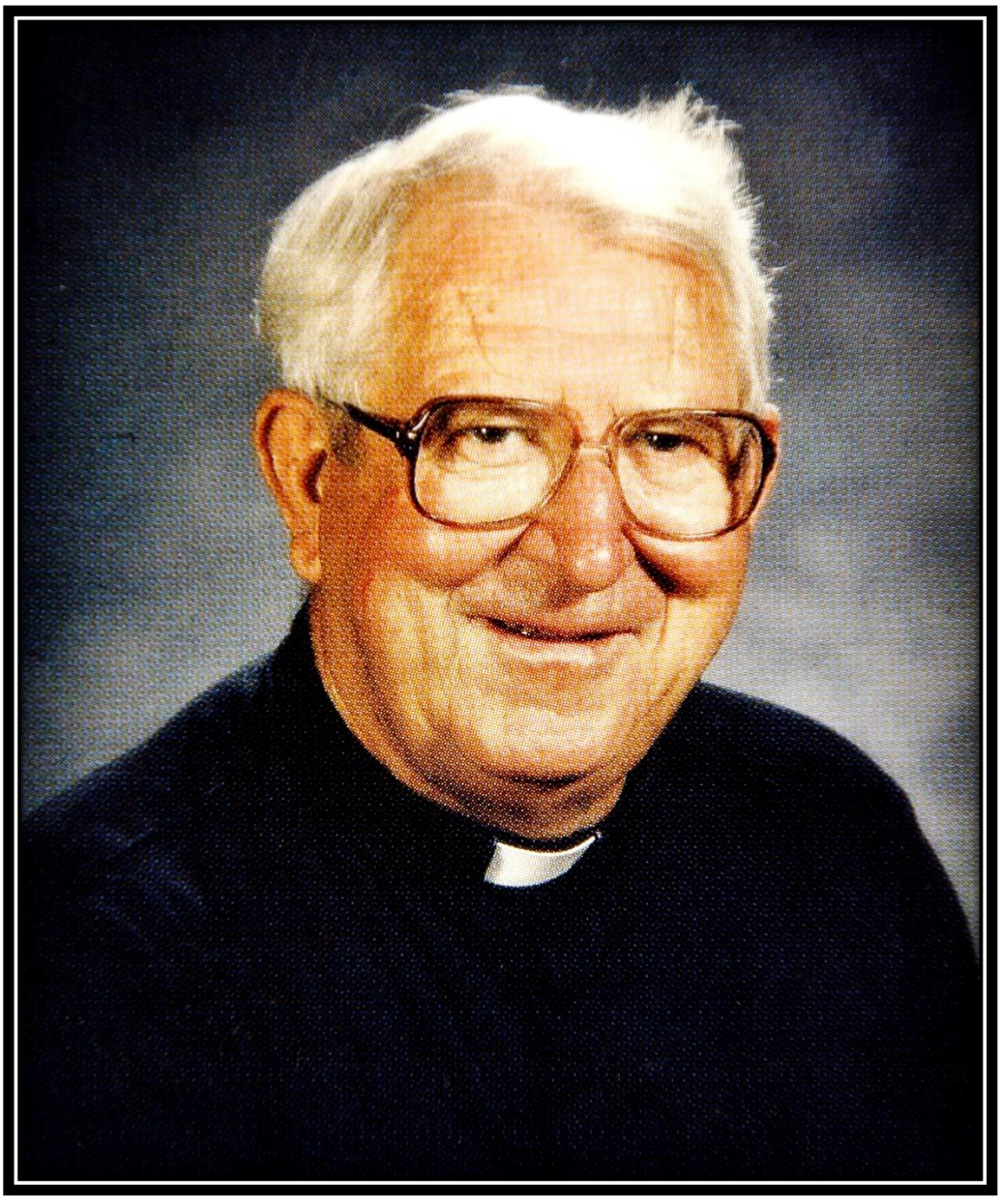
SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 5 Father John E Boll, Diocesan Archives No 22

Father Richard Doheny

Native Son of County Tipperary, Ireland
Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento
Pastor of Emeritus of Saint Mel Parish, Fair Oaks, California
October 30, 1923 -- March 4, 2006



Richard Doheny was born on October 30, 1923, the sixth of ten children born to Richard Doheny and Mary Dwyer. Two of his sisters became nuns. He was raised on the family dairy farm in County Tipperary and grew up with a healthy respect for hard work which was nurtured by faith in his close-knit family. Richard attended Thurles Christian Brothers School from 1937 to 1942 and then on to Saint Patrick Seminary, Thurles, where he studied from 1942 to 1948.

ORDAINED A PRIEST FOR THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

Richard was ordained to the priesthood at Saint Patrick College, Thurles, on June 13, 1948 by Archbishop Kinane. He was one of nearly a dozen Irish priests selected by Father Thomas Kirby to serve the diocese of Sacramento during California's post-World War II population growth. "There was a great need for priests at that time," Father Doheny said, with a smile on his face, and then added, "We all paid our own way."

Ordination day, Fr. Doheny standing behind Bishop Kinane. . To the left of Fr. Doheny is Fr. John Grace.

Photo from Saint Paul Parish Archives

FIRST ASSIGNMENTS IN THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

After his arrival in Sacramento, Father Doheny's first assignments were as assistant pastor to Saint Patrick Parish, Angel's Camp, followed by an assignment at Saint Joseph Parish in Marysville.

NAMED PASTOR OF QUINCY

After six years as an assistant, Father Doheny was appointed to his first pastorate in 1954 at Saint John Parish in Quincy. He served in that pastoral role for six years until he was appointed founding pastor of Saint Paul Parish in South Sacramento.

Photo by John E Boll

Saint John Church, Quincy

FOUNDING PASTOR OF SAINT PAUL PARISH, SACRAMENTO

In 1960, Bishop Joseph T McGucken appointed Father Doheny founding pastor of Saint Paul Parish in Florin. As the area grew in population, it became evident that the old mission church in Florin was not large enough to accommodate the growing number of parishioners and in addition, parts of the old facility were simply wearing out.

On the original property where the Florin mission church had been built, diocesan officials thought that land was adequate to build a larger church. Father Doheny, on the other hand, judged that the creek on the property limited its potential as a building site and he convinced Bishop McGucken to lend the parish money for a down-payment on 15 acres of land on the corner of Florin Road and Gardner Avenue as the site for the new parish.

It was at this time that Father Doheny met Mary Scardello. She recalls how Father Doheny "left his mark" on this new parish which began with 100 families but grew to be a parish

with 3,000 families. Ms Scardello went on to say that “People who came here liked the way they were treated.” She was impressed by the way Father Doheny went about purchasing property, building a new church and moving in temporary buildings for much-needed religious education classrooms. “He was the kind of a person people gravitated to because he had the ability to talk anybody into doing anything,” she said. Whenever there was an event in the parish hall, Father Doheny was in the kitchen cooking and frequently sent people away with vegetables picked from his own garden.

Photo from St Paul Parish Archives

The First Saint Paul Church in Florin 1946

NAMED PASTOR OF SAINT MEL PARISH, FAIR OAKS

In 1976, Bishop Alden J Bell appointed Father Doheny pastor of Saint Mel Parish in Fair Oaks. In this parish, he once again directed building projects including renovation of the church, construction of a space for youth ministry, a library and computer lab and expansion of the rectory and social hall.

He took great pleasure in preparing dinner for friends and fellow priests which earned him the nickname “Mr Hospitality,” said Father Liam McSweeney, Father Doheny’s cousin who succeeded him as pastor of the parish when he retired. “Every Christmas, Thanksgiving or special occasion, he was always inviting a group of priests to his rectory for dinner.”

STRICKEN WITH CANCER

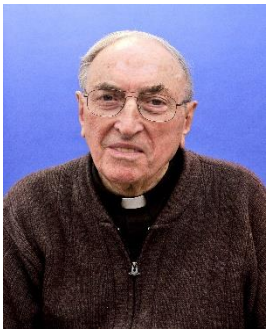
Father Doheny served as pastor of Saint Mel parish for 30 years. He was diagnosed with cancer and battled this disease for three years. After retiring in 2005, he continued living at Saint Mel rectory until his death on March 4, 2006. He died in his own bed in the parish rectory at the age of 82.

Photo by John E Boll

Saint Mel Church, Fair Oaks

FATHER DOHENY'S FUNERAL

Because Father Doheny was a larger-than-life personality, known by many priests and people in the Diocese of Sacramento and beyond, his Funeral Mass at Saint Mel Parish had an attendance of nearly 2000 people on March 8, 2006. Bishop William Weigand was the main celebrant at the Mass and was joined by 130 priest concelebrants from the Sacramento and Stockton dioceses.



Monsignor Edward Kavanagh, pastor of Saint Rose Parish in Sacramento, was the homilist at the Mass. He and Dick Doheny grew up just two miles from each other. Although they attended different seminaries, they were ordained the same year for the Diocese of Sacramento. Monsignor Kavanagh described his lifelong friend and golfing partner as "a Gaelic scholar, very well read, a man who never forgot a name or a face. He was a man of prayer and

great vision. He could see a program doing well in another parish and implement it in his own parish."

TESTIMONY OF PARISHIONERS

Katie Burke, a parishioner of Saint Mel Parish and coordinator of the parish's *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* program, says her life was changed by Father Doheny. She was baptized by him in 1991 and said she was inspired to full membership in the Catholic faith after attending his weekly religious education classes. "He was an absolutely wonderful teacher who taught the faith by sharing personal experiences," she said. Her two children were both married by Father Doheny. "He was fully involved with bringing people to the Catholic faith and became one of my very best friends."

After making several pilgrimages to Europe led by Father Doheny, Katie Burke concluded that her pastor, whose eyes twinkled "whenever he started with the blarney," typically knew more than the travel guides.

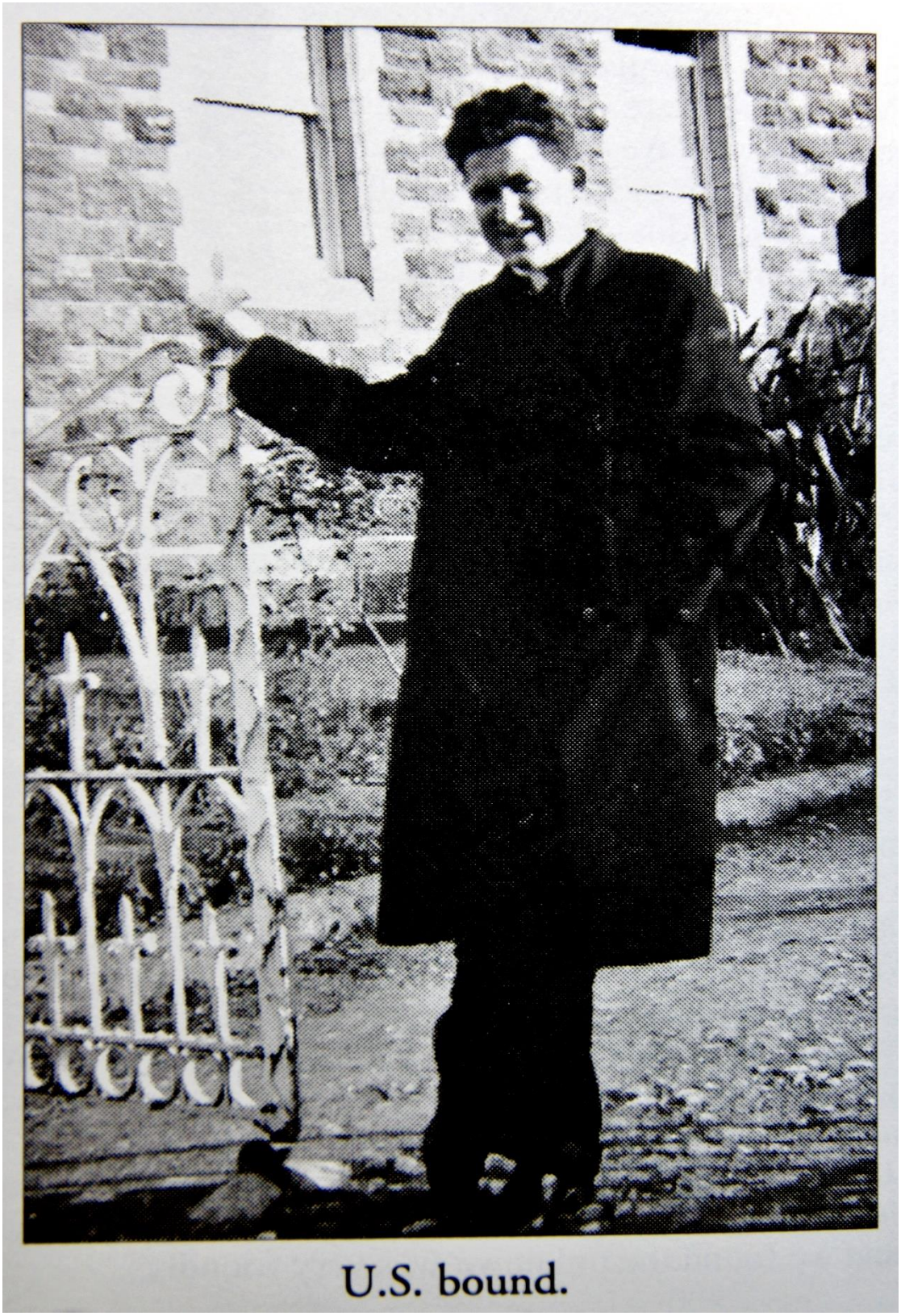
Father Liam McSweeney, Father Doheny's cousin, accompanied the Doheny family back to Ireland where a Funeral Mass was held for him in Gortnahoe followed by burial at Fennor Cemetery in County Tipperary. At the time of his death, Father Doheny was survived by his brothers Bill of Australia, John of Tipperary and Ned of Dublin and his sister, Nora Doheny of Tipperary, Ireland.

Photos of Father Doheny on his Journey of Life

The Doheny family. To Father's right is his mother, Mary; to his left is his father, Richard. Standing in front him is first cousin Angela O'Dwyer.

Ordination day: surrounded by his mom and dad. Standing: Bill, Mary, Michael, John, Nora and Ned

1988 Family reunion in Irealand. Sitting: Mary, Sister Angela and Nora. Standing: Fr. Doheny, Ned, Bill, John and Michael.



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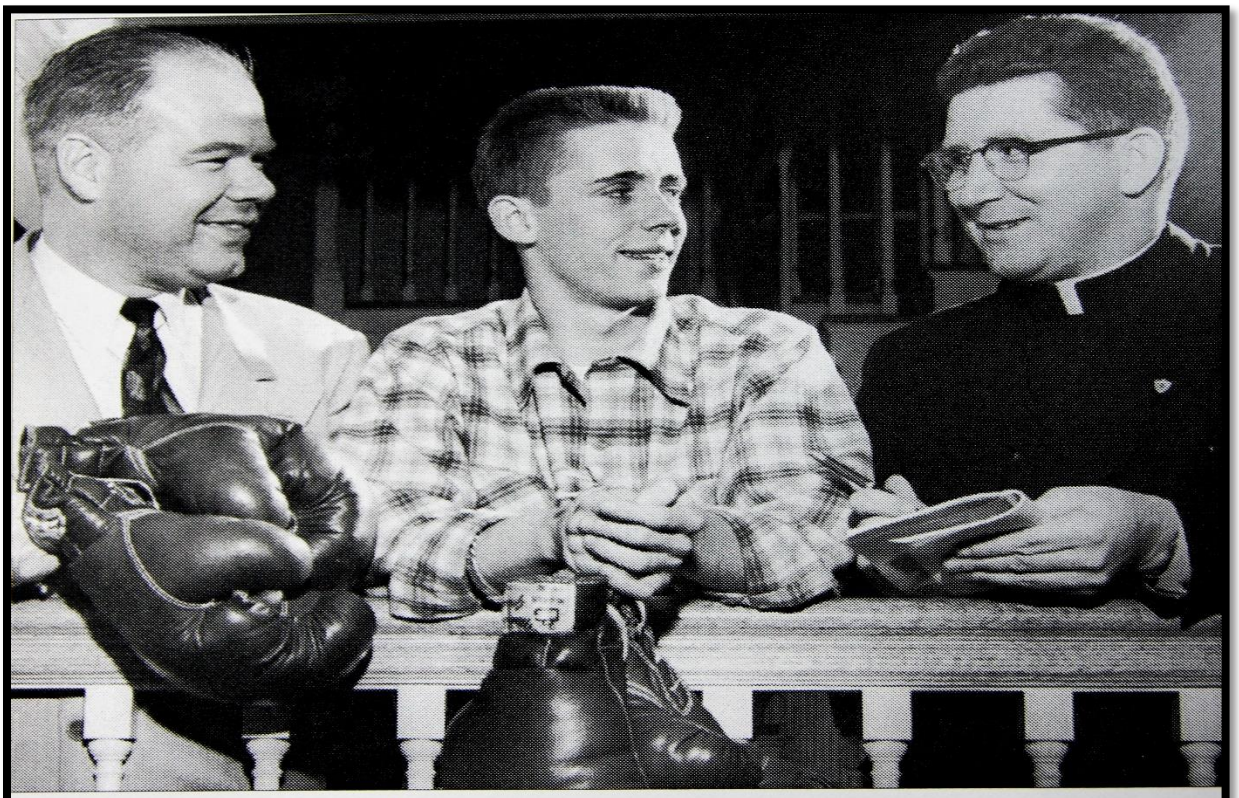
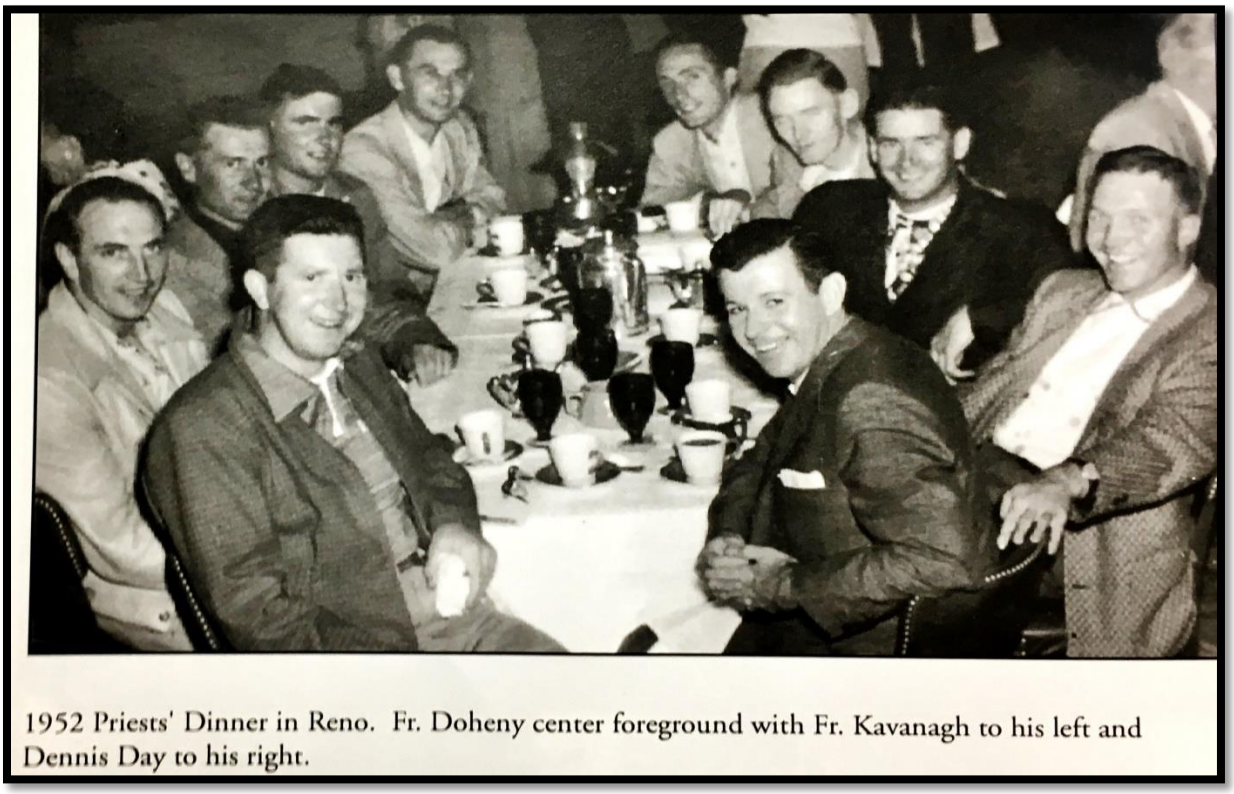


At a CYO event in Marysville

Fr. Doheny with Jeanne Crain, Alan Ladd, Regis Twomey and Noah Berry in Quincy for the filming of "Guns of the Timberland"

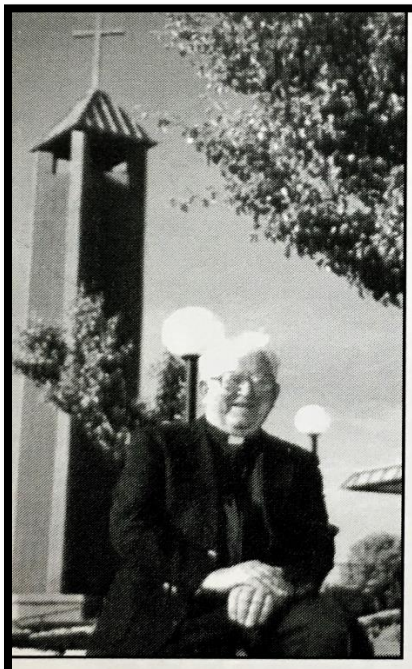


1952 Priests' Dinner in Reno. Fr. Doheny center foreground with Fr. Kavanagh to his left and Dennis Day to his right.

Father Doheny Meets Pope John Paul II in Rome

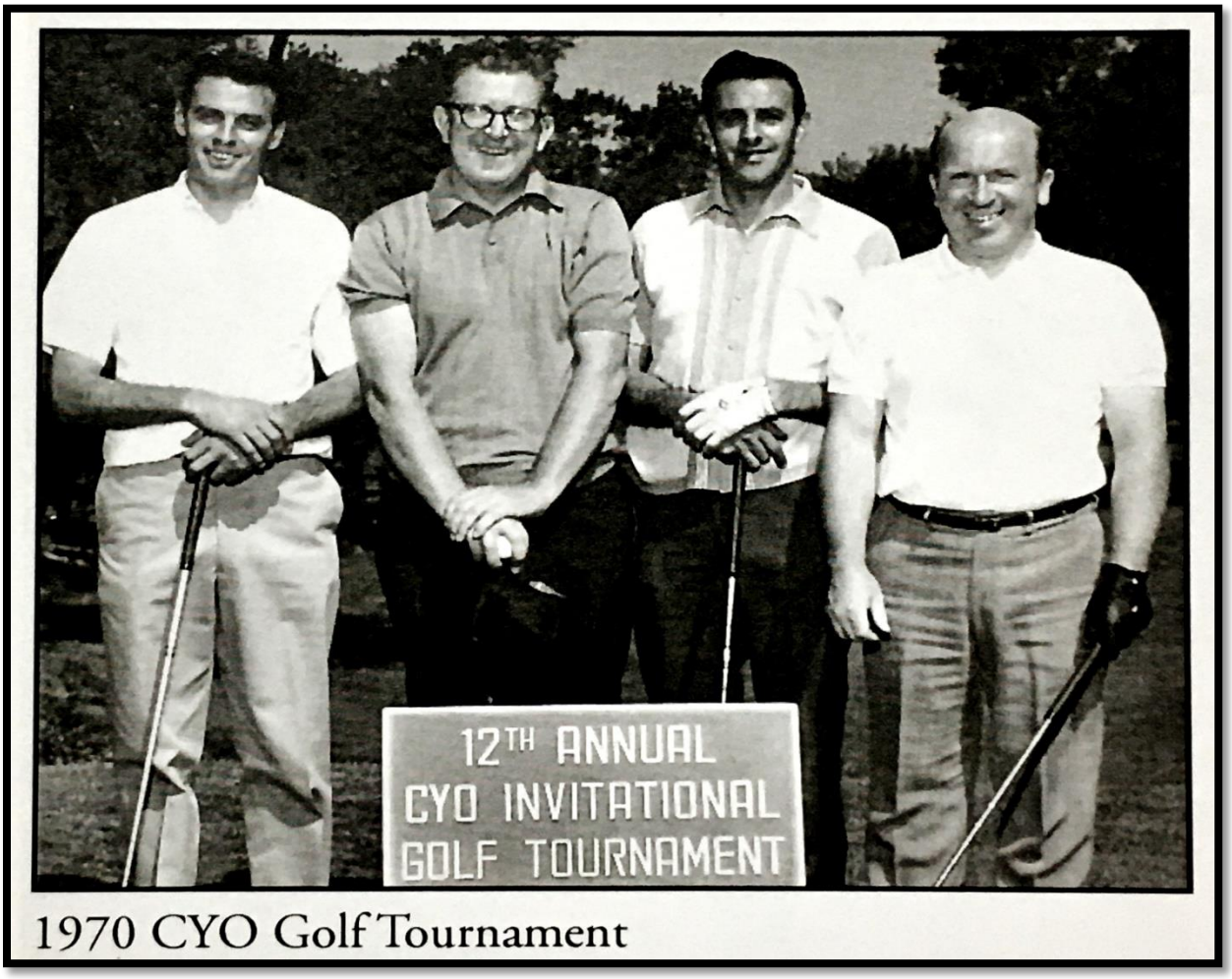
"My heartiest congratulations and prayers for you on this special day. Your dedication, hard work And strong spiritual life have benefited us all. You are a great priest."

Bishop William Weigand, Diocese of Sacramento

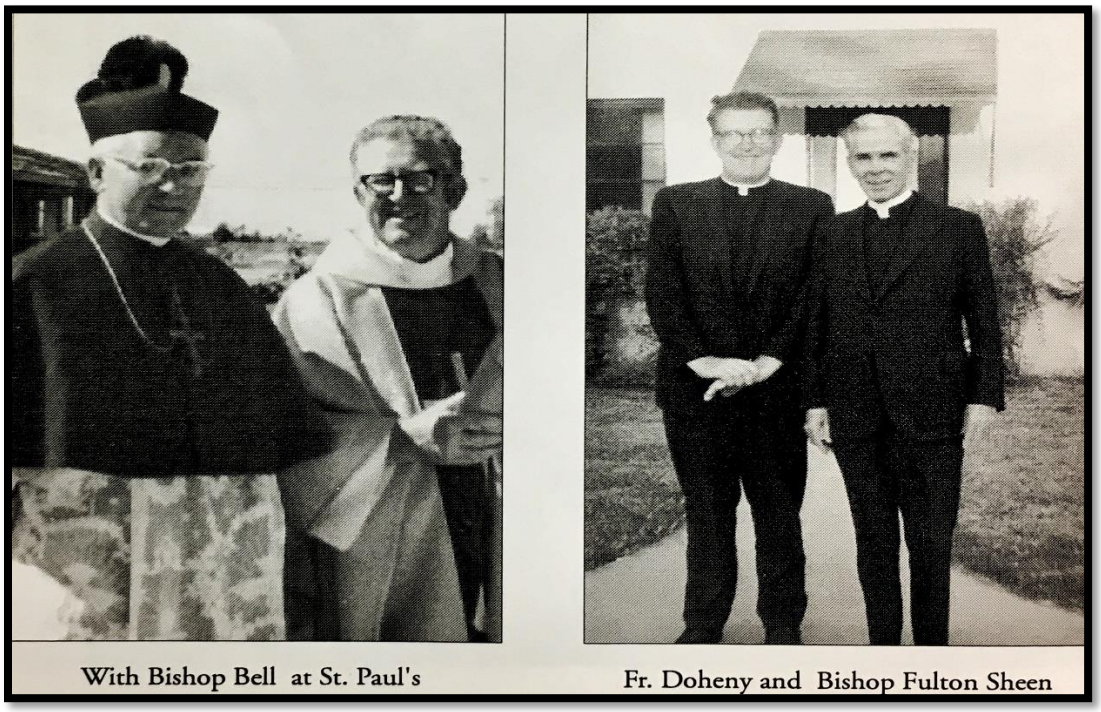


1998 New bell tower

Picking peaches in his garden



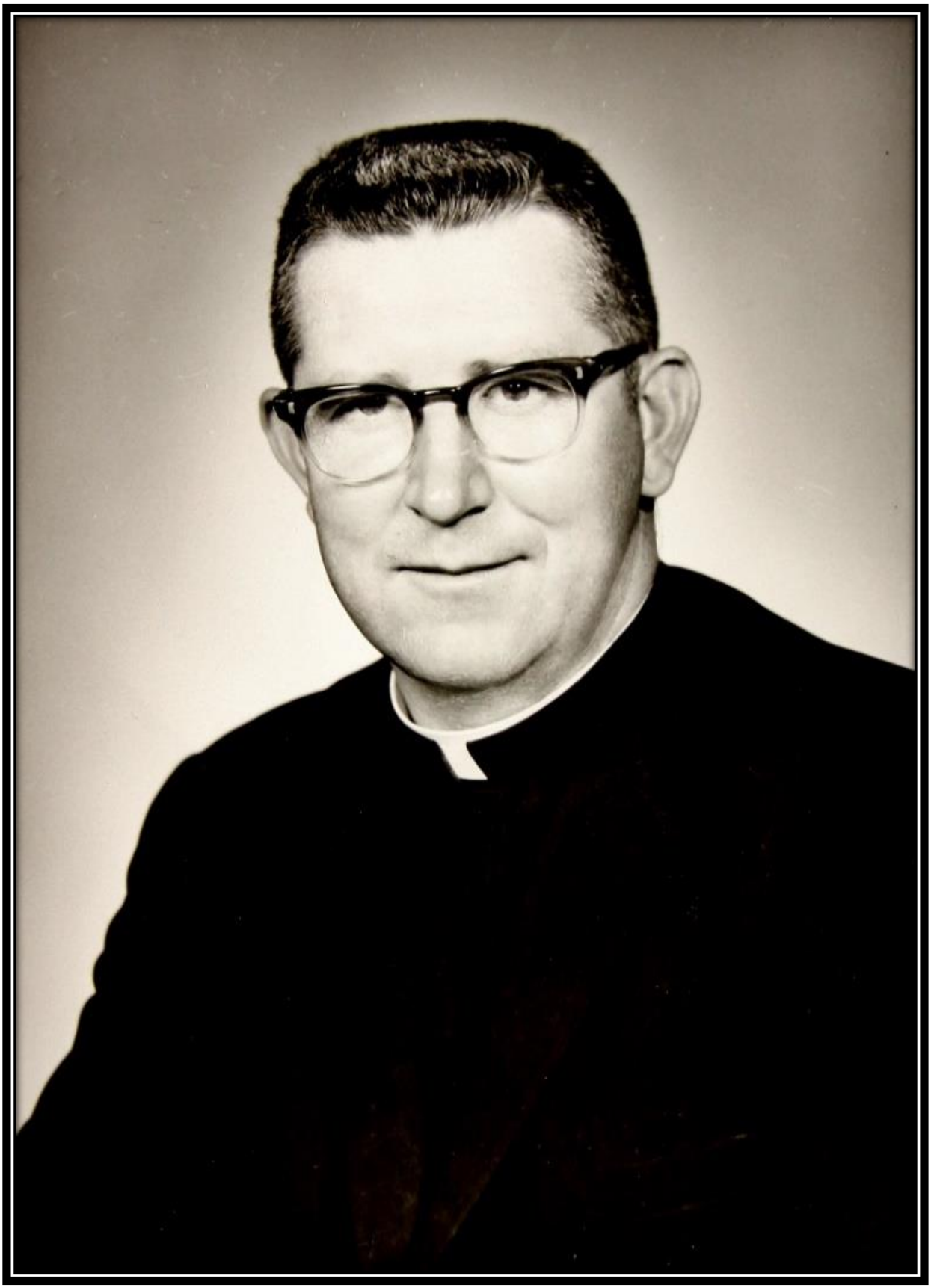
1970 CYO Golf Tournament



With Bishop Bell at St. Paul's

Fr. Doheny and Bishop Fulton Sheen

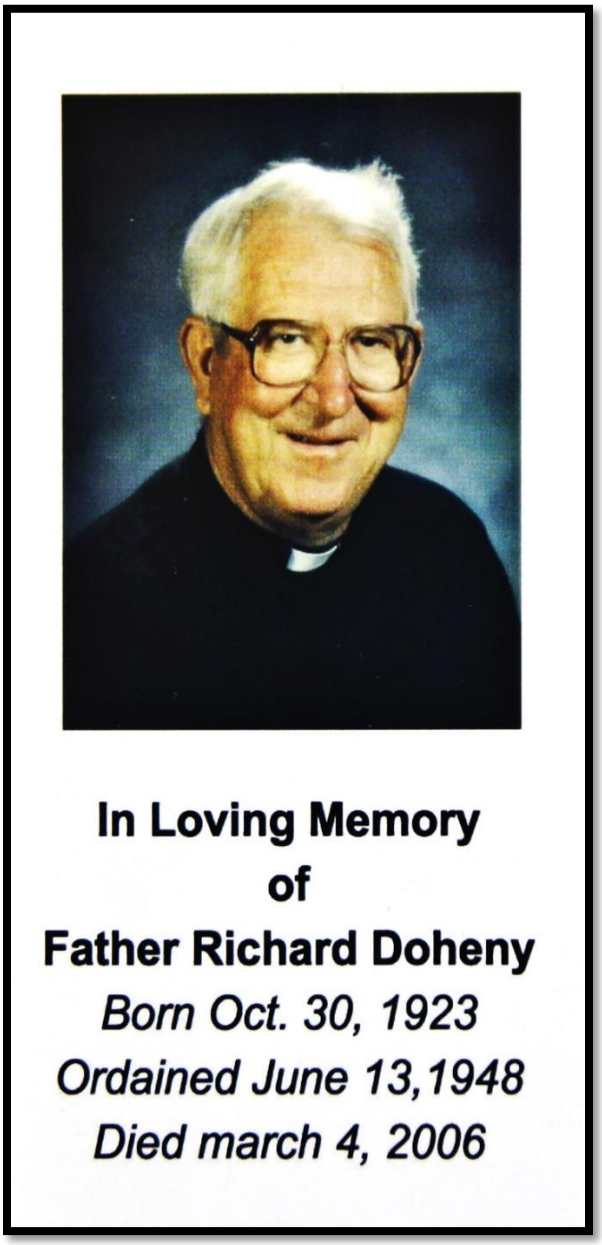
Father Doheny visits the students at Saint Mel School



To live in the midst
of the world without
wishing its pleasures;
To be a member of
each family, but
belonging to none;
To share all sufferings;
to penetrate all
secrets; to heal
all wounds;
To go from men to God
and offer Him their
prayers; to return from
God to men to bring
pardon and hope;
To have a heart of fire for charity and a heart of
bronze for chastity;
To teach and pardon, console, and bless always;
My God, what a life!
And it is yours, O priest of God!

Henri Lacordaire, OP
1802-1861

ARCHIVIST'S COMMENT



Father Doheny was an amazing man. A natural extrovert, a people person with the gift and Blarney, he was able to touch people's lives by his friendly and welcoming manner and his Irish wit and humor. He loved to make up humorous terms from Latin like "sub ubi" for the word *underwear.* The literal Latin words, ***sub ubi*** means *under where?* Not *underwear.* But this was a typical Doheny malapropism for which he was famous.

FIVE TERMS

Father Dick was appointed pastor of Saint Mel Parish before there were six-year terms for pastors. He served as pastor of Fair Oaks for three decades. We would say today that he served five terms as pastor of Saint Mel Parish.

ALWAYS BUILDING AND DEVELOPING

During all his pastorates, he never lost his welcoming spirit and desire to develop new facilities and programs to build up the parish community.

ONE OF A KIND

There may never be another personality like Richard Doheny in the history of the Diocese of Sacramento. All who knew him
celebrate the life of this dedicated priest who was one of the more interesting and outgoing characters who blessed the People of God for a half century in this part of the Master's vineyard.

Eternal rest grant unto Father Richard Doheny, Oh Lord.
May he enjoy eternal life in your presence.
May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed
through the mercy of God rest in peace.