frame structure that went up rapidly enough and came right down again with a strong wind. Unfortunately, Father Anderson didn't live long enough to see the church; he died of exhaustion and sickness while helping the sick during a cholera epidemic in Sacramento, just three months after he arrived. He was, in the full sense of the word, a martyr of charity—and recognized as such as early as 1850.

On September 27, 1860, after 10 years of sending missionaries into Northern California from San Francisco, the Marysville vicariate was established. It included all of Northern California and most of the state of Nevada. The first Vicar Apostolic was Bishop Eugene O'Connell, who had previously been a professor at All Hallows Seminary in Dublin, Ireland. His reaction to being named bishop was, "I am condemned to the mines!"

By March 3, 1868, the vicariate of Marysville had sufficient priests and people that it could stand on its own as a diocese. Consequently, Pope Pius IX created the Grass Valley Diocese, with Bishop Eugene O'Connell as its first and founding bishop. He served from 1868 until March 17, 1884, when he resigned. He died in Los Angeles on December 14, 1891.

The man who took O'Connell's place as bishop of the Grass Valley Diocese was one of the legendary figures in California history, Patrick Manogue. Student, gold miner, seminarian, and priest of the Comstock, Manogue built the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament when he became the first and founding bishop of a new diocese created on May 28, 1886, by Pope Leo XIII. The new Diocese of Sacramento was created out of the old Grass Valley Diocese, to which were added 10 counties in Northern California and eight in Nevada.

Bishop Patrick Manogue died on February 27, 1895, in the cathedral rectory. His good friend and the rector of the cathedral, Father Thomas Grace, was present at his death.

On June 16, 1896, Father Grace (1841-1921) was consecrated the second bishop of the Diocese of Sacramento. For 25 years, Bishop Grace guided the diocese through a period of transition from its pioneer days to a more modern period. He was indefatigable in traveling the length and breadth of the diocese, even against the advice of friends.

The next bishop of Sacramento was Father Patrick J. Keane, DD (1872-1928), a priest of the Archdiocese of San Francisco. He was consecrated as an auxiliary bishop by Bishop Grace on December 14, 1920, and succeeded him as the third bishop of the diocese on March 17, 1922. His short tenure of six years was characterized by the formation of a system of parochial schools. He died September 1, 1928.

The fourth man to be consecrated bishop of Sacramento was Father Robert Armstrong. Born in San Francisco in 1884, he and his family moved to the Pacific Northwest, where he lived most of his life until he was appointed bishop on January 4, 1929. Previously, he had served for many years as parish priest in the Diocese of Seattle.

For 28 years, Bishop Armstrong served as bishop of a diocese that originally comprised 91,562 miles. He inaugurated a period of considerable growth, in which over 28 new parishes were established, the work of caring for the socially disadvantaged was professionalized, and the quality of Catholic schools was upgraded. Bishop Armstrong died, after a long illness, on January 14, 1957.

Most Reverend Joseph T. McGucken, STD, LL.D, auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles, was appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Sacramento on October 26, 1955, and succeeded to the See upon the death of Bishop Armstrong. He was born March 13, 1902, in Los Angeles, and was ordained in Rome, January 16, 1928.

On February 21, 1962, Pope John XXIII appointed Bishop McGucken fifth Archbishop of San Francisco, where he was installed on April 3, 1962. At the same time, His Holiness announced a sweeping change in Northern California diocesan boundaries with the creation of three new dioceses: Oakland, Santa Rosa, and Stockton. Sacramento ceded five counties to the new jurisdiction, Del Norte, Humboldt, Calaveras, Tuolumne and Mono; and added Solano County, formerly a part of the Archdiocese of San Francisco.



Bishop Thomas Grace



Bishop Patrick J. Keane



Bishop Robert Armstrong



Bishop Joseph T. McGucken



Bishop Eugene O'Connell



Bishop Patrick Manogue

Pope John XXIII, on March 30, 1962, appointed the Most Reverend Alden J. Bell, DD, auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles, to become the sixth spiritual leader of the Sacramento Diocese. He was solemnly installed on May 15, 1962, in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. On September 15, 1966, Alpine County was transferred from the Diocese of Sacramento to the Diocese of Stockton by Sacred Decree.

On February 26, 1974, Pope Paul VI appointed John S. Cummins as an auxiliary to Bishop Bell. However, within three years, he was selected as the second bishop of the Oakland Diocese, leaving Bishop Bell without an auxiliary.

Bishop Bell retired on July 11, 1979, at age 75. His years in the Diocese of Sacramento were busy ones since they demanded a flexibility in allowing and promoting the changes brought about because of the Second Vatican Council. He surrounded himself with people who were leaders in the field of social action and education. He also strongly encouraged the emerging lay ministry in the diocese. Bishop Bell died on August 28, 1982.

Five months after Bishop Bell retired, Pope John Paul II named Francis A. Quinn, then an auxiliary bishop of San Francisco, as the seventh bishop of the Diocese of Sacramento. He was installed on February 18, 1980, in the Sacramento Memorial Auditorium.

Two years later, on September 1, 1981, John Paul II selected Father Alphonse Gallegos, OAR, Director of the Hispanic Affairs Division of the California Catholic Conference, as an auxiliary bishop to Bishop Quinn. He was ordained auxiliary bishop in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament on November 4, 1981. After 10 years of pastoral ministry characterized by a special outreach to minority groups, Bishop Gallegos' life was cut short in an automobile accident. Thousands of people gathered for his burial rites in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament on October 11, 1991.

Bishop Francis Quinn's service to the Diocese of Sacramento was characterized by compassion, understanding, and the ability to choose good men and women to whom he delegated authority to promote and proclaim the Gospel of Christ in a world increasingly complex.

Under his direction, in the fall of 1982, the diocese embarked on an extensive study to formulate a ten-year Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Father Keith Kenny was a prominent leader in this field. At the end of two years, in early November 1984, a diocesan convocation of clergy, religious and laity from throughout the diocese adopted the Pastoral Plan, which was then implemented at the diocesan and parish levels.

Bishop Quinn also called for a year of celebration as the Diocese reached its 100th birthday: 1886-1986. It was a year characterized by



Bishop Alden J. Bell



Aux. Bishop John S. Cummins



Bishop Francis A. Quinn

remembering our own history as well as a preparation for the celebration. The event itself was picked up by local television companies and filmed.

Under Bishop Quinn's guidance, a diocesan-wide spiritual renewal program, called "Renew," took root and flourished. A Pastoral Council consisting of priests, religious and laity was formed. Its purpose is to represent life in the diocese and act as advisor to the bishop in his pastoral responsibilities.

During Bishop Quinn's tenure, seven new parishes, several missions, two elementary schools and one high school were established. In 1992, a group of consultants met to prepare the second Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

Bishop Quinn's request to retire was accepted in 1993. He was then made Apostolic Administrator until a new bishop could be appointed.

On November 30, 1993, Pope John Paul II named Bishop William K. Weigand as bishop of the Diocese of Sacramento. On January 27, 1994, Bishop Weigand, former Bishop of Salt Lake City, was installed in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament as the eighth bishop of the diocese.

When the Diocesan Pastoral Center was completed early in 1994, the Bishop's Office relocated to the new building at 21st & Broadway. So, too, did twelve of the diocesan departments, which had previously been at a number of different locations in the city of Sacramento. The people who staff these departments aid in promoting the Church's mission to proclaim Christ and the Gospel. The Pastoral Center was blessed by Bishop Weigand on June 10, 1994.

On November 25, 1997, Pope John Paul II called Father Richard J. Garcia, a priest from the San Jose Diocese, to be the Fourth Auxiliary Bishop. He was ordained auxiliary bishop in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament on January 28, 1998.

From 1994 to the year 2000, one new parish has been established and several new schools. The Diocese of Sacramento is deeply committed to education, a fact which reveals itself in numerous other ways: preparation for new deacons; RCIA programs, continuing education for adults, various outreach programs and new methods of evangelization.

The year 2000 marks the end of the world-wide preparation of the Great Jubilee, culminating in the year of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior of the world. The Catholics of the Diocese of Sacramento participated in the Jubilee both on the parish and diocesan level in several celebrations throughout the year, beginning with an ecumenical event at Arco Arena on January 2, 2000.



Aux. Bishop Alphonse Gallegos



Bishop William K. Weigand



Aux. Bishop Richard J. Garcia