

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 4

Father John E Boll, Diocesan Archivist

No 51

DIOCESAN ARCHIVIST'S REPORT ON THE DIGITIZATION OF THE SACRAMENTAL REGISTERS OF THE PARISHES OF THE DIOCESE

September 5, 2016

No thought was given to digitizing the sacramental registers of the parishes of the diocese until the disastrous Boles Fire in Weed, CA on September 15, 2014. The fire ignited at 1:38 pm that day and raced up a hill not far from Interstate 5. Father Joshy Mathew, administrator of Holy Family Parish, had just returned to Weed from Tulelake. Just minutes after he arrived home the hill behind the church was ablaze. All he had time to do was jump in his car and leave to escape the flames of the raging fire.

THE DEVASTATION OF THE WEED FIRE

By September 16, the Boles Fire had burned 375 acres and was only 20% contained. By September 20, the fire had destroyed 150 homes in Weed and 8 commercial properties, including Holy Family Catholic Church and Grace Presbyterian Church across the street. All the sacramental records of the Weed and Tulelake parishes were destroyed in the fire.



Photo by John E Boll 2011

Holy Family Church, Weed, before the 2014 Fire

INTERNET PHOTOS OF THE 2014 BOLES FIRE IN WEED, CALIFORNIA



The Boles Fire began not far from Interstate-5. The strong winds suddenly change direction and blow the fire north toward the city of Weed and Holy Family Church.

Firefighters had little hope of stopping the flames because of the high winds that day. Many homes in Weed were reduced to ashes in a matter of minutes.





Photo from the internet

The bell alone survived the fire that consumed Weed's Holy Family Church

BEGINNING THOUGHTS ABOUT DIGITIZING THE SACRAMENTAL REGISTERS

In 2015, Ron Alexander from Ricoh-USA contacted me to inquire if the diocese would be interested in digitizing any documents. I met with him to find out more about what Ricoh had to offer. As we talked, I began to think about the sacramental records of Holy Family Parish and Holy Cross Parish, Tulelake that were in safe-keeping at the Weed parish but now all destroyed in the Boles fire. I realized at that moment that fire could strike again anytime and anywhere in the diocese destroying other historic sacramental records in other parishes.

RON ALEXANDER PREPARES A PROPOSAL

Mr Alexander invited me to visit the Ricoh plant in Rancho Cordova. After my visit I realized that digitization of all sacramental registers of the parishes would be a sure way to prevent further loss when another natural disaster hits. I asked Ron to prepare a proposal that I could present to Bishop Soto. Ron asked for an estimate of the number of books that would be digitized. Having no clear idea how many sacramental books existed in each parish, I gave him a rough estimate of the scope of the job.

E-RECORDS-USA SELECTED TO DO THE DIGITIZATION

Realizing the size of this project, Mr Alexander did not think the Ricoh plant in Rancho Cordova had the equipment needed to handle the size of this project. Through his contacts, he was able to secure the help of eRecordsUSA in Fremont, CA that had the equipment needed to handle this large diocesan project. Ron Alexander prepared a proposal for our diocesan project.

BISHOP SOTO CONSULTS WITH THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL

I presented the Ricoh proposal to Bishop Soto who took time to consider it before taking any action. The bishop agreed that digitizing the sacramental books would be a wise decision to take but he wanted the Presbyteral Council to be involved in the discernment process.

Mr Alexander was invited to make a presentation to the Presbyteral Council in 2015 and the Council members recommended to the bishop that the diocese move forward with the project. Chancellor Kathy Conner said she did not have the staff to oversee this project so Bishop Soto asked me as archivist if I was willing to organize and oversee the process of digitizing all the parish sacramental records. I agreed to coordinate the project.

PLANNING THE PROCESS

I decided to use the deanery structure to accomplish the goal. After discussing the plan with Mr Pankaj Sharma of eRecordsUSA in Fremont, he thought his company would be able to digitize the documents of one deanery a month. I set up a schedule to gather the records of one deanery a month.

HELP OF THE DEANS

I asked the deans of the diocese to collect the sacramental registers of the parishes in their deaneries and deliver them to the Diocesan Archives on their scheduled date. I am grateful to the deans for their help and cooperation in the process.

USING THE DEANERY STRUCTURE

Using the deaneries as listed in the diocesan directory, I began with the Siskiyou Deanery. This deanery had the least number of parishes in the diocese and the records of Weed and Tulelake had been lost in the Boles Fire. eRecordsUSA digitized the sacramental records of the Siskiyou deanery quickly and Mr Sharma thought his staff could handle the documents of two deaneries a month. I revised the schedule to do two deaneries each month. I sent an updated list to the deans through the Tuesday e-mail with the revised delivery schedule.

The next two deaneries were Shasta and Sutter Buttes. Shasta Deanery had six parishes but Sutter Buttes Deanery had 12. From that point on, eRecordsUSA struggled to digitize the increased number of registers from the larger deaneries in four weeks' time. That is why the process took longer than expected because of the increased number of books to be digitized.

TRANSPORTING THE DOCUMENTS TO FREMONT

Ricoh provided a van and driver to pick-up the sacramental registers from the Diocesan Archives at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, deliver them to eRecordsUSA in Fremont and return them to Sacramento. The Ricoh driver, Mr Ishola McKinnie, did the monthly pick-up and delivery of the sacramental records between the Diocesan Archives and eRecordsUSA in Fremont.



Ishola McKinnie prepares to transport sacramental records to eRecordsUSA in Fremont

CONCLUDING THE DIGITIZING PROCESS

The process to digitize the sacramental registers of all the parishes of the diocese began in October 2015 and was completed in July 2016. It took ten months to complete the process. All registers have been returned to their parishes and no books were lost or damaged.

I am pleased with the careful handling of the sacramental registers by the staff of eRecordsUSA in Fremont. The employees realized that many of the registers were fragile, dating back to the 1850s, and they handled them with great care and respect. The eRecordsUSA employees did a very professional job in digitizing the sacramental registers of our diocese.

SPECIAL THANKS

I thank all who were involved in the process of digitizing the sacramental records of the diocese. Thanks to Ron Alexander who raised the issue of digitizing our records and Jason Tivy-Debauche from Ricoh-USA who oversaw the technical aspects of the project; Bishop Jaime Soto who saw the wisdom of preserving the sacramental records by digitizing them; his consultation with the Presbyteral Council; the Presbyteral Council's supported the project; Chancellor Kathy Conner; JoAnn Horta who helped when I was not in the office; the deans of the diocese who collected the sacramental records from the parishes and delivered them to the Diocesan Archives and then returned them to the parishes; the pastors and secretaries who prepared the parish records for

digitization; Mr Pankaj Sharma, business owner of eRecordsUSA, and his staff who digitized the sacramental records; and Ishola McKinnie of Ricoh-USA who transported the documents from Sacramento to Fremont and returned them to the Archives in Sacramento. With everyone's help and cooperation, we have successfully completed this ten month project!



Photo by John E Boll 2016

The team members of eRecords-USA in Fremont, CA who digitized the sacramental records of the parishes of the Diocese of Sacramento; Mr Pankaj Sharma, owner, is second from the left

**REPORT TO BISHOP JAIME SOTO, BISHOP MYRON COTTA
AND PRIESTS AND DEACONS OF THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO
UPON COMPLETION OF THE PROCESS OF DIGITIZING THE
SACRAMENTAL RECORDS OF THE PARISHES OF THE DIOCESE**

AMERICAN RIVER DEANERY

PARISHES	PAGES SCANNED
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Sacramento	1809
Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Carmichael	4101
Presentation of the BVM Parish, Sacramento	2499
Saint Ignatius Loyola Parish, Sacramento	2613
Saint John Vianney Parish, Rancho Cordova	3255
Saint Joseph Parish, Sacramento	6284
Saint Lawrence Parish, North Highlands	4018
Saint Mel Parish, Fair Oaks	3821
Saint Philomene Parish, Sacramento	5051
Saint John the Evangelist Parish, Carmichael	<u>2488</u>
Total	35,939

CITY DEANERY

Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Sacramento	13,500
Divine Mercy Parish, Sacramento	964
Holy Spirit Parish, Sacramento	3470
Mercy General Hospital, Sacramento	1155
Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Sacramento	8712
Sacred Heart Parish, Sacramento	4086
Saint Anne Parish, Sacramento	2628
Saint Anthony Parish, Sacramento	829
Saint Elizabeth Parish, Sacramento	3214
Saint Francis of Assisi Parish, Sacramento	4456
Saint Joseph Parish, Clarksburg	4761
Saint Mary Parish, Sacramento	6778
Saint Robert Parish, Sacramento	<u>2635</u>
Total	57,188

GOLD COUNTRY DEANERY

Holy Trinity Parish, El Dorado Hills/Cameron Park	1380
Immaculate Conception Church, Sutter Creek	2574
Sacred Heart Church, Ione	785
Saint John the Baptist Parish, Folsom	5010
Saint Katharine Drexel Parish, Martell	425

Saint Patrick Church, Jackson	1438
Saint Patrick Parish, Placerville	4277
Saint Theresa Parish, South Lake Tahoe	<u>3763</u>
Total	19,652

MOTHER LODE DEANERY

Assumption of the BVM Parish, Truckee	4651
Corpus Christi Parish, Tahoe City	1109
Immaculate Conception Parish, Downieville	773
Saint Canice Parish, Nevada City	1400
Saint Dominic Parish, Colfax	1012
Saint Joseph Parish, Auburn	5076
Saint Patrick Parish, Grass Valley	3226
Saint Teresa Parish, Auburn	<u>532</u>
Total	17,779

RIDGE DEANERY

Holy Family Parish, Portola	924
Our Lady of the Snows Parish, Lake Almanor	652
Sacred Heart Parish, Alturas	1471
Sacred Heart Parish, Susanville	1304
Saint John Parish, Quincy	<u>608</u>
Total	4959

SHASTA DEANERY

Our Lady of Mercy Parish, Redding	1462
Sacred Heart Parish, Anderson	2218
Sacred Heart Parish, Red Bluff	4022
Saint Joseph Parish, Redding	4656
Saint Francis of Assisi Parish, Burney	583
Saint Patrick Parish, Weaverville	<u>709</u>
Total	13,650

SISKIYOU DEANERY

Holy Cross Parish, Tulelake	Records Burned in Fire
Holy Family Parish, Weed	Records Burned in Fire
Sacred Heart Parish, Fort Jones	264
Saint Anthony Parish, Mount Shasta	790
Saint John the Evangelist Parish, Dunsmuir	472
Saint Joseph Parish, McCloud	2348
Saint Joseph Parish, Yreka	<u>1359</u>
Total	5,233

SOLONO DEANERY

Holy Spirit Parish, Fairfield	10,543
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Fairfield	2011
Saint Basil Parish, Vallejo	5642
Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, Vallejo	3190
Saint Dominic Parish, Benicia	5105
Saint Joseph Parish, Rio Vista	1352
Saint Joseph Parish, Vacaville	1001
Saint Mary Parish, Vacaville	5867
Saint Vincent Ferrer Parish, Vallejo	<u>13,362</u>
Total	48,073

SOUTHERN SUBURBS DEANERY

All Hallows Parish, Sacramento	5286
Good Shepherd Parish, Elk Grove	1800
Immaculate Conception Parish, Sacramento	6132
Saint Anthony Parish, Walnut Grove	1903
Saint Charles Borromeo Parish, Sacramento	2751
Saint Christopher Parish, Galt	2139
Saint Jeong Hae-Elizabeth, Sacramento	436
Saint Joseph Parish, Elk Grove	3787
Saint Maria Goretti Parish, Elk Grove	174
Saint Paul Parish, Sacramento	2938
Saint Rose Parish, Sacramento	8195
Saint Stephen the First Martyr Parish, Sacramento	497
Saint Therese Parish, Isleton	864
Vietnamese Martyrs Parish, Sacramento	<u>315</u>
Total	37,217

SUTTER BUTTES DEANERY

Immaculate Conception Parish, Corning	1146
Our Divine Savior Parish, Chico	1203
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Colusa	2568
Sacred Heart Parish, Gridley	2874
Sacred Heart Parish, Maxwell	3255
Saint Dominic Parish, Orland	3973
Saint Isidore Parish, Yuba City	5565
Saint John the Baptist Parish, Chico	5699
Saint Joseph Parish, Marysville	9314
Saint Monica Parish, Willows	2252
Saint Thomas Aquinas Newman Center, Chico	541
Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish, Oroville	1558
Saint Thomas More Parish, Paradise	<u>918</u>
Total	40,866

WEST PLACER DEANERY

Divine Savior Parish, Orangevale	1200
Holy Family Parish, Citrus Heights	4573
Saints Peter and Paul Parish, Rocklin	1791
Saint Clare Parish, Roseville	1366
Saint Joseph Marello Parish, Granite Bay	305
Saint Joseph Parish, Lincoln	2184
Saint Rose of Lima Parish, Roseville	<u>7410</u>
Total	18,829

YOLO DEANERY

Holy Cross Parish, West Sacramento	3285
Holy Rosary Parish, Woodland	8303
Our Lady of Grace Parish, West Sacramento	1576
Saint Anthony Parish, Winters	1849
Saint James Parish, Davis	4442
Saint Paul Parish, Knights Landing	810
Saint Peter Parish, Dixon	<u>3397</u>
Total	23,662

TOTAL PAGES SCANNED FOR ALL THE PARISHES: 323,047



Photo courtesy of Fr Joshy Mathew

The new Holy Family Church Complex in Weed, Rising from the Ashes!