

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

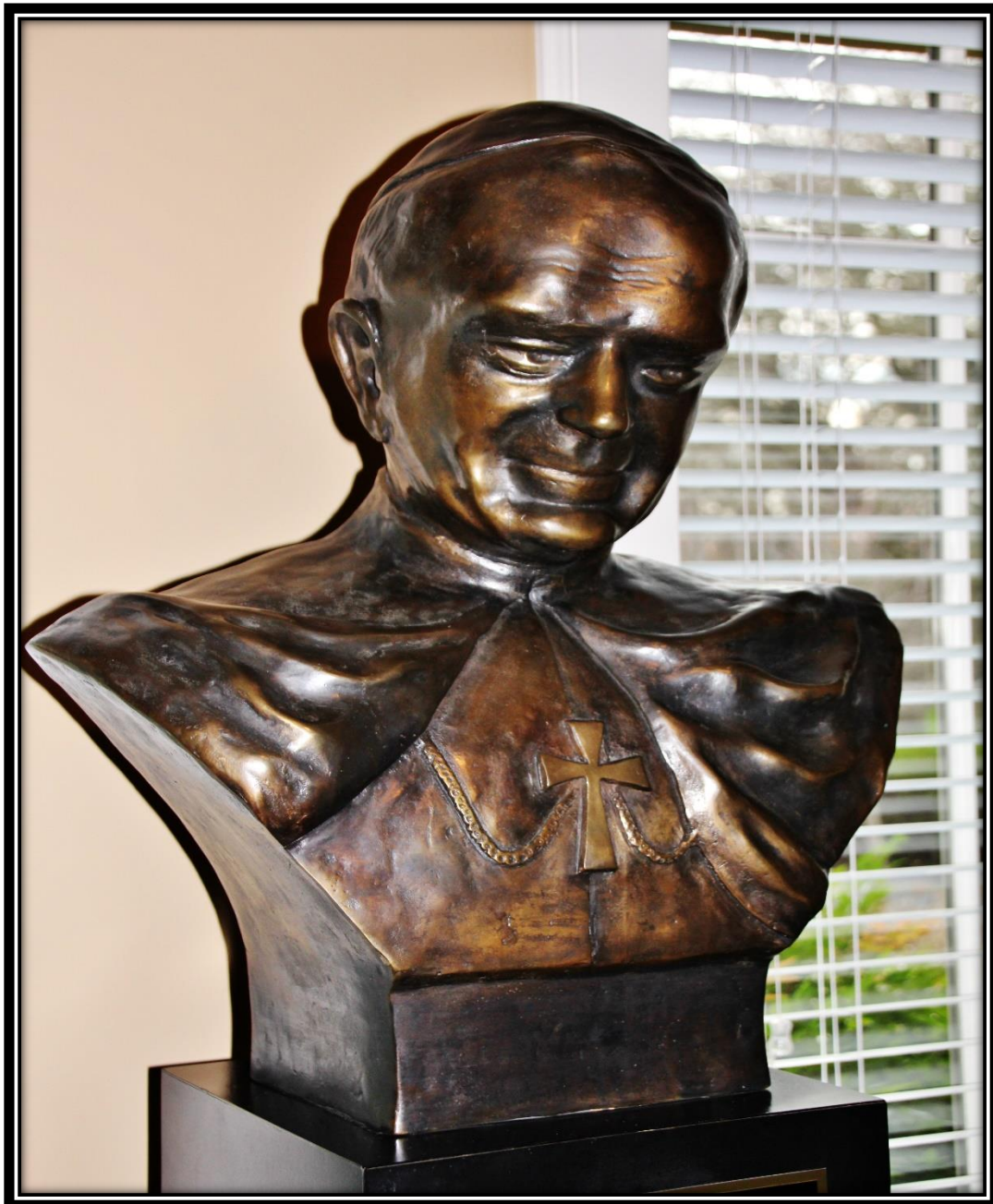
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Father John E Boll, Diocesan Archivist

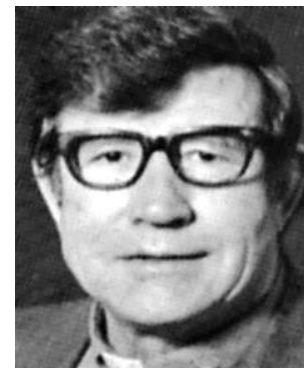
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ARTIST AND SCULPTOR FATHER JOHN JOSEPH KYNE CASTS A BRONZE BUST OF BISHOP ALDEN J BELL

Information for this article came in part from the June 4, 1981 issue of the *Catholic Herald*
In an article by Valeria Christiansen, Associate Editor of the *Catholic Herald*



Irish born Father John Joseph Kyne served the Diocese of Sacramento for many years until his death on November 27, 2001. He was an artist and had an artistic flare as part of his personality. He often called Bishop Bell to chat on the phone and to limit himself on how long he talked to the bishop, John had a pay phone installed in his home to force himself to limit the amount of time he would talk on the phone. As you might guess, once Father Kyne starting to engage in a subject he loved to talk about, time melted away.



Father John J Kyne

JOHN THE ARTIST

Father Kyne decided that he would make a cast of the bust of Bishop Bell and set out to do just that. In an interview with Valeria Christiansen, associate editor of the *Catholic Herald* in the 1980s, Father Kyne told her, "A portrait is not merely a physical likeness. Of course, I strove for that – but I also tried to capture the character of the man." The character he tried to capture in bronze was that of Bishop Alden John Bell who retired in 1980 after 17 years as the bishop of the Diocese of Sacramento. The bronze bust of Bishop Bell was unveiled in a special ceremony by Bishop Francis Quinn on June 1, 1981 at the beginning of a Jubilee Mass in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Sacramento to celebrate the occasion.



Photo from the *Catholic Herald* 1981

**Bishop Quinn unveils the Bronze Bust of Bishop Bell in the Cathedral
Artist Father John Kyne stands next to Bishop Quinn**

ABOUT THE BUST

The bust of Bishop Bell stands six feet high on its 45-inch granite pedestal placed in the cathedral vestibule close to the central doors of the church. The bust is cast from a clay model by the “lost-wax” method and polished to a beautiful dark patina. Father Kyne explained that in setting out to work on the bust in 1980, he conceived of it as a gift for Bishop Bell.

CAPTURING THE GENTLENESS OF THE BIHSOP

Father Kyne stated that “the characteristics I wanted to bring out are the bishop’s gentleness, kindness, and patience. The shape of the pedestal is meant to bring out something else: that he and his two feet are firmly on the ground, that he was not easily moved by trifles or by pain.” Pausing briefly, Father Kyne went on to say: “He lived through times recently that were very difficult – and bore them very well.”



Bishop Alden John Bell

THE PROCESS USED TO MAKE THE BUST

Working with over 100 photographs of Bishop Bell and a three-hour sitting session, Father Kyne executed the figure in 300 pounds of clay. “That is the sculpture,” he said. “I could end there.” The rest of the labor of producing a bronze bust is more technical than creative.

A mold, made of rubber and 300 pounds of plaster was taken from the clay model. Then a “wax” figure was formed in the mold, encased in approximately a ton of plaster and sand. “This big lump of ‘concrete’ is placed in a kiln and is left there for three days at high heat -- about 2000 degree F – to burn out the wax. When the wax is burned away it is replaced by bronze heated to 2100 degree F and poured into the space where the wax had been.”

Three and a half hours later the sand and plaster mold was broken away from the bronze figure, both inside and out, together with the “gates” or “leads” through which the bronze was poured. The figure was then sandblasted and polished, and finally treated with a Sulphur solution to turn its new penny gleam into the darker patina of the 150-pound finished product, which received one last rubbing to bring out the “highlights” and a coat of polish.

THE PEDESTAL

The trapezoidal pedestal upon which the bust is mounted is also Father Kyne’s own design, cut and polished by the Union Granite Co of Rocklin. Weighing 1500 pounds, the pedestal’s height was reduced six inches to meet the structural stress requirements of the cathedral vestibule.

THE PROJECT TOOK A YEAR TO COMPLETE

The project required a year to complete because Father Kyne, functioning single-handedly as pastor of Saint Peter Parish in Dixon with only assistance of a Spanish speaking priest who served the parish on a part-time basis. The bust was made mostly during the bits and pieces of Father Kyne’s free time.

Father Kyne refused to place any price on his labor in doing the sculpture saying only that it cost “several thousand dollars” to complete, that amount allocated principally for materials and for paying the student technicians from California State University, Chico, and California State University, San Jose, who helped him some of the time. Speaking about his work, Father Kyne said he likes to do most of it himself.

LOVE OF SCULPTURING BEGAN IN CHILDHOOD

John Kyne’s career as a sculptor goes back to his childhood when he began the study of art and sculpture at the age of seven under Michael Shorthall, RHA, one of three well-known sculptors in Ireland at the time. He worked chiefly in Irish limestone and marble into his 20s when he chose to enter the seminary to become a priest and put his art aside.

BISHOP BELL’S ENCOURAGEMENT

Encouraged by Bishop Bell to continue his sculptural works as a hobby, and to have a studio wherever he was assigned, Father Kyne took up the art again. His productions, which includes a bronze bust of Pope John Paul II, remain limited, mainly because of a continuing lack of time.

“I absolutely missed sculpture,” he said. “One of the most difficult things in my life was not to have my hands in the work but I had given myself to the other vocation. I feared the time it would take away from my duties and I didn’t want to renew the pain of leaving it in the first place for the priesthood. It was a great vacuum in my life.” The bronze bust of Bishop Bell is a priest’s gift of gratitude to the bishop who gave him back to himself.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BUST OF BISHOP BELL?

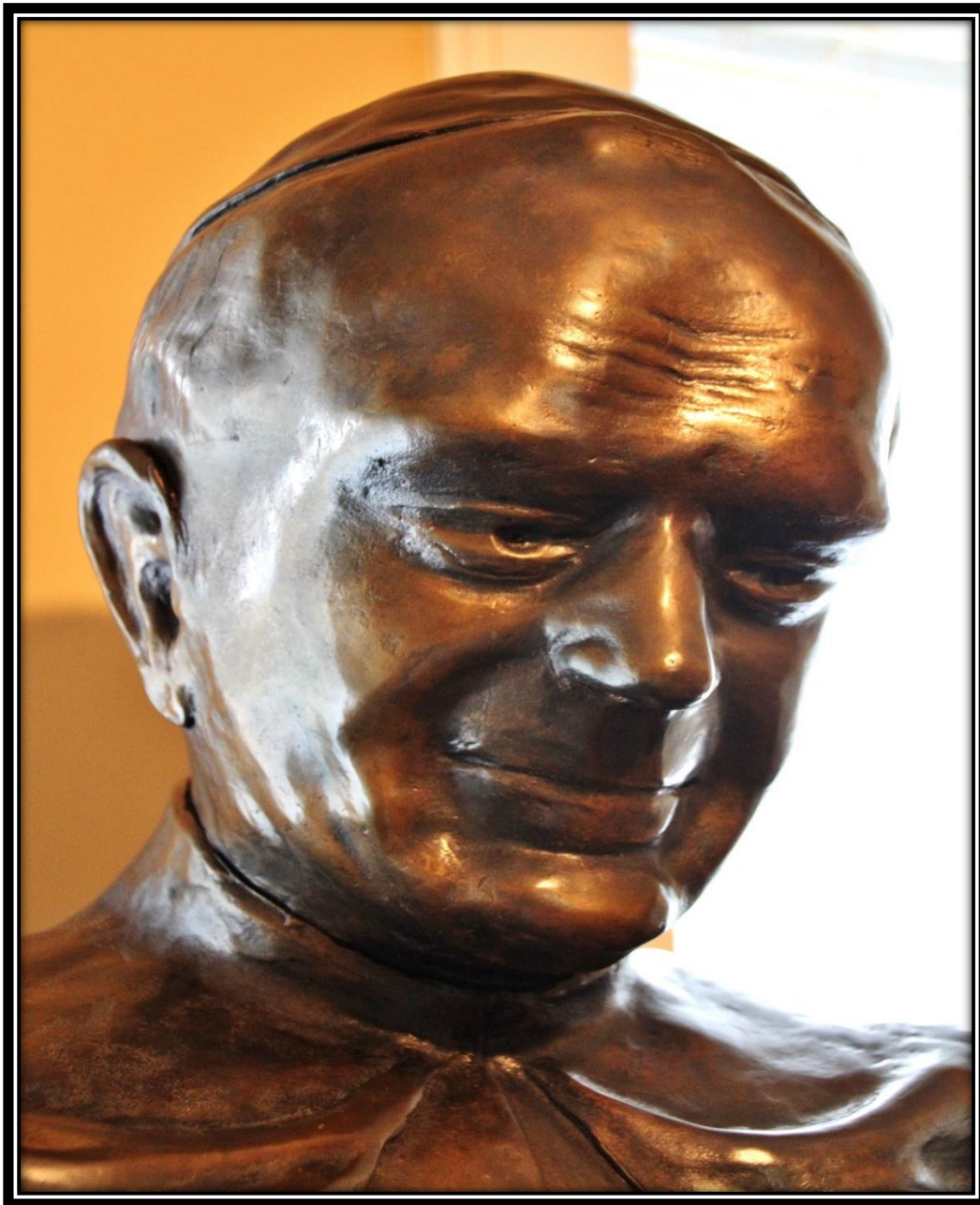


Photo by John E Boll 2017

The Bust of Bishop Alden J Bell

The Most Reverend Alden John Bell
Bishop of Sacramento
1962 - 1979

Sculpted By Father John Kyne

When the cathedral underwent a major renovation in 2003 to 2005, everything in the cathedral had to be removed to make way for the major repair work. The bust of Bishop Bell was moved as well but where was it put?

NEW HOME FOR THE BUST OF BISHOP BELL

In 2015, the priests living at the Priests' Retirement Village in Citrus Heights heard that the bust of Bishop Bell had been taken to Davis. A few of the priests took the initiative to contact Father Peter Bosque, pastor of Davis, to see if the bust could be moved to the Priests' Village and placed in the community building since all the retired priests knew Bishop Bell personally and would appreciate having his bust at the village.

Father Bosque was willing to give the sculptured bust of Bishop Bell to the Retirement Village. It was brought from Davis to Citrus Heights and placed in the library at the community building of the Village.

THE PLOT THICKENS

In preparation for the writing of this article about Bishop Bell's bust, the Archivist talked with Father Daniel Looney who became pastor of Saint James Parish in Davis in 1994. During that conversation, he said the bust of Bishop Bell was already at Saint James Rectory in 1994 when he arrived. It became immediately obvious that the bust in Davis was a copy of the original one that had been placed in the Cathedral. Thus began the Archivist's search for the original bust.

THE STATE OF THE QUESTION TODAY

At this point, no one knows where the original bust of Bishop Bell is today. After speaking to Monsignor James Murphy, Bishop William Weigand, Father Michael Kiernan and Monsignor James Kidder, none of them knows what happened to the bust when it was moved. Father Kiernan suggested I speak to Thomas Waddock, a volunteer at the Cathedral. Tom did a search of the Cathedral and found the granite base for the bust in the former Catholic School Department behind the Cathedral but the bust itself had been removed from its base. At this point, the search continues for the original bust of Bishop Bell.

FATHER KYNE'S OTHER SCULPTURES

Two other pieces of sculpture by Father Kyne are located in the Diocese of Sacramento. The statue of Mary presenting the child Jesus to the world is located on the grounds of the Trappist Monastery in Vina and a second copy is located in the courtyard of the Diocesan Pastoral Center in Sacramento.



Photo by John E Boll

Statue of Mary presenting the Christ Child to the World
Father John J Kyne, Sculptor

Statue located in the patio of the Diocesan Pastoral Center, Sacramento



Photo from the *Catholic Herald* 1981

Archbishop Joseph McGucken was homilist at Bishop Bell's Retirement Mass

ARCHIVIST'S COMMENT

Father John J Kyne's talent lives on through his sculptures that adorn various places in the diocese. The Church of Sacramento is grateful to Father John for sharing his God-given talent to create beautiful pieces of art that inspire and remind us of the joyful creativity of God who continues to draw out the best in the human spirit through the creativity of human art.