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## FATHER PATRICK FARRELLY: YREKA'S PASTOR Church in the Gold Mines

By Father John Dwyer, printed in the July 15, 1976 issue of the *Catholic Herald*

**Few priests whose lives** were of short duration made as much of an impact on their surrounds as did Father Patrick Farrelly of the old Grass Valley Diocese. Since his principal place of ministry was Yreka, recalling his memory in this, the centennial year of St Joseph's Church, Yreka, is an excellent opportunity to review Father Farrelly's role in the history of the Church in that community.

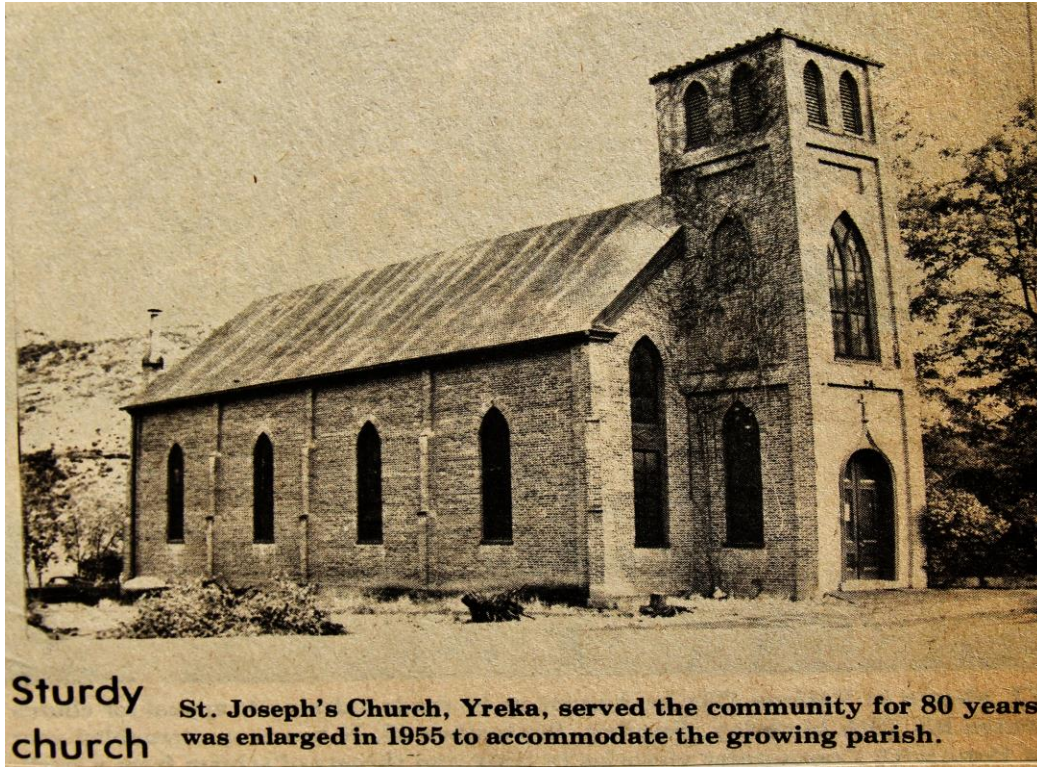
Yreka is the fourth oldest parish in northern California, preceded only by Marysville, Weaverville and Grass Valley. It was founded by Archbishop Alemany of San Francisco in 1855. Thus there had been a succession of five pastors prior to the arrival of Father Patrick Farrelly on the scene ten years later.

When Father Farrelly, newly ordained from All Hallows in Dublin, arrived in the Marysville Vicariate in 1865, Bishop O'Connell lost no time in appointing him to Yreka where the Italian Father Guido Matassi of the Passionist Monastery at Divide, Nevada, had been filling a gap. Father Farrelly found the original frame church located in the cemetery in poor condition. He set about building a new one of brick. It was completed by the end of 1866, together with a rectory next door and named by him Saints Peter and Paul.

Bishop O'Connell, a former seminary professor, was cast in the mold of those teachers who are quick to correct but slow to praise. His praises of Father Farrelly then had much more value. In 1869, in writing to All Hallows he wrote: "In Father Farrelly, pastor of Yreka, a town 250 miles north of Marysville, I have a model man. He doesn't know what it means to demure, much less to disobey, the reasonable commands of his superior." In another instance he refers to him as "the good man and true," words of rare praise indeed from Bishop O'Connell

Father Farrelly's zeal was not limited to building a new church. Concerned about the faith of his people, he brought to Yreka the famous Jesuit Missionary, Father James Bouchard, SJ who gave a weeklong mission in the new church in 1867 and preached at its dedication. The same zeal that prompted the building of the new church and the holding of the mission also fired his concern for the education of the children of the parish. It was Father Farrelly's ambition to bring sisters to Yreka and to open a school for these children. His first contacts with a French Order of Sisters in Montreal failed. In fact, Father Farrelly wrote to Bishop O'Connell while he was at the first Vatican Council in Rome asking him to stop off at Montreal on his way home to see what he could do to change the sisters' decision. Instead Bishop O'Connell appealed to the Sisters of Mercy in Manchester, New Hampshire, and Mother Camillus McGarr and two novices were sent to make a foundation in Yreka.

Meanwhile Father Farrelly had purchased the F.J. King residence at the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Butte Streets, a house some 36 by 50 feet to which he added a wing 20 by 48 feet. By the time the sisters were welcomed to the community in January 1871, Father Farrelly had already expended \$7,500, a goodly sum for those days.



Picture from Diocesan Archives

The sisters opened their school in February 1871 with only five students, but in the years that followed the enrollment rose to 85. In 1873, the bishop wrote to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Paris and appealed for help for this foundation which was now \$9,000 in debt. What he did not tell was that in addition he himself had given the sisters a loan of \$6,000 from the money which had been collected to make possible his trip to the Vatican Council. It is doubtful if this money was ever repaid to the bishop as financial troubles continued to beset the foundation for many years.

While rejoicing in the arrival of the sisters and the opening of the school as well as carrying the worry of the debt, Father Farrelly was asked to carry an even heavier cross. On July 4, 1871, his new church and rectory were burned to the ground. Undaunted, Father Farrelly undertook the building of Yreka's third church, St Joseph's which he was not destined to complete. Meanwhile to assist him during these days, Bishop O'Connell found priests to send as assistants in the persons first of Father Stephen Kearney and then of the famous Father Patrick O'Kane. However, Bishop O'Connell needed a new pastor for the Marysville Cathedral. Therefore at Easter time, 1872, he transferred Father Farrelly as pastor of St Joseph Cathedral in Marysville,

so that the credit for completing the present St Joseph Church in Yreka belongs to his successor Father James J Callan.

Father Farrelly remained in Marysville until the summer of 1874 when Bishop O'Connell appointed him pastor of Red Bluff. Scarcely three years later was this zealous young priest dead at the age 43. His death on January 17, 1877 brought praises of him from many sources. He was described as a "man of culture, and an accomplished musician besides having an extensive knowledge of philosophy and theology."

Father Farrelly's funeral Mass was held at St Joseph Cathedral in Marysville and his body was buried in the priests' plot in St Joseph's Cemetery, Marysville. This was the fourth of Bishop O'Connell's scarce supply of clergy to be buried in that cemetery. The loss of this good priest was one of the many crosses Bishop O'Connell had to carry during his 23 years as Bishop of Northern California and Nevada.



Photo by John E Boll 2011

### **INTERIOR OF SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH, YREKA, TODAY**