



Sacramento Bee file

Monsignor Edward Kavanagh, pictured in 1989 at St. Rose church, has been called "the spiritual father of south Sacramento."

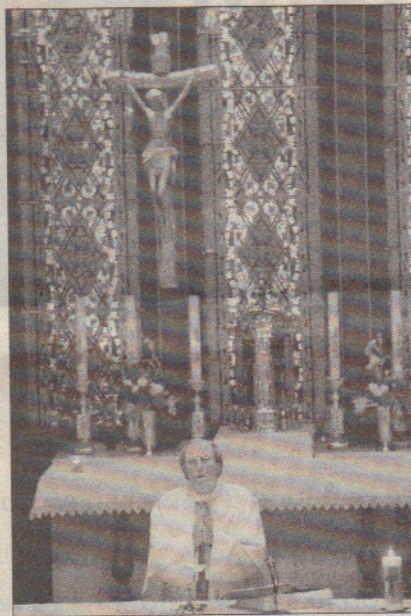
Priest

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ty of ailments, including a fall he took after a baptism. He's been recovering at Mercy McMahan Terrace senior residence at 3865 J St.

Kavanagh has vowed to go home in several weeks and continue ministering to a sixth generation of parishioners, but he was too weak to attend a concert in his honor Thursday night at Christian Brothers High School featuring the McKeever School of Irish Dance, the Irish American Ceili Dancers, and Ireland's foremost tenor Anthony Kearns, who brought tears to the crowd when he sang "Danny Boy" and "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling."

Powers, who was born physically disabled, told the crowd that Kavanagh's church "was the only place that fully welcomed me and provided me an opportunity to participate with children my age," inspiring Powers to enter the priesthood.



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Kavanagh leads a 1989 Mass. He is recovering from ailments at a care site.

mento Bee, said longtime friend Joe McNamara, a Christian Brothers alumnus who organized the Thursday night tribute.

"His photo still hangs in the pubs as hurler, not a pastor, and until last year he'd return to Ireland every September for the All Ireland Final," McNamara said. Kavanagh loves Irish music, and would often bring famous tenors to Sacramento.

"He's at the very end of an era in the Catholic Church," McNamara said. "The seminaries in Ireland have dried up completely."

In an interview earlier this week in his room at Mercy McMahan Terrace, Kavanagh shared some of his rules for life. "We've been given the 10 commandments and unfortunately as a country we haven't been following them," he said. First and foremost, "you have to help people, look out for the needy and pray every day with your family. The family that prays together stays together."

Kavanagh was close friends with the

He's not only a ministerial priest, but a wheeler-dealer businessman," Powers said. Kavanagh bought a boat dealership and turned it into the church's car donation program, opened a community garden for Hmong refugees, and turned a grocery store into St. Patrick's Store Bargains Galore to fund St. Patrick's home and the ministries of St. Rose church.

St. Patrick's Home for Children was an orphanage on Franklin Boulevard from 1932 to 1977 with beds for 200 boys and girls, and still cares for troubled youths through a series of group homes. The boys who Kavanagh guided have grown into grandfathers who still visit the man they say became the father they never had.

"My mother died when I was 7," recalled Gomez Delgado, 78. "There were 12 of us, and my dad had personal problems, so we all got split up." Some of Delgado's siblings went to foster homes, but eight of them were sent to the orphanage.

Monsignor Kavanagh "played soccer with us, showed an interest in all of us and a lot of respect, no matter who and what we were," said Delgado, who re-

members Kavanagh taking him to Christian Brothers football games, punching him playfully and saying, "You can do this!"

Delgado couldn't afford Christian Brothers, but Kavanagh got him in on a scholarship. "He always encouraged me, said I could make something of myself," said Delgado, who became an all-Metro quarterback. "He was a father figure to many of us and seemed to know where all the kids went, whether you became a success in life or ended up in prison - he visited those kids."

Augie Ledesma, 74, followed the crops as a boy, picking carrots, lettuce, peaches, onion and potatoes until his mom died when he was 9. He recalls Kavanagh's motto: Do the best you can. "He'd bring you in and give you a stern talk, but never get really mad at you." Ledesma had a body shop for 32 years, and Kavanagh sent him customers and performed weddings for his four sons.

From the start, Kavanagh did things his own way. His family owned one of the biggest bus companies in Ireland, and at 8 he drove a bus to Dublin to pick up the newspapers for distribution. He remains a faithful reader of The Sacra-

McClatchy, and said when death approached, "she was prepared for it because she was very fulfilled and very grateful to God for her life and her many friends."

Kavanagh is a strong advocate of immigration reform. "I love the Mexican people, they're very family-oriented," he said. "Families get broken up when a kid or parent goes back to Mexico and can't come back, or parents come here and kids can't."

He strongly opposes abortion, but urges parents to show compassion to children who have babies out of wedlock.

Sister Kathleen Horgan, who has helped Kavanagh raise funds for inner city schools since the 1990s, said he has always served the needy and the sick. "He believes we're all going home to God, the father," she said. "Whether we've done our best or not, God will welcome them home. His mercy always exceeds his justice."

Call The Bee's Stephen Magagnini, (916) 321-1072. Pete Basofin contributed.

Champion for the needy gets a special celebration

BY STEPHEN MAGAGNINI
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He's been toasted in pubs throughout Kilkenny County, Ireland, for his hurling prowess and called the "Irish Godfather," "the spiritual father of south Sacramento," a singer and a saint during his 66 years ministering to needy Sacramentans across faiths and races.

Monsignor Edward "Ned" Kavanagh is his name, and serving underdogs is his game.

As midfielder, he led Kilkenny to the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship over Cork before 50,000 fans in 1947. His stats on God's team at St. Rose Catholic Church along Franklin Boulevard are even more impressive, said his friend and protégé the Rev. Troy Pow-

ers: He's performed more than 16,000 baptisms, 4,000 weddings and about five funerals a week, and raised thousands of orphans and wayward children as his own at St. Patrick's Home For Children.

The 6-foot-2 priest with a soft heart and an iron will once faced down Gov. Gray Davis, refusing to let the governor bring gifts to St. Patrick's in 2002 unless Davis publicly renounced his support of abortion.

"He's like a priest from central casting," said Kevin Eckery, spokesman for the Sacramento diocese.

Kavanagh's streak was interrupted several months ago when the 89-year-old went on the disabled list for a varie-



Courtesy Monsignor Kavanagh's collection
Edward "Ned" Kavanagh, left, is seen after beating Cork in 1947 in the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship.



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