

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 4

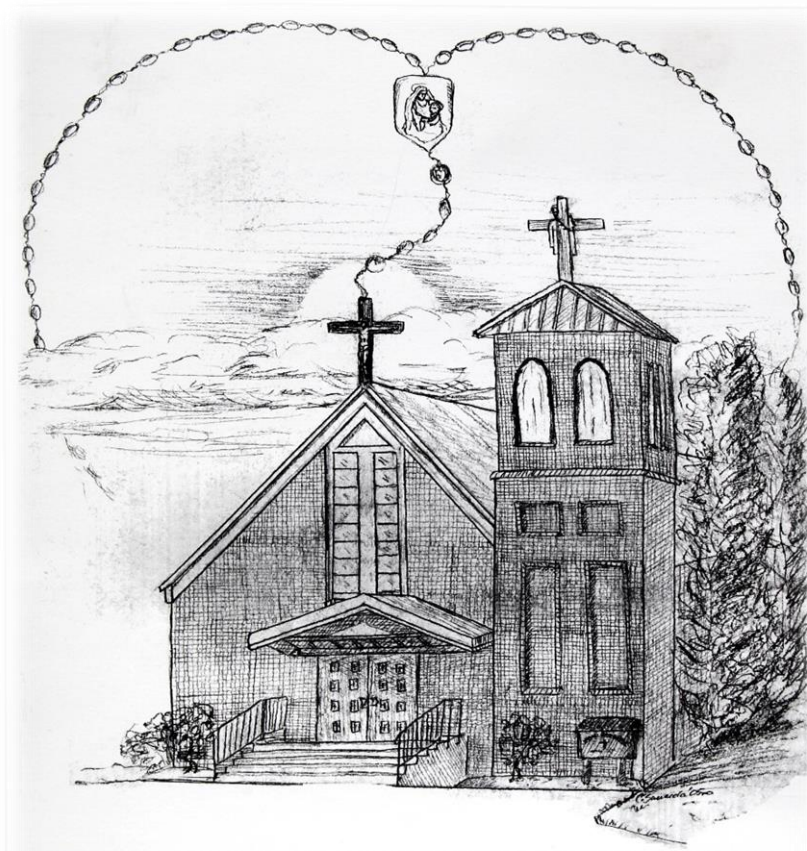
Father John E Boll, Archivist

No 35

HOLY ROSARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Loyalton, California

1955 - 2015



HOLY ROSARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

1955 -2005

The history of the present Holy Rosary Church in Loyalton, California, begins in 1954 when the current church was built and consecrated in 1955. The prior history of the Catholic presence in Sierra Valley and the Loyalton region, however, goes much further back in time.

In the 1800s a Catholic church was built near the Sierra-Plumas County line on County Road A-23 and a visiting priest from Downieville served the Catholic community on occasion. This church served Catholics in the northwestern part of Sierra Valley. The only remaining vestige of the church is the Catholic cemetery overlooking the area where the church was located. This cemetery, filled with mostly Irish immigrants, attest to the faith of the early Irish community of Sierra Valley.

An old Story Told by Many: Hooley's Funeral circa 1914

Adella Lombardi tells this story: My father Antone Dotta and Alex Guidici were two of the pallbearers for Hooley's funeral. The hearse (probably the one in the Loyalton Museum) was pulled by two black mares going from the Loyalton Catholic church to the graveyard in West Sierra Valley off A-23. After Mass the driver "Sims" had to cross the "slew" of the Feather River where the Steel Bridge is now. As he was going up the west side (it was kind of steep), the horses pulled up. The casket came off and went into the water! The two pallbearers, Dotta and Guidici, told "Sims" if he could dance a "gig" on the casket, they would help load it back on the hearse. Poor Sims had no choice, so he obliged. All having fun, they loaded the casket and continued to the graveyard. It was also said they had an Irish wake the night before. Adella Lombardi

The Story of a Young Devout Catholic Woman

When the Catholic Church for the Valley was by the graveyard off A-23, the people had to cross the "slew" a wide area of the valley that was very wet as the water drained to join the Feather River. One young lady who went to the Antelope school and then in eighth grade the Superintendent of Schools gave her an efficiency test. She passed and she taught school there. She was Cesare Lombardi's teacher. She dressed very neatly and was prim and proper. She always rode to church on horseback. The boys wondered how she did this when they knew she and the horse had to swim the slew. So they decided to find out. When she had to dismount the horse, she had a towel and would take off boots, stockings and her nice "outside skirt," and wrap her fine clothes in the towel. Mounting the horse she would hold the towel over her head when she crossed the slew. When she reached the other side, she dressed and went on to church. I believe she was a Myers. Adella Lombardi.

Holy Family Parish Established in 1929



Father Patrick McTague

Holy Family Parish in Portola was established on November 10, 1929 by Bishop Robert J Armstrong, Bishop of Sacramento. Loyalton was made part of the parish as a mission church. The first pastor of the newly formed parish was Father Patrick McTague, a graduate of All Hallows College, Dublin, Ireland, who was ordained on June 20, 1926. Father McTague worked to establish the new parish and to offer a regular schedule of liturgies for the people of Loyalton and Sierra City. Father McTague served the parish for eight years until 1937

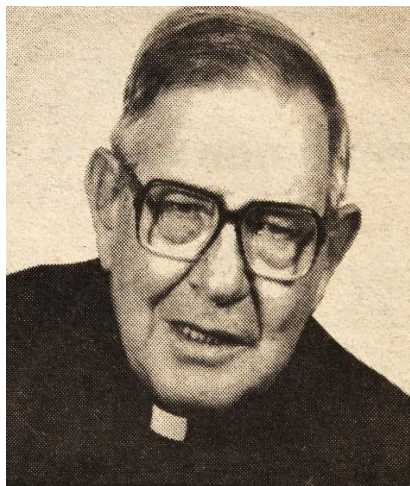
Father John McGoldrick Succeeds Father McTague

Father John McGoldrick was assigned as the second pastor of Holy Family Parish, serving as pastor from 1937 to 1946. During Father McGoldrick's pastorate, he was assisted by Father Michael Myles from 1944 to 1954. The two men lived in Portola but served the Catholic churches in Portola, Quincy, Greenville and Loyalton.



Father John McGoldrick

Father Arnold Schaffer named Pastor of Portola



Father Arnold Schaffer

Father Arnold Schaffer succeeded Father McGoldrick as pastor of the Portola Parish, where he served from 1946 to 1954. He began the first capital drives to raise money to build a new church in Loyaltown 1953.

In 1954, Bishop Robert Armstrong appointed Father Schaffer pastor of Saint Joseph Parish, Lincoln where he served for the next thirty years.

Father Schaffer, known as “Lefty” to his friends, was an excellent baseball player. While attending the Pontifical Josephinum College in Columbus, Ohio, scouts pursued him to become a professional baseball player. He decided to be a priest instead.

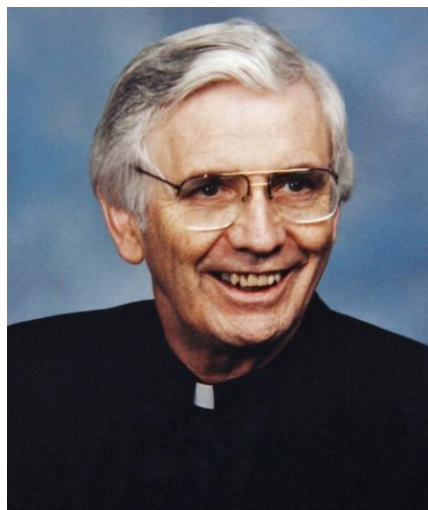
Father Thomas O’Brien Named Pastor

Father Thomas O’Brien followed Father Schaffer as pastor of Holy Family Parish and worked tirelessly to build the new church in Loyaltown. The church was completed in 1954 and consecrated in 1955. The building contractor was Jim Davis. Mr Flannigan designed the church and donated time and finances to complete the construction of the church. The altar railing was locally constructed and the pride of the church. The statues of the Blessed Virgin and of Saint Joseph and the Christ Child were taken from the old church and installed in the new one where they remain to this day. Bonnie White served as the first organist of the new church and has remained a faithful organist for over fifty years providing the church with beautiful music.



Father Thomas O’Brien

Father Corkell Succeeds Father O’Brien



Father Patrick Corkell

Father Patrick Corkell who served the Portola parish from 1961 to 1967 had the responsibility of initiating the changes that came from the Second Vatican Council. The altar rail was removed from the sanctuary and used as the railing for the walkway that connected the church to the social hall.

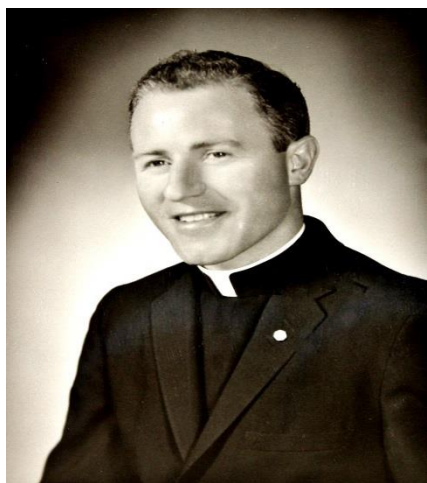
Parishioners became lectors and Eucharistic ministers while the choir was relocated from the choir loft to the front of the church and the altar was turned to face the congregation. These were years of significant liturgical change in the Catholic world.



May 27, 1967 Wedding of Virginia King and Richard Bowling with Father Patrick Corkell

In 1967, Bishop Alden Bell appointed Father Corkell pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Gridley. Succeeding Father Corkell in the Portola and Loyalton parish was Father Bernard Burns.

Father Bernard Burns Appointed Pastor in 1967



Father Bernard Burns served the Portola-Loyalton parish as pastor for thirty years, from 1967 to 1998. His ministry began with many baptisms, weddings, First Communions, confirmations and the first RCIA program in Loyalton.

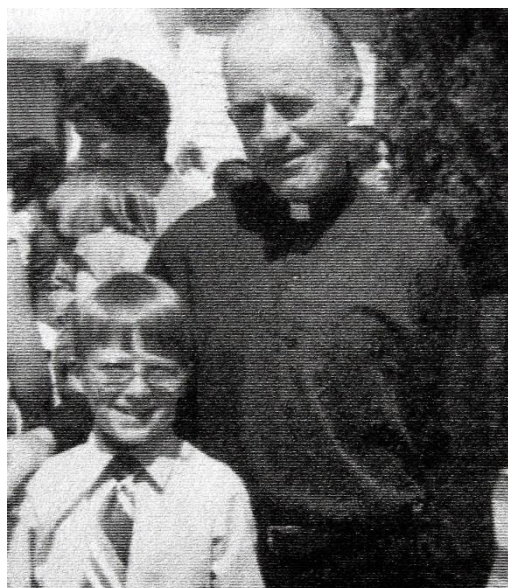
It became evident that the Loyalton community needed much more. Father Burns began to raise money to build a new social hall. The old church was moved to the City Historical Park in 1984. The priest's house was moved to the backyard of what is now Marianne and Mike Moore's home and the "out house" was long gone. The work on the new hall began in 1984 and was as dedicated in a grand celebration in 1985.

Father Bernard Burns

Father Burns endeared himself to the Holy Rosary community as well as the Sierra Valley community. He treated Holy Rosary and Holy Family communities as one family and gave himself fully to all.

When he retired, everyone was sad to see him leave for his beloved County Cavan, Ireland. He returned to visit the parish he gave so much to and all are sure it was to make sure they are behaving themselves!

The Loyalton community is grateful to Father Burns for all the love he showed to them during his many years as their pastor.



Father Burns with RD Vanetti in 1980



Photo from the Parish Archives

The Original Holy Rosary Church, Loyalton

Father Glenn Dare Becomes the Next Pastor



Father Glenn Dare

Succeeded Father Burns was Father Glenn Dare who served as pastor from 1998 to 2004. He focused on retiring the parish debt for the new parish hall in Portola. He accomplished his goal to pay off the parish debt.

Father Dare enjoyed the area and loved golf and Sunday donuts. After six years as pastor, he decided to retire from parish ministry but that plan would change.

Three years later in 2007, Father Dare decided to return to active ministry and was appointed pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Auburn for two years. He then filled in as chaplain at Beale AFB near Sheridan, California. He is now retired again and lives in his own home in Saint George, Utah

Father James Walsh Becomes Pastor of Holy Family Parish

Succeeding Father Dare in 2004 was Father James Walsh. He became a very busy pastor of the parish. He added a Wednesday 12:10 pm Mass, Spanish at Sunday Masses, established a RCIA process and made changes in the administration committee to help make the parish successful in its ministry. He also loves potlucks!

On the occasion of his 40th anniversary of ordination and graduation from All Hallows College in Dublin, Ireland, the whole parish community of Portola and Loyalton celebrated with Our Lady of Grace Parish in West Sacramento in honoring Father Walsh. Everyone had a wonderful time and met many fine people from the West Sacramento parish.



Father James Walsh

Father Walsh left the Portola-Loyalton Parish in January 2006. The love and prayers of the parish communities went with him as he returned to Ireland to begin his years of retirement.

Father Joyle Martinez Succeeds Father Walsh



Father Joyle Martinez

Succeeding Father Walsh in the pastoral role of Portola and Loyalton in 2006 was Father Joyle Martinez. Bishop Jaime Soto assigned Father Joyle as parish administrator of Holy Family Parish. This was Father Joyle's first appointment as a parish administrator and it turned out to be a very positive experience for him.

During Father Joyle's transition to the Portola-Loyalton parish, he attempted to create some new programs and involved more people in the administration of the parish. As often happens in rural parishes with more than one church, there was some tension between Portola and Loyalton which affect their working together as one parish community. Father Joyle spent time and energy to bridge the gap and united the communities in pastoral ministry.

During his three years in Portola and Loyalton, he found parishioners to be very supportive and generous to their church and loved their Catholic faith. This was a joyful experience for Father Joyle and he greatly appreciated the love and support of all the people of Portola and Loyalton.

In 2009, Bishop Soto asked Father Joyle to become pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Red Bluff. Although Father Joyle preferred to stay at Holy Family Parish at least a few more years, he accepted the bishop's request and moved to Red Bluff to become the new pastor there, succeeding Father Sean O'Leary who continued as administrator pro-tem until Father Joyle arrived. This move of Father Martinez created a need for a new pastor in the Portola-Loyalton parish.

Father Renier Siva Appointed Parish Administrator

In 2009, Bishop Soto appointed Father Renier Siva the parochial administrator of Holy Family Parish. This too was his first assignment as parish administrator.

Father Siva served as parochial administrator until 2011 when Bishop Soto appointed him pastor of Our Divine Savior Parish in Chico.

Once again, Holy Family Parish was in need of a new pastor and Bishop Soto appointed one of the younger priests to serve this Sierra community.



Father Renier Siva

Father Arlon Vergara Succeeds Father Siva



Father Arlon Vergara, OSA

Following Father Siva as spiritual leader of the Portola and Loyalton Catholic communities was Father Arlon Vergara, OSA, a member of the Order of Saint Augustine. He oversaw the creation of a meditation garden and outdoor Stations of the Cross at the Holy Family parish site in Portola.

He continues the work of uniting the Portola and Loyalton churches as one family of faith. He has a Bible study every Thursday for both communities. He began a monthly Spanish Mass in the Portola church and established a new custom of praying Morning Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours before the daily weekday morning Mass.

The Holy Rosary Mission Church in Loyalton has been active initiating contact with other local Christian churches in the area during its ecumenical prayer service held every Good Friday and September 11, spearheaded by Father Arlon. He also started the novena to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary and gathers parishioners to celebrate the annual feast day of the mission's Patron Saint.

Father Arlon enjoys his ministry with the parishioners of the whole parish and we wish him many joys and blessings in his ministry as he proclaims the Gospel of Joy.



Photo by John E Boll 2011

Holy Rosary Church and Hall, Loyalton



Photo by John E Boll 2011

Interior of Holy Rosary Church, Loyalton



Photo by John E Boll 2011

Holy Family Church and Rectory, Portola

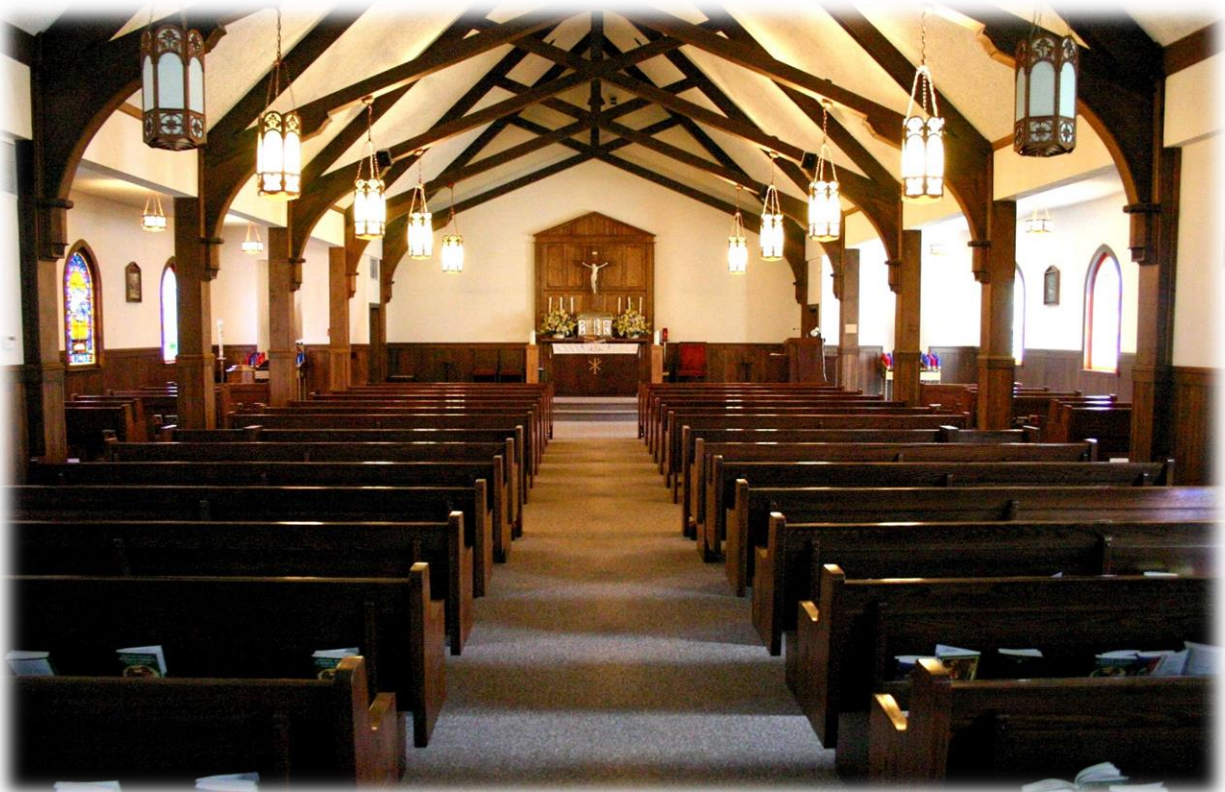


Photo by John E Boll 2011

Interior of Holy Family Church