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BROTHER AMBROSE REILLY, FSC **Has Served 70 of the 100 Years Since the Brothers Came to California**

By Eleanor Doyle, printed in the October 17, 1968 issue of the *Catholic Herald*

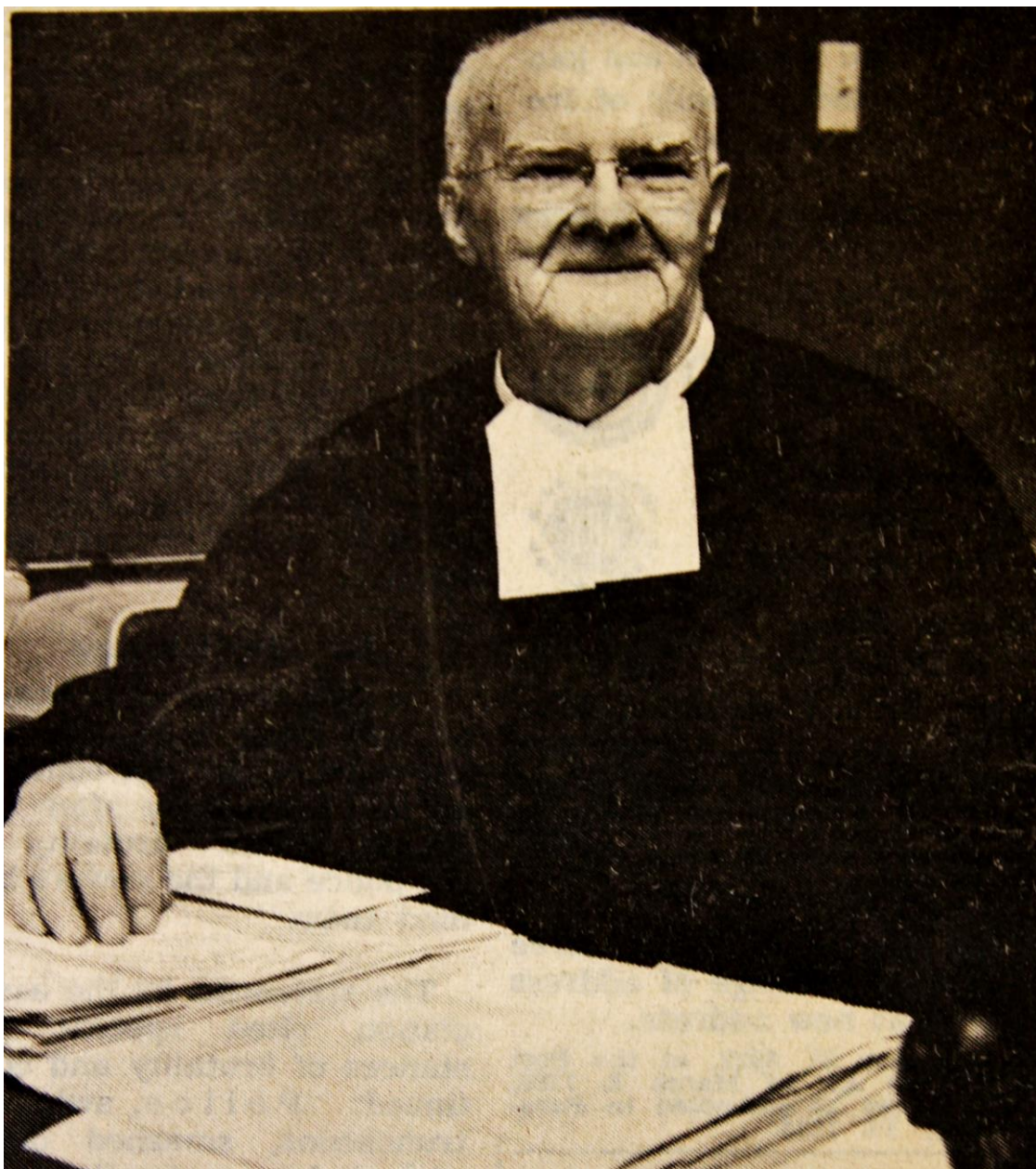


Photo from the Catholic Herald

Christian Brother Ambrose Reilly, FSC

Find a senior citizen with a twinkle in the eyes and it is safe to assume the twinkle was always there and that age, by some strange alchemy, has merely magnified the spark. Such is the case with Brother Ambrose Reilly, FSC, who passed his 84th milestone last January and this past week clocked off another record, which makes him not only the oldest but the man who has been associated longest with his Christian Brothers community than any other Brother in the province.

Entered in 1898

Seventy years ago this past October 9, the young Reilly boy entered the Christian Brothers Juniorate, then located in Martinez, and on July 1, 1900, received his habit. Now retired from teaching duties and residing in the community's residence at Christian Brothers High School, he will be on hand this Saturday to take part in the centennial celebration of the Brothers arrival in California. A concelebrated Mass of Thanksgiving will be offered at Old St Mary's Church, San Francisco, followed by a civic banquet at the Fairmont Hotel.

The Christian Brothers arrived in this state on August 10, 1868, at the urgent invitation of Archbishop Joseph Alemany to take over the ailing St Mary's College which he had established five years earlier. Thirty years later, Brother Ambrose entered the community and for 70 years he has been associated with the Christian Brothers, the majority of those years has found him assigned in Sacramento.

First Local Campus

"I first taught at St Vincent's in Marin County," he recollects, "then in 1910 I was assigned to the old Christian Brothers School at 12th and K Streets, staying there for three years." Brother Ambrose notes how different the cit looked in that far off time: "When I left here in 1913, the city limits only reached to 31st Street (Alhambra Boulevard) on the East, and Y Street levee (now Broadway) on the south, and the American River on the north. Why I believe it was 1911 when Oak Park was annexed to the city."

Returning 17 years later in 1930 to teach the lower grades at what was then the "new" Christian Brothers campus at 21st and Broadway, Brother Ambrose "couldn't believe the changes that had taken place." Harking back to those first early years when he remembers well Sacramento's second prelate, Bishop Thomas Grace, who was an across the street neighbor at 12th and K, the dean of the Brothers notes that the principal form of recreation for his community then was bicycle riding.

"We took jealous care of those bikes as they were our only form of amusement," he declares. "They also offered us lots of good exercise and many were the times we would pedal to Folsom or Elk Grove, packing along a lunch as it took quite a time to get there and back. There were no such things as paved roads then, just hard dirt."

It takes a true “old timer” to remember when a high hill existed between Sacramento and Roseville, now long since leveled, but Brother Ambrose remembers it well because on occasion he would take that route, via the bicycle, for a day’s outing.

His twinkle really generates power when, *sotto voce*, he mentions that en route on a hot summer day there was nothing as refreshing as a glass of beer to help lift the spirits of a cyclist. “Sacramento was a great beer town then,” says Brother Ambrose, “and why not? It had the breweries right here to supply it.”

The long years he was assigned to the 21st and Broadway campus, retiring in 1954, is replete with fond memories for the octogenarian. “I still enjoy being around the young students and am grateful that I can reside here with the Brothers in Sacramento.”

Brother Haig Charshaf, local principal, explains that Brother Ambrose fills a needed spot here. “There are countless tasks he handles for the community,” he explains, “things that the other Brothers don’t always find time for and it is a great help to us having Brother Ambrose available to turn to these matters.” This suits Brother Ambrose just fine? “If I can’t fill a need,” he says, “they might decide to send me to Mt La Salle, where so many of the Brothers reside in retirement. But that place is too close to the cemetery to suit me.”

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS OBSERVE CENTENARY

The Christian Brothers, who arrived in California 100 years ago after Bishop Joseph Alemany negotiated with them for 15 years, observe their centennial this Saturday with a Concelebrated Mass in Old St Mary’s Church, San Francisco, and a civic banquet at the Hotel Fairmont.

Their first task in 1868 was to take over the ailing St Mary’s College, which today is located in Moraga in the East Bay area and is a flourishing liberal arts college.

In 1870, the Brothers opened a novitiate in Oakland, followed by St Joseph’s Academy in Oakland in 1872; Sacred heart College, San Francisco, 1874; and Christian Brothers High School, Sacramento, 1876.

Since the Brothers arrival in San Francisco, their now operate 11 high schools in California and one in Oregon, in addition to Mount La Salle Vineyards in Napa.



Photo by John E Boll 2013

Mount LaSalle Monastery Vineyard in Napa, CA