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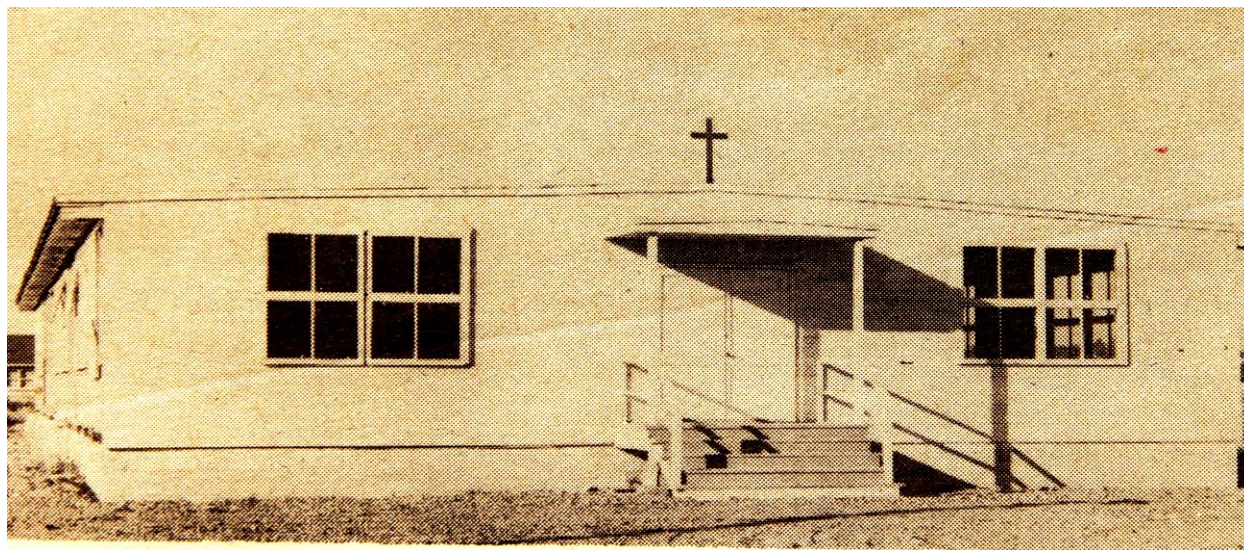
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The History of Holy Cross Parish Tulelake, California

By Fr John Boll, Diocesan Archivist, August 2013

Creation of Holy Cross Parish in 1948

Tulelake is as far from Sacramento as one can get and still be in California. This town today has a population of 1010 and sits in a large valley at an elevation of 4015 feet. It is about four miles from the Oregon border and nine miles from Merrill and Malin in Oregon.



Tulelake's first church, 1949

Father Francis Sullivan, Founding Pastor of Tulelake Parish, 1948-1950

It was Bishop Robert Armstrong who established this parish in November 1948 and informed Father Francis Sullivan that he would be the founding pastor of Tulelake including the small mission church in Dorris, twenty-five miles west of Tulelake. Father Sullivan's appointment became effective on November 10, 1948 and he had to develop the parish with very little resources.

A donor promised to make a financial gift to the new Tulelake parish with a stipulation that the donor would choose the name of the church. Since the donor never made the promised donation, Father Sullivan took matters into his own hands and named the parish **Holy Cross** after his college alma mater in Massachusetts.

As World War II ended in 1945, the 18,700 Japanese Americans who were imprisoned for three years in nearby Newell were released. The hundreds of barracks used to house these Japanese American internees were now vacant and the US Government was willing to give them to anyone who would haul the buildings away.

The Winema School District offered to share in the acquisition of one of these buildings from the Bureau of Reclamation for the parish, asking at that time: "Would the church committee share half of the building expense?" The only cost was moving the building from its location in Newell to the parish site. The church committee agreed and one of the buildings was moved to the newly acquired three lot parcel on First and G Streets. The former barracks were fitted together to become the first Catholic Church in Tulelake with a small living quarter included in the building for Father Sullivan, the founding pastor. The surrounding parishes provided an altar, pews and kneelers for the church. Father Sullivan served as pastor for two years and was then transferred to Holy Family Parish in Weed.

Father Cornelius O'Connor Named Second Pastor, 1950-1961

Father Sullivan was succeeded by Father Cornelius O'Connor in December 1950. With the arrival of new homesteading families in 1947, 1948 and 1949, there was a new spirit of optimism and enthusiasm in the area, especially in the Holy Cross Parish community.

Under Father O'Connor's guidance and encouragement, funds were gathered by donations and fundraisers enabling the community to build a new and permanent brick church and rectory in 1952. Father O'Connor served as pastor of the parish for eleven years and in 1961 he was named pastor of St Patrick Parish in Placerville.



Photo by John E Boll, 2013

Holy Cross Church, Tulelake

Father John Dowling Named Third Pastor, 1961-1981

The next pastor of Tulelake was Father John Dowling who was a convert to the Catholic faith from Methodism. John was raised in the Deep South. He arrived in Tulelake in October 1961 and by November of that same year the parish was completely debt free. Although the parish was always small by normal standards, the enthusiasm and generosity of the parishioners more than made up for the parish's small size.

Father Dowling had many practical skills that he put to good use by making many improvements to the parish hall, the former barracks in the Japanese Concentration Camp. The hall provided a place where Sunday school classes were held to this very day. The Altar Society was a great help in providing necessary items needed for the Sunday liturgy. Father Dowling served as pastor for twenty years until his retirement in June 1981.

Father Michael Canny Succeeds Father Dowling as Fourth Pastor, 1981-1987

Succeeding Father Dowling was Father Michael Canny who arrived in Tulelake in October 1981. Because of his great devotion to Mary, the mother of Jesus, Father Canny built a Marian grotto at Holy Cross Church in Tulelake and another at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church in Dorris. He also installed painted stained glass windows in Holy Cross Church. In 1987, Bishop Francis Quinn appointed him pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Maxwell, which left Tulelake once again in need of a new pastor.



Photo by John Boll 2013

Marian Grotto in Tulelake

Father John Molomby Becomes Fifth Pastor 1987-1989

The role of pastor for Tulelake was entrusted to Father John Molomby who arrived in the parish on April 1, 1987. With the approach of the parish's fortieth anniversary, Father Molomby and the parish community began planning for this important parish celebration. The Anniversary Mass was held on Sunday, November 6, 1988, with Bishop Francis Quinn as principal celebrant and Monsignor Cornelius O'Connor as the homilist. Father O'Connor had been the pastoral leader of Tulelake when the new church and rectory were constructed in 1952.

Father Michael Tamburi is Named Parish Administrator of Tulelake 1989-1993

Father Michael Tamburi was ordained a priest for the diocese of Hartford, CT in May 1959. After some years in ministry he left the active priesthood and eventually settled in Los Angeles.

He had read about Bishop Francis Quinn and was impressed by what he read. He made contact with Bishop Quinn and expressed his interest in returning to active ministry if Bishop Quinn was willing to accept him. Bishop Quinn eventually welcomed Father Tamburi to the Diocese of Sacramento and assigned him to Sacred Heart Parish in Anderson working with Father Michael Kiernan. After Father Molomby was assigned to St Theresa Parish in Auburn, Bishop Quinn appointed Father Tamburi to serve the people of Tulelake and Dorris as the parish administrator in 1989. He was later incardinated into the Diocese of Sacramento.

Father Tamburi suffered from diabetes and gave himself insulin shots daily. When he did not show up for morning Mass on Thursday, October 21, 1993, a parishioner went to the rectory to look for him. With no reply at the door, the parishioner entered the house and found that Father Michael had died while working at his office desk. Bishop Quinn celebrated a Funeral Mass for Father Tamburi in Tulelake and another at Sacred Heart Parish in Anderson the following day. Father Michael was laid to rest in a crypt at St Joseph Cemetery in Redding.

Pastorate of Father Patrick Henry 1993-2000

Father Patrick Henry was appointed pastor of Holy Cross Parish in October 1993, following the untimely death of Father Tamburi. He took action to address two important pastoral objectives. The sacraments of reconciliation, First Eucharist and confirmation had not been celebrated in the parish for six years. Within a few months, Father Henry implemented programs of instruction that prepared many children ranging in ages from four to seventeen years for the reception of the sacraments over the course of the ensuing years.

Secondly, given the large number of Hispanics living as migrant farm laborers in the parish, Father Patrick decided to inaugurate a ministry that would be conducted in the Spanish language. This was done with the help of both Father Umberto Gomez and Father John Boll, who was Vicar for Priests at the time.

During both winter and spring, there was weekly instruction for baptism, a preparation for quinceañeras, instruction, mainly in English, for young children on both Saturday and Sunday of each week, weekly Masses in Spanish and the full cultural celebration of December 12 at the mission church of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Dorris.

Pastorate of Father Brent Carlton Nall, 2000-2004

Succeeding Father Henry as pastor was Father Brent Carlton Nall. He served as Tulelake's pastor for four years. This was a time of water shortage in the Tulelake basin and without an adequate supply, the farmers could not grow their crops. This era was difficult both for farmers and for farm workers. The lack of sufficient water in the Tulelake basin continues to this day. The economic struggle of farmers has made it difficult for the parish to survive financially as well. In 2004, Bishop Weigand appointed Father Nall to the pastorate of Gridley.



Photo by John E Boll, 2013

Tulelake Basin

Father Guillermo Rodriguez Appointed Parish Administrator 2004-2008

Father Guillermo Rodriguez, a native of Mexico who had worked in many parishes of the diocese years before, was appointed administrator of the parish by Bishop Weigand. His English speaking ability was limited and as a result, English speaking parishioners began to leave Holy Cross Parish and attended Mass at St Augustine Parish in Merrill, Oregon which is nine miles away from Tulelake. This made it even harder for Sacred Heart Parish to cover its expenses. After four years in Tulelake, Father Rodriguez retired and returned to Mexico.

Father Paul Schloeder Serves Tulelake for Six Months in 2008

In 2008, Bishop Weigand asked Father Paul Schloeder who was already retired if he would be willing to go to Tulelake to serve the parish. Father Paul agreed and moved to Tulelake in January 2008. During his seven months there, he made every effort to get to know the parishioners and even went to the local bar to have a beer and talk with the people. He says that the half year he spent in Tulelake was the highpoint of his priestly ministry.

But because of Tulelake's four thousand foot elevation, the cold weather in winter and his delicate physical condition, Father Schloeder had to return to the Sacramento Valley to a lower altitude and a warmer climate. Had his health not been an issue, he says he would have loved to stay on at Tulelake and minister to the people.

Father Rolan Pabellon, 2008-2009

The Diocese of Sacramento entered into conversation with the Diocese of Baker to see if an agreement could be made between the two dioceses for the parish in Merrill to cover the Tulelake parish. Because Tulelake was in another state, the Diocese of Baker did not want to extend its jurisdiction into California so no agreement was reached.

Hoping to keep a pastoral presence in Tulelake, Bishop Weigand appointed Father Rolan Pabellon as administrator of Holy Cross parish. Father Rolan remained in Tulelake only one year and was then reassigned to the Weed parish.

The Next Step to Serve the People of Tulelake and Dorris

With the departure of Father Rolan from Tulelake, Bishop Weigand turned over the care of Holy Cross Parish to the two neighboring parishes of Weed and Alturas. Father Mervin Concepcion, pastor of Weed until his recent assignment to Saint Maria Goretti Parish in Elk Grove, served as administrator of Tulelake and Father Bernardin Mugabo, parochial administrator of Alturas, serves as parochial vicar.

The pastor of Weed drives to Dorris every Sunday to celebrate the 11:30 am Mass at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church. Every other week he continues on to Tulelake to celebrate Mass at Holy Cross Church at 2 PM. On the alternate Sundays, Father Bernardin comes to Tulelake to celebrate the 2 PM Mass at Holy Cross Church. This is a significant sacrifice for both pastors because the drive to Tulelake for each priest is a round trip of 150 miles. The Masses at Dorris and Tulelake are in addition to the Masses they must celebrate in their own parishes each weekend. Driving this distance in the summer is one thing, but making the 150 mile trip in winter is very different. These priests are to be commended for the sacrifice they make to serve the Catholic community of Tulelake and Dorris.



Photo by John E Boll 2013

Holy Cross Parish, Tulelake Today

Holy Cross Parish in the Twenty-First Century

The Catholic community in Tulelake today consists mainly of Spanish speaking families who work in agriculture in the Tulelake Basin. Of the hundred plus people who attend the weekly 2 PM Sunday Mass, ninety-five percent or more are Spanish speaking. Today there are only five to ten English speaking parishioners who attend the bi-lingual Sunday Mass in Tulelake. Because the Mass is at 2 PM on Sunday, it is late in the day for this farming community. But with no resident pastor, this is the only option at the present time.

The diocese would do well to appoint a pastor who is fluent in English and Spanish. We should not underestimate the stamina, vitality and potential in this small community in the northern most tip of the Sacramento Diocese.



Photo by John E Boll 2013

Interior of Holy Cross Church, Tulelake