

# SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

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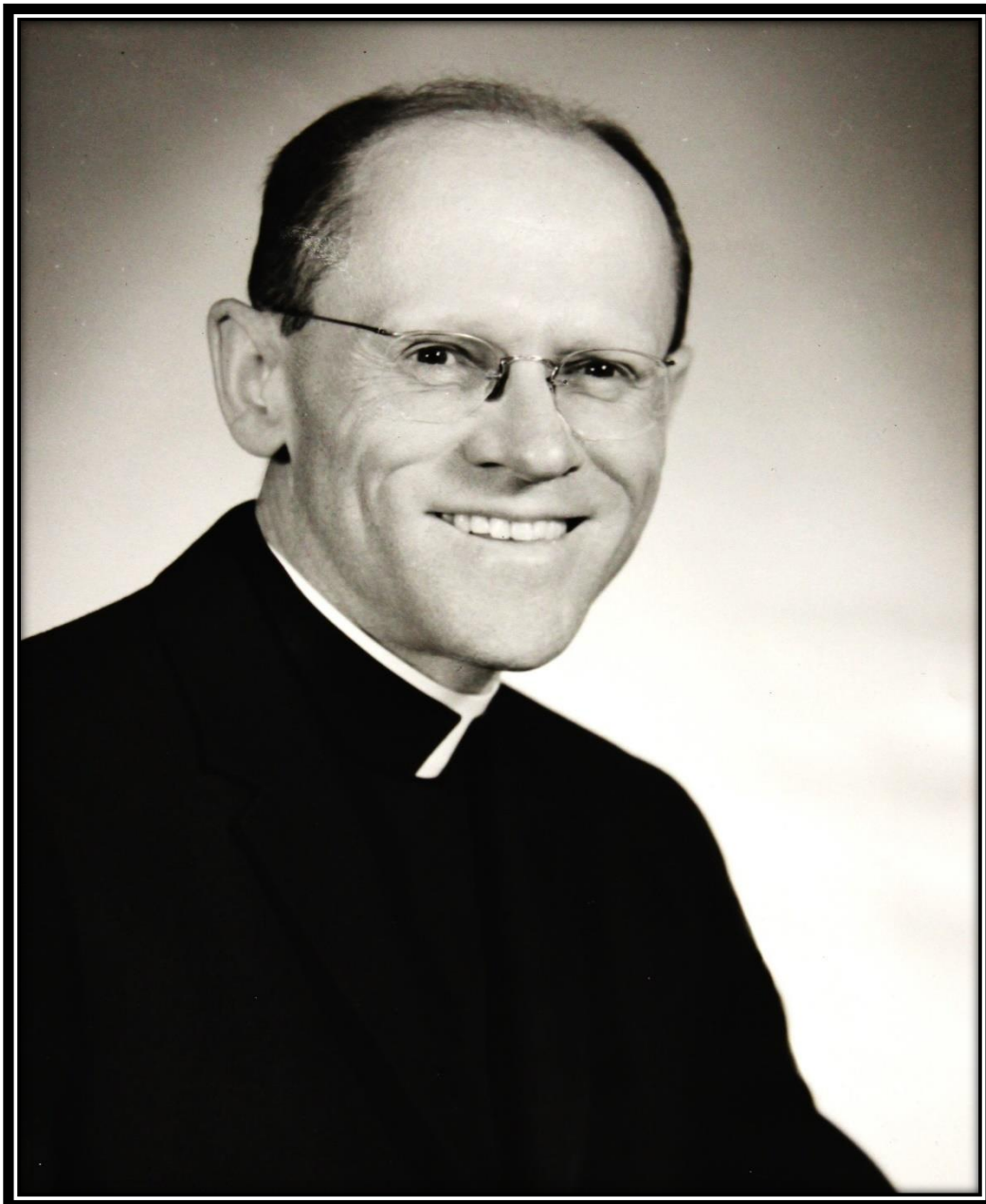
## *Monsignor Raymond Benedict Renwald*

Native of Fort Madison, Iowa

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor Emeritus of Saint Thomas More Parish, Paradise, CA

October 12, 1905 – May 2, 1993



***Raymond Benedict Renwald was born in Fort Madison, Iowa*** on October 12, 1905. He entered the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio in 1919 to begin his studies for the priesthood. He was ordained a priest in Saint Joseph Cathedral in Columbus on May 31, 1931 for the Diocese of Sacramento by Bishop James Joseph Hartley, bishop of Columbus.

### **Father Renwald's Assignments**

Father Renwald's first assignment was to Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Colusa. In 1937 he came to Sacramento to become diocesan superintendent of schools, a post he held for 15 years, and assistant pastor at the cathedral. In 1951, he was appointed rector of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament and in 1968 Bishop Alden Bell named him pastor of Saint Philomene Parish in Sacramento. In 1973 he was appointed pastor of Saint Thomas More Parish, Paradise until 1981 when he retired at the age of 76 as pastor emeritus of Saint Thomas Parish.



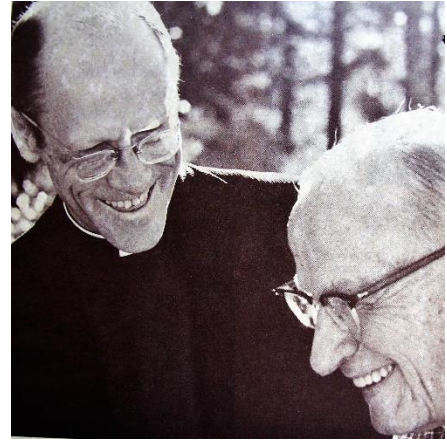
Photo by John E Boll 2014

**Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament**

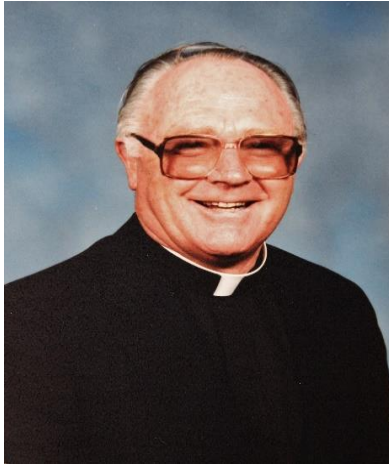
### Served on many Boards

Monsignor Renwald was the first chairman of the Sacramento Human Relations Commission and served on the commission from 1961 to 1971. He was a member of the diocesan school board, the priests' senate and the diocesan building commission. He was diocesan director of the Holy Childhood Association from 1958 to 1977 and served as diocesan director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith from 1958 until his death.

Monsignor Renwald suffered from Parkinson's disease during the last three years of his life until his death in 1993.



### Father McAllister's Reflections at Monsignor Renwald's Funeral Mass



In his homily at the funeral Mass in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacramento, Father Leo McAllister recalled his assignment as assistant pastor of the cathedral in 1958. He was 28 when he arrived at the back door of the cathedral. He was quickly ushered upstairs to meet Monsignor Renwald. "I was really impressed by his unassuming nature, almost shyness," Father McAllister said, "but I was most impressed when he said, 'I'm Father Renwald.' I'd hear him on the phone all the time, and he would always say 'Father Renwald.' I never heard him say Monsignor Renwald."

### Monsignor's Brilliance

Father McAllister and other friends spoke of Monsignor Renwald's brilliance as a student of history and a linguist but their memories always came back to his unpretentious and unfailing concern for people. He was always a kind, patient and understanding shepherd to his people.

"Transients and other poor people would come to the rectory door," Father McAllister said, "and he would give them a ticket for a meal at the China Cafe. Many of the transients would ask for Ray by name, and he would always be available to see them, to talk to them, to listen to them.

"Ray was a living sermon you can see," Father McAllister said. "Those are always better than a sermon you hear." One of the most inspiring parts of that living sermon was Monsignor Renwald's concern for people. He knew people by name and by address. He sought them out in hospitals and in their homes. One of the families he came to know well was the Barbeau family. The friendship continued over the decades.

### Ernie Barbeau Recalls

As an altar boy, Ernie Barbeau said he was inspired by Monsignor Renwald, by "the reverence and awe he had while celebrating Mass." As a teenager and young adult he often talked to



Monsignor Renwald for an hour once or twice a month and Ernie always had Monsignor Renwald's undivided attention: "He never looked down at the papers on the desk. He always looked straight at me."

While Monsignor Renwald was a resident at the Mercy Care Center, Ernie Barbeau did what he could to repay Monsignor Renwald; he visited his old friend at Mercy Care daily. Those visits were more of a joy than a duty. Even in his last illness, Monsignor Renwald was a brilliant man with "a wonderful grin and a twinkle in his eye – a holy man who didn't know he was holy."

### **Monsignor Church's Remembrances**



Monsignor James Church served as assistant director for the Propagation of the Faith in Monsignor Renwald's last years. He remembers his friend as "absolutely gracious to everybody. He would remember their names and their faces, and he'd expect other priests to do the same."

This graciousness extended, Monsignor Church said, to even the "grouches" of the world. "He was impossibly good. He could see good in everybody, and he brought out the best in all of us, priests and people, young and old, good and bad."

### **Father Sidney Hall Recalls**

Father Sidney Hall, another close friend of Monsignor Renwald, described him as "a very prayerful man. He prayed the Liturgy of the Hours up until the very last... He believed that life was a gift from God and that we should live it as well as we can. He used his walker to get around, and he visited other patients in the Mercy Care facility."



### **Monsignor O'Connor Admired Monsignor Renwald**

After Monsignor Renwald retired, Father McAllister, pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Elk Grove, invited him to live in residence at the parish. When Monsignor Albert O'Connor succeeded Father McAllister as pastor of Saint Joseph, he too had the great honor of living with Monsignor Renwald in the parish rectory and considered him the finest priest he ever met.

### **Funeral Mass for Monsignor Renwald**

On May 6, 1993, a Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Monsignor Renwald in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament where he had pastored for 17 years, 1951 to 1968. Bishop Francis Quinn who presided at the Mass was familiar with Monsignor Renwald's long list of important positions he held in the diocese but when he came to the final commendation at the end of the Mass, he did not dwell on them. Instead, Bishop Quinn simply said "Monsignor Renwald was a model parish priest. He died on Good Shepherd Sunday and he was a good shepherd. He knew his people and his people knew him. The hallmark of his ministry was going door to door to see his people. He will be remembered for his unflagging zeal and enthusiasm – and his prayerfulness. The people could sense he was a man of prayer, a priest in love with his priesthood."

### **Monsignor Renwald's Final Resting Place**

Monsignor Renwald was laid to rest after the Funeral Mass in the Priests' Section of Saint Mary Cemetery in Sacramento. He joined his brother priests who had served the People of God in the Diocese of Sacramento before him.



Photo by John E Boll 2014

### **Monsignor Renwald's Headstone, Saint Mary Cemetery, Sacramento**

### **Anecdotal Remembrance by Archivist**

In the first three years of the 1970s, I served as a young priest at the Cathedral. One day I answered a telephone call from a woman who wanted to speak to Monsignor Renwald. I told her he was now in Paradise. There was a pause and she said: "Oh, I didn't know he had passed." I



replied: "Oh no, he is very much alive and is pastor in Paradise, California!" I think we can be confident in saying that Monsignor Renwald indeed lives in Paradise, not Paradise, California, but the eternal paradise prepared by God for all who love Him. Monsignor Renwald must have one of the best seats at the Table in the Kingdom reserved for all the good shepherds who closely imitated the Good Shepherd.

*Thank you, Monsignor Renwald, for the great example you gave us by simply being a Good Shepherd to the People of God wherever you served.*

*Rest now in the loving embrace of God's Peace!*



Photo by John E Boll 2016

**Chapel of the new Saint Mary Cemetery and Funeral Center, Sacramento**

Thanks to Patrick Joyce who composed Monsignor Renwald's obituary for the Catholic Herald. It was helpful to the Archivist in preparing this biographical sketch of Monsignor Renwald's life.