

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

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Father John E Boll, Archivist

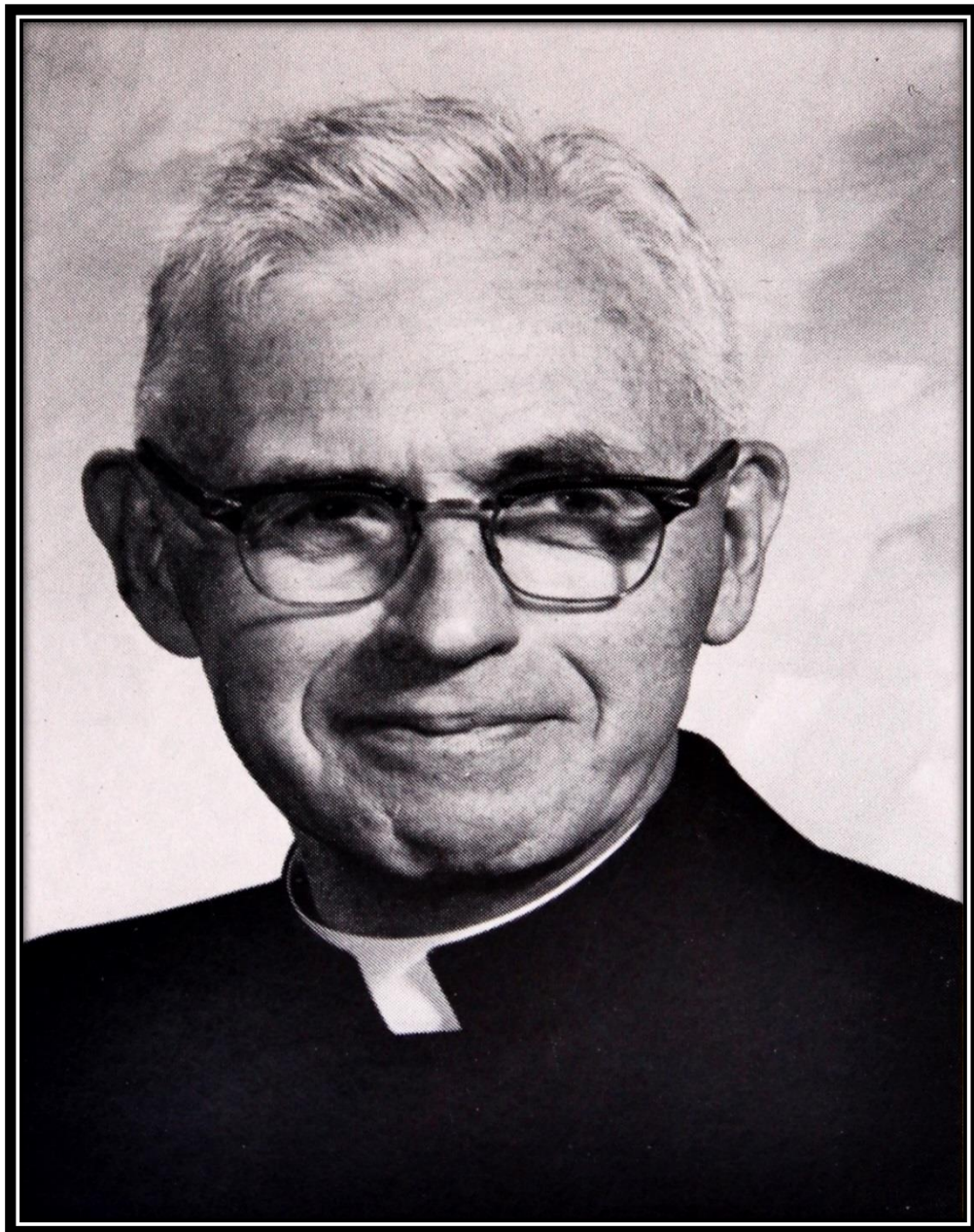
No 5

Monsignor Paul Degnan

Son of Legga, County Longford, Ireland

Pastor Emeritus of Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish, Oroville

1907 – 1997



Monsignor Paul Degnan was born in Legga, County Longford, Ireland. After discerning a calling to the priesthood, he entered Saint Kieran's Seminary in Kilkenny to begin his studies. He later came to Saint Patrick Seminary in Menlo Park, CA where he completed his theological training and was ordained to the priesthood in Saint Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco on June 4, 1932.



Photo by John E Boll 2007

Saint Patrick Seminary, Menlo Park

First Assignments

His first assignments were to Saint Joseph Parish in Marysville and then to Saint Patrick Parish in Sonora where he served as an assistant priest. He then was appointed pastor of Saint Patrick Parish in Scotia, Humboldt County, from 1942-48; Saint Joseph Parish in Crescent City, Del Norte County, 1948-1950; Saint Paul Parish in Knights Landing, Yolo County, 1950-52; and Saint James Parish in Davis, Yolo County, from 1952-1963.

Pastor of Saint James Parish, Davis

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) began while Father Degnan was pastor in Davis. Vatican II began a new era in the life of the Catholic Church that renewed and refocused its vision of the Church in the Modern World.

This was a time of growth in Davis, both in the student body at the University of California in Davis and the Davis community in general. These new realities increased pressure on Father Degnan and he asked to be moved to a smaller, less hectic parish where he could continue his ministry. Bishop Alden J Bell granted Father Degnan's request and appointed him pastor of Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish in Oroville where he served as pastor until his retirement in 1976.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint James Church, Davis in the 1950s

Father Degnan's sister, Mary Degnan, was devoted to her brother and served as his housekeeper for most of his priesthood. When he retired she moved with him to the former sisters' convent in Oroville and took care of him until his death.

Monsignor Degnan was 89 at the time of his death. He had suffered from Parkinson's disease for more than 15 years. Father Troy Powers, who succeeded Monsignor Degnan as pastor of Oroville, stated that Monsignor Degnan's "devotion to God, to his sister Mary, and to parishioners who continued to visit him was quite evident. He was a man of piety, prayer, devotion and service. Through all his years, Monsignor Degnan continued to provide us with an exemplary example of the Catholic faith.

"I anointed him Thursday (August 14) as he thumbed his rosary in prayer. He was very persevering and in a state of prayer until the end. Parishioners are always talking about how he touched their lives in significant way."

Although Monsignor Degnan had been retired 21 years, people still thought of him with affection as they recalled the lasting impact his 34 years in Oroville had made on their lives. This is a testimony to his effective ministry among the people of Oroville.

At the time of his death on August 16, 1997, Monsignor Degnan was the oldest living priest in the Diocese of Sacramento and the last living priest in his ordination class of 1932, including Bishop Alden J Bell and Monsignor Markham who was classmates.

May Monsignor Degnan abide now in the joy and peace of the Kingdom of God



Photo from the Diocesan Archives

**Monsignor Paul Degnan's Golden Jubilee Mass at Sacred Heart Church,
Sacramento**

Monsignor Degnan, left, Bishop Quinn, center, and Monsignor Markham, right



**Monsignor Degnan's Grave
Priests' Section, Calvary Cemetery, Sacramento**



Photo by John E Boll 2015

The Beginning of a New Day