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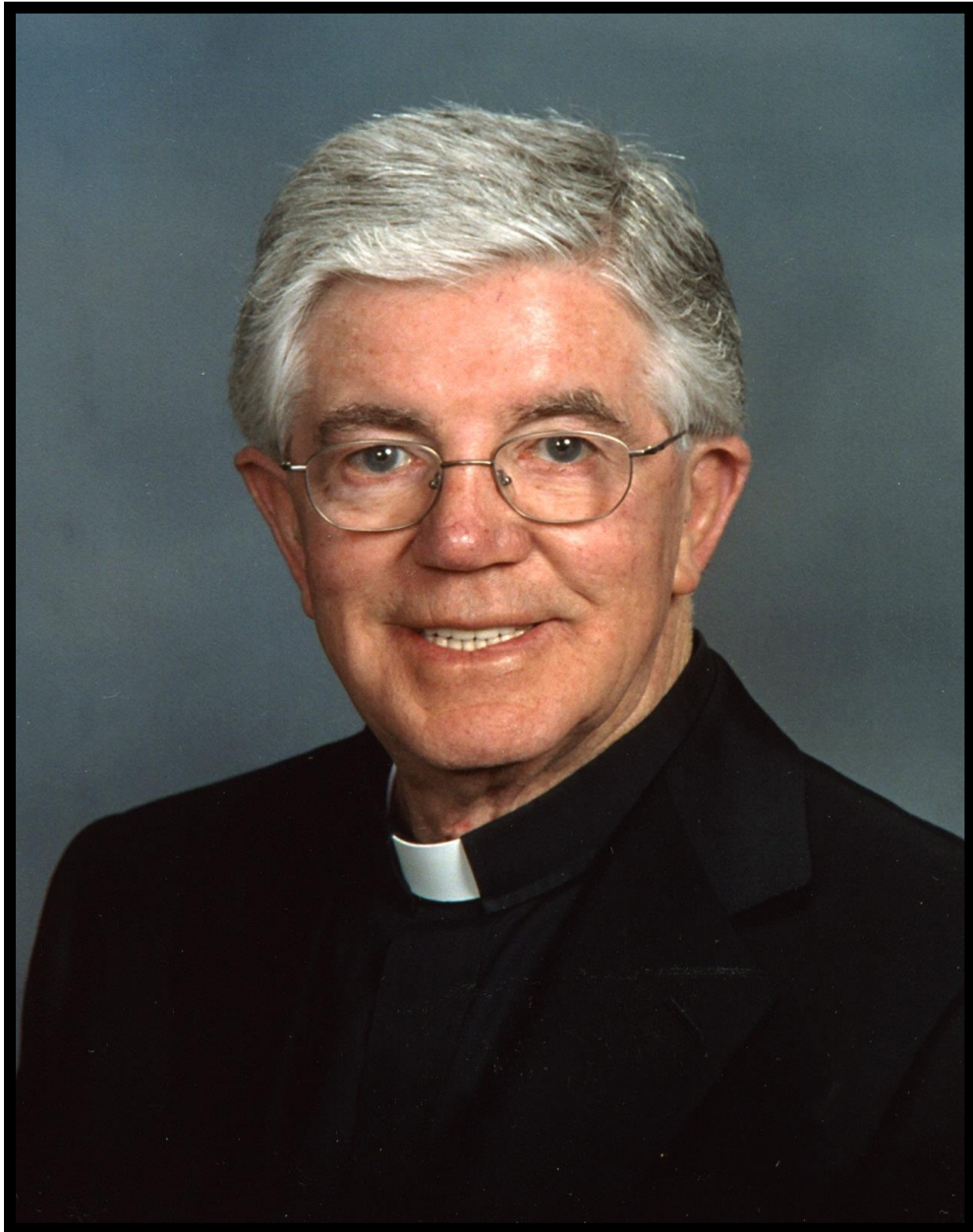
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MONSIGNOR TIMOTHY BRENDAN O'SULLIVAN Pastor Emeritus of St Anthony of Padua Parish, Sacramento

Interview by Reverend John E Boll, Archivist



Monsignor Brendan O'Sullivan

Timothy Brendan O'Sullivan was born in Cahermore, County Cork, Ireland, on October 31, 1930. He is the eighth child of twelve born to John O'Sullivan and Mary Harrington. He began his schooling at the National School of Cahermore and his teacher was Dennis O'Sullivan, his godfather. When Brendan finished his regular school work, his godfather taught him and a few other students privately. Brendan says his godfather Dennis was particularly hard on him because he wanted Brendan to excel in his studies. This additional class was like a private school within a school. Dennis was Brendan's teacher the last four years of his primary school.

For secondary school, Brendan attended the Mill Hill Fathers in Freshford, County Kilkenny. Dennis' teaching paid off because Brendan did the five year course in four years and graduated with honors.

Beginning of Seminary Studies

Normally, Brendan would have continued his college education at Roseendaal in Holland but instead he decided to enter Saint Patrick Seminary, Thurles, County Tipperary. He says he had considered the priesthood since he was a young boy when he served Mass at his parish church. He believes his vocation took root at that early age of his life. He remembers when Father O'Leary, the parish curate, was leaving the parish, he took Brendan's hands and said, "These are the hands of a future priest."

From the point of view of studies, the Thurles Seminary was very easy for Brendan. One of the professors, Father Michael Russell, said that Brendan was the best student he had had in 16 years. This professor gave Brendan extra work beyond the normal curriculum. Doctor Thomas Morris who became archbishop of Cashel, asked Brendan to rewrite the notes of some of the students who had been ordained in prior years but who left the Catholic Church and converted to other Christian denominations. Brendan says he rewrote the notes in Indian ink.

Brendan was the editor of *LUCEAT*, the annual Thurles seminary publication, when the first professionally printed edition was sent to all the Thurles priest alumni throughout the world. He thought that the seminary faculty was wonderful because of their interest in and preparation of the students for ministry. The faculty went beyond the regular curriculum to enhance the seminarians' knowledge, experience and love for learning.

Ordination to the Ministerial Priesthood

Brendan O'Sullivan was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Sacramento by Archbishop Kinane of Cashel and Enly in the Thurles Cathedral on June 10, 1956. In August of that year he set sail for New York on his way to Sacramento. He was met at the New York port by his sister and they drove by car to Wisconsin where Father Brendan spent a week visiting his family. He then flew from Chicago to San Francisco and was met by Fathers Charlie Brady and John Hannan. Brendan stayed at Saint Joseph Parish in North Sacramento until he received his first assignment.

Father Brendan remembers that a few days after his arrival in Sacramento, Father Pat McTague took Fathers Vincent Lenihan, Pat O'Brien and Brendan to dinner at a local restaurant and all of them came down with a serious case of food poisoning. What a way to get started in ministry!

First Assignment, Saint Joseph Parish, Redding



Photo from Diocesan Archives

St Joseph Church, Redding in the 1950s

day one this was not a happy assignment for Father Brendan. The personalities of these two priests were just too different for them to connect and build a unified team approach to ministry in Grass Valley.

Father O'Sullivan began to do a door to door census of the parish and visited most of the Catholic families in Grass Valley which was a positive experience for him. He taught in the school and enjoyed this ministry. The year, 1958, Cardinal Angelo Roncalli was elected pope and took the name of John XXIII. Brendan remained in Grass Valley for only 14 months and later both Bishops McGucken and Bell apologized to Brendan for sending him to Grass Valley.

The Next Move – St Joseph Church, Fortuna



Father O'Sullivan advised Father Boland that he was going to the diocese to lodge a complaint against him, although Brendan never carried out his threat. A lateral move was arranged with Father Tom Burke; Brendan was sent to Fortuna to work with Father Mike Manogue and Tom Burke was sent to Grass Valley.

Brendan says that Father Mike Manogue was an enigma, a kind old gentleman but confused in his thinking. If Father Manogue's car suddenly had a flat tire, he would blame the Protestants for doing the evil deed. Father Brendan was intrigued by Father Manogue's speech impediment, especially when it came to reading the Latin texts at Mass. The rectory was in poor condition and when Brendan walked on a certain area of the floor in his quarters, the lights would go out. Once when Father

Manogue was away, Brendan had his room painted and he purchased new furniture.

Father Manogue always went through the mail first. One day he brought a letter to Brendan that was sent to him by the diocese. The letter was Brendan's new appointment to Saint James Parish in Davis, received on the very day that the Sacramento diocese was divided in 1962.

Father James Gabriel was assigned to replace Brendan in Fortuna. As Brendan was preparing to leave for Davis, Father Manogue handed him an itemized bill which included every long distance call Brendan had made in the course of his parish ministry. This bill came to the exact penny of the cost of the furniture that Brendan had purchased. Brendan left the furniture behind in the Fortuna rectory and Father Manogue revised the bill to zero.

Ministry at Saint James Parish, Davis



Photo by John E Boll 2012

St James Church in the 1950s

Actually, it was not Paul who wanted to know; he asked for his inquisitive sister Mary.

Father Degnan, a very nervous type person, was named pastor of Oroville. His successor to the Davis pastorate was Father Andy Coffey who was pastor of Winters. Brendan and Andy did not hit it off well from the start. As Mrs. Antonia Campbell who lived next door to the rectory once said to Brendan: "You know, Father, two orbs cannot exist in the same space."

Brendan had worked with the students at UCD during his years in Davis. When Father Coffey arrived in town, he wanted to be in charge of the student ministry. Brendan suggested that they work together as Newman chaplains so there would be no competition or jealousy between them. However, the relationship between these two priests continued to be difficult until Father O'Sullivan moved to his next assignment.

Father O'Sullivan was sent to Davis in 1962 to work with Father Paul Degnan. Brendan says he was beginning to get a reputation as a difficult priest, thanks to comments made by Jerry Boland and Mike Manogue to their priest friends.

Brendan says that Father Paul Degnan was an absolute saint. Mary, his sister, was the house keeper and cook but in fact acted like *la popessa*. The accommodations at the rectory were limited at best. If someone came to see Brendan, Paul would ask, "You had a visitor today; who was it?"

Teaching at St Francis High School

Brendan was given a new assignment to teach at Saint Francis High School in Sacramento with residence at St Lawrence rectory in North Highlands. Bishop Bell asked him also to be campus minister to American River College. Brendan taught for seven years at Saint Francis High School and Bishop Bell pleaded with him to stay longer but Brendan had other plans in mind.

A Teaching Stint at the University of Notre Dame de Namur, Belmont

Father O'Sullivan asked and received permission to teach at Notre Dame University in Belmont. He also took a course in finances at Stanford University. It was his plan to earn a doctorate degree from Stanford University when Bishop Bell called him to say he needed him back in Sacramento. The bishop wanted Brendan to be administrator of Saint John Parish in Folsom but Brendan felt he needed more experience in pastoring before taking on the role of pastor.

Assistant at Clarksburg

Instead of Folsom, Father Brendan was sent temporarily to Clarksburg to help Monsignor Jim Mulligan who was going to school full time. Brendan enjoyed his ministry with the Clarksburg community and he liked taking the dog out for a run every day. "Jim Mulligan was a real gentleman," Brendan says. Jim's elderly father Terry lived with them in the rectory as well. Monsignor Mulligan left the priesthood from Clarksburg to marry a former Mercy sister.



Photo by John E Boll

St Joseph Church, Clarksburg

Founding Pastor of Saint Anthony Parish in the Pocket Area of South Sacramento

Father O'Sullivan was in Clarksburg nine months even though his letter of appointment stated he would be there for three weeks. Monsignor Harry Markham and Father Patrick Corkell asked Father Brendan to do a study on what the Clarksburg parish needed. Brendan did a detailed assessment of the parish and sent his report to this diocesan committee. The committee made a recommendation to Bishop Bell to establish a new parish across the Sacramento River in the Pocket area. Brendan was told by the committee not to apply for Clarksburg. When the pastorate for new parish was advertised, Brendan applied. Father Leo McAllister was also interested in the pastorate of the new parish but Brendan was chosen for the position.

Father Brendan rented an apartment in the Pocket area as he set about the work of establishing the parish and building a church. After five years, the church and rectory were built and Father Dan Looney joined Brendan as the first parochial vicar at Saint Anthony Parish. Over the years, Brendan had a number of parochial vicars; some were great and others less so.

Father Brendan was pastor of Saint Anthony Parish for 31 years, from 1974 to 2005. This pastorate was a wonderful experience for him and he says God was very generous to him.

During his time at Saint Anthony Parish, he suffered from both throat and prostate cancer. He kept the fact of prostate cancer quiet but everyone knew about the throat cancer since it affected his vocal chords and his ability to speak.



Photo by John E Boll 2009

Interior of Saint Anthony Church

Other Diocesan Appointments

Over the years, Father O'Sullivan served on many diocesan boards and committees. He was a member of the Priests' Personnel Board, the Priests' Council and was director of Ongoing Education for the Clergy. For a number of years he taught theology courses in the diocese and was a teacher in the permanent diaconate formation program.

Father Brendan is Named Monsignor

In 2005, at the age of 75, Father O'Sullivan retired from his pastorate and moved into a duplex within the confines of Saint Anthony Parish. He began to assist at the Cathedral, often celebrating a weekday Mass and also presided at the Sunday liturgy. Bishop Weigand, as a way to thank and honor Father O'Sullivan for his work, asked the Holy Father to name him a monsignor. Fathers O'Sullivan and James Murphy were named monsignors and were installed together by Bishop Weigand in the Cathedral in the fall of 2005.

A Long Life of Ministry

As he looks back over the years, Monsignor O'Sullivan feels he was blessed indeed. He has no complaints of any kind. He feels the bishops he served treated him fairly and he enjoyed the various ministries he was given.

A Thank You to Monsignor O'Sullivan

Monsignor O'Sullivan has been retired now for nine years and has kept active and involved. Approaching 84 years of age, he decided it was time for him to move to Mercy McMahon Terrace in Sacramento where he has more services available to him and where there are five other priests residing, including Bishop Francis Quinn who is 93. Monsignor O'Sullivan serves as priest chaplain at McMahon Terrace and celebrates the Saturday evening Mass. He takes his daily walk and since he still drives his car, he is free to be out and about as he chooses.

Monsignor O'Sullivan has had a happy and fulfilling life of ministry these past 58 years. He has always had a good command of the English language and is known to be an effective and insightful preacher. He has used his talents well to enrich the diocese and the presbyterate. The Church of Sacramento is indeed grateful to him for his life of faithful service. His godfather Dennis O'Sullivan would be proud of his accomplishments.

We wish Monsignor O'Sullivan good health and many years of happy retirement.

AD MULTOS ANNOS!



Photo by John E Boll 2008

Saint Anthony of Padua Parish, Sacramento
Father Brendan O'Sullivan, Founding Pastor in 1974

Published with the permission of Monsignor Brendan O'Sullivan



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