SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

DIOCESAN CATHOLIC CEMETERIES OF SACRAMENTO
Interview with Frank Espinosa

General Manager of St Mary Cemetery, Sacramento
By Father John E Boll
December 2014

Frank Espinosa

Frank Espinosa began work for the Catholic Cemeteries in Sacramento on the Feast of All Saints, November 1, 1975 when John Seymour, Director of Catholic Cemeteries, hired him to be Superintendent of Saint Mary Cemetery. For the first month, John directed Frank to work outside with the cemetery crew so he would have personal experience of how the operation worked, starting with actual burials and ending with the management of the cemetery office.

FRANK'S FIRST BURIAL

The first person Frank helped bury at Saint Mary Cemetery was Lucy O'Brien in a basement crypt of the mausoleum on November 8, 1975. Whenever he goes to the mausoleum, he stops by her crypt to offer a prayer and to say hello. Never in his wildest dreams did he imagine he would work in a cemetery. As a young man Frank was employed at a Sacramento furniture store. When the furniture store went out of business, he had a wife and two small children to support. He asked God to find him a meaningful job but it took a couple years before Frank was hired by the Catholic Cemetery Department.

HOW IT ALL HAPPENED

Frank was the secretary/treasurer of the Sacramento Portuguese Bowling League and Bob Oehler, one of the funeral directors at Klumpp Funeral Home, was one of the team bowlers. John Seymour and Father Valdemiro Fagundes were on the same team. Bob asked Frank where he was working and Frank replied that he was doing furniture upholstery. Bob suggested he contact John Seymour who was planning to hire a superintendent for Saint Mary Cemetery. Frank replied that he knew nothing about cemeteries. Bob told Frank that he had good people skills and he should talk to Seymour. Frank did speak to John about the cemetery position and John hired him. Since that day, Frank has worked at Saint Mary Cemetery for 40 years.

Frank was 35 years of age when he began working at Saint Mary Cemetery and now he is 75. He has overseen many changes at the cemetery during his 40 years as superintendent. When he was hired, there were 25,000 people buried in the cemetery and today there are 60,000.

FRANK'S FIRST CEMETERY CONFERENCE IN MILWAUKEE IN 1976

Frank remembers well his first cemetery conference in Milwaukee. Most of the people attending the conference were clergy. In 1976 the clergy were in charge of cemetery operations throughout the United States. Today most Catholic cemeteries are operated by lay personnel. One of the issues brought up at the conference was cremation. The clergy were very vocal saying cremation would never be allowed in Catholic cemeteries. Even though Vatican II allowed cremation, the clergy who oversaw Catholic cemeteries were against it. Today, cremation is widely accepted and common in Catholic cemeteries. Calvary Cemetery has many beautiful glass columbarium niches where cremains are buried. The percentage of cremations today in Sacramento County is 60% while at Saint Mary Cemetery it is about 25%. The cost for a niche to entomb ashes is about the same as burial of a body in the ground. St Mary, Calvary and

All Souls Cemeteries now offer a number of options for burial of ashes: granite or glass niches, pedestals and cremation benches.

Saint Mary Cemetery circa 1936

When Frank began working at Saint Mary Cemetery, there were Saint Mary Mausoleum built in 1934 and Saint Joseph crypts built in the 1950s. These included the crypts bordering 21st Avenue and 65th Street that were built during the administration of Monsignor Patrick Nolan and John Seymour. In the 1950s, two new wings were added to Saint Mary Mausoleum.

Saint Mary Mausoleum in the 1950s with new Side Wings

The only lawn at the cemetery was in front of Saint Mary Mausoleum. Since the sections of the cemetery had no distinctive names, Frank gave names to all the lawns and crypts after the Saints, Mary and the Risen Christ.

The First Phase of Saint Mary Mausoleum, Sacramento circa 1935

During this period, the diocesan chancellor was in charge of the cemeteries beginning with Monsignor Thomas Kirby, followed by Monsignors Patrick Nolan, Cornelius Higgins and Albert O'Connor.

THE FIRST TWO SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE CATHOLIC CEMETERIES
It was Monsignor Thomas Kirby who first oversaw Catholic Cemeteries in the Diocese of Sacramento. He was a wise, shrewd and farsighted priest who just seemed to know where to purchase property for future parishes and cemeteries long in advance of their need and his hunch was always right. It was he who hired Barney Brady to be the first superintendent of the newly established Saint Mary Cemetery on 21st Avenue and 65th Street in East Sacramento. Barney began his work at Saint Mary Cemetery just after it opened in 1934. After Barney's death, he was buried in Saint Mary Mausoleum.

Succeeding Barney as superintendent of Saint Mary Cemetery was John Seymour who was hired by Barney Brady in 1954 just before he retired. John was a native of Dublin, Ireland and after he was hired as superintendent of Saint Mary Cemetery, he worked there for 44 years.

John negotiated with Sacramento County to purchase more than 20 acres of land on the east side of the cemetery. He developed a plan for the construction of new garden crypts and built chapels where Mass could be celebrated. He developed a section of pre-need burial lawns for more than 2,500 burials. He also served as an advisor to parishes that managed their own cemeteries. He was totally committed to Catholic cemeteries and the faithful Catholics of the diocese.

When he retired he said he could not have fulfilled his vision for the cemeteries without the dedicated help of a great cemetery staff. He loved every minute of his work with the cemeteries and when John died, he too was buried in Saint Mary Mausoleum just as Barney Brady before him. The Catholic Cemetery Department was fortunate to have the dedicated leadership of Barney Brady and John Seymour.
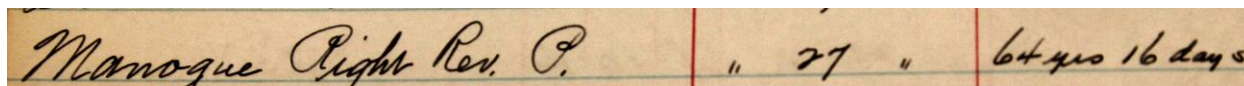
SAINT JOSEPH CEMETERY, SACRAMENTO

Photo by John E Boll

Bishops' Crypt, Saint Joseph Cemetery, Sacramento

Saint Joseph Cemetery, established in 1865, was the first diocesan cemetery to serve Catholics in the Sacramento area. The first person buried in the cemetery was a man named James

O'Hara who was killed in a steamboat accident on the Sacramento River. He was buried in the Murphy plot.

Bishop Manogue, founding bishop of the Diocese of Sacramento, died in 1895 and was buried in Saint Joseph Cemetery in a special mausoleum prepared for him and his successors. The graves of his brother priests surrounded the Bishops' Crypt. Bishop Manogue's successors, Bishops Grace and Keane, were also buried in the Saint Joseph Bishops' Crypt.

Actual Record of Bishop Manogue's Burial, St Joseph Cemetery, February 27, 1895

After Saint Mary Cemetery was established in 1934, the diocese moved the bodies of the three bishops from Saint Joseph Cemetery to the new Bishops' Mausoleum Crypt in Saint Mary Cemetery. Members of the Gormley family, relatives of Bishop Manogue, were upset that the body of Bishop Manogue was moved from Saint Joseph Cemetery because this mausoleum was built for Bishop Manogue as his burial site.

During the influenza epidemic of 1918 many people in Sacramento died from the flu and were buried in Saint Joseph Cemetery. As one walks around the cemetery and notes the date of death on headstones, the year 1918 can be seen with frequency. These people most likely died from the 1918 flu epidemic.

Before Bishop Manogue High School construction could begin some bodies had to be relocated to a different area in Saint Joseph Cemetery to make room for the new high school.

Around 2005 the Catholic Cemetery Department considered the possibility of upgrading Saint Joseph Cemetery and even returning Bishop Manogue's body to Bishop's Mausoleum in this cemetery. Topsoil was hauled to Saint Joseph Cemetery in order to plant lawn but people began to complain that graves were being covered over so the project was halted. Frank was not consulted about this proposal and the project was abandoned because it was deemed financially unfeasible.

BISHOP WEIGAND REQUESTS A REVIEW OF ALL CATHOLIC CEMETERIES IN THE DIOCESE
Bishop Weigand asked Frank to investigate where all the Catholic cemeteries were located in the diocese and to find out who was responsible for the care and upkeep of these cemeteries. Frank reported to the bishop that there were at least fifty Catholic cemeteries in the diocese. In times past, families cared for the burial plots of their loved ones. Saint Joseph Cemetery had a charge of $20 a year for the upkeep of the cemetery but an endowment was never established. The care of Saint Joseph Cemetery is paid for by endowment revenue from the other diocesan cemeteries.

EARLY CEMETERY AT SAINT ROSE PARISH ON FRANKLIN BOULEVARD

Frank reports that a cemetery existed on the grounds of Saint Rose Parish on Franklin Boulevard from the 1860s but those 20 to 30 bodies were moved to Saint Joseph Cemetery.

CALVARY CEMETERY ESTABLISHED IN 1953

Calvary Cemetery was established in 1953 by Monsignor Thomas Kirby. Frank thinks the land may have been donated to the diocese. At the present time there are about 15,000 people buried at Calvary including 23 priests buried in the priests' section close to the large crucifix overlooking the cemetery.

Photo from Cemeteries Archives

Ground Breaking Ceremony at Calvary Cemetery in 1953

L-R Fr Pat McTague, Fr Jim Kenny, Fr Vito Mistretta, Bishop Alden Bell, Fr Jim Corcoran and Fr Declan O'Sullivan

A VINEYARD PLANTED AT CALVARY CEMETERY IN 2014

In the fall of 2014 a vineyard was planted at Calvary Cemetery and blessed by Bishop Myron Cotta. When the vines begin to produce grapes, the wine will be bottled and given free of charge to the parishes of the diocese for sacramental use. The Catholic Cemetery Department is waiting for the Sacramento City Council to grant an agriculture waiver before planting of vines can be done at Saint Mary Cemetery.
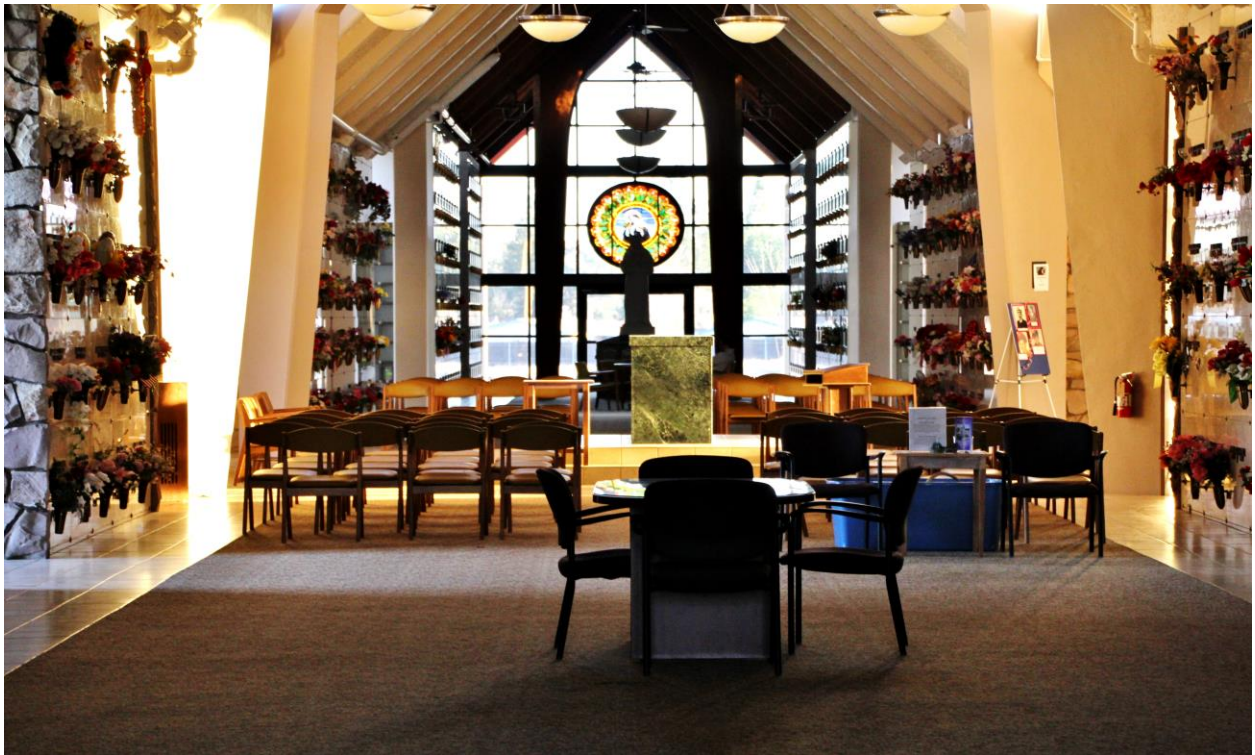
Calvary Cemetery Mausoleum and Chapel

DEVELOPMENTS AT SAINT MARY CEMETERY
In 2003 Saint Mary Cemetery began the development of the Holy Family Crypts and Niches on the east side of the cemetery on 21st Avenue. There are 1200 crypts and 385 niches in this new section of the cemetery.

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CEMETERY

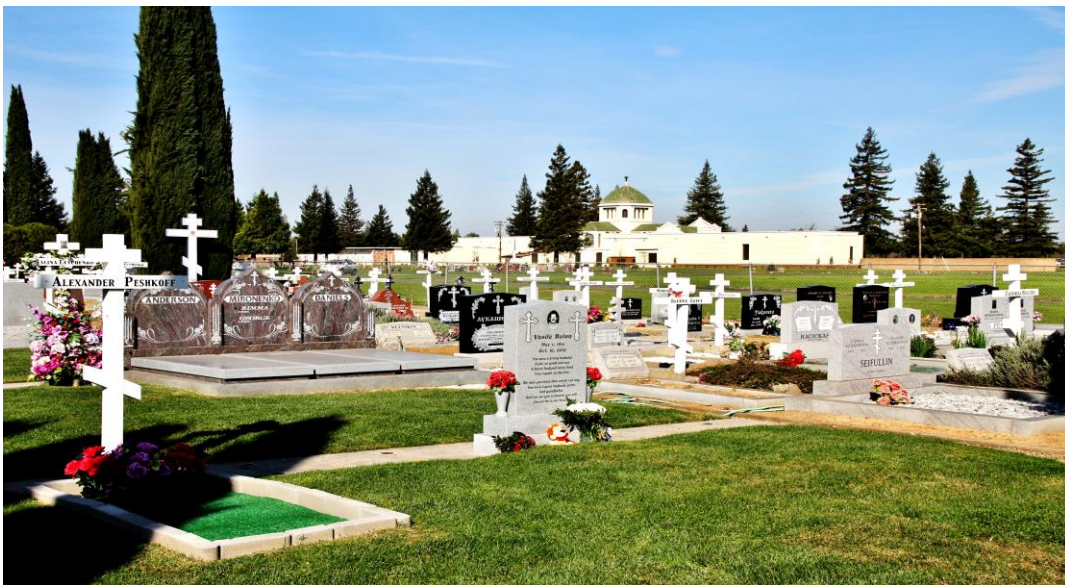**Russian Orthodox Christian Burial Site at Saint Mary Cemetery**
Since the 1970s, Holy Ascension Russian Orthodox Church in Sacramento has a burial section in Saint Mary Cemetery. The Orthodox Church entered into a contract with Saint Mary Cemetery to do the burials but the Orthodox Church takes care of its own maintenance. The Orthodox

plan to build a small chapel 52' X 40' at their cemetery site. Adjacent to the Russian Cemetery is the Sacramento County Veterans' Memorial Cemetery which Saint Mary Cemetery now owns. The county asked Saint Mary Cemetery to take over the Veterans Cemetery as well as the Sacramento County Indigent Cemetery.

VANDALISM AT THE CEMETERY
In earlier days, the cemetery was not locked. Bishop Keane wanted the Saint Mary Mausoleum to look like a church so it and the outside statues were lighted at night. However, vandals began breaking the night lights shining on the buildings so in the 1960s the cemetery was locked at night and the lights shining on the mausoleum and statues were discontinued.

ST MARY CEMETERY NOW OVERSEES THE SACRAMENTO COUNTY INDIGENT CEMETERY

Photo from Cemetery Archives

The Original County Potters' Field Before it Became Part of Saint Mary Cemetery

When John Seymour was the Director of Catholic Cemeteries in the 1970s, County of Sacramento approached the diocese to see if Saint Mary Cemetery could take over the county's indigent cemetery which was contiguous to Saint Mary Cemetery. There were ten thousand indigents buried in Potters' Field. John successfully negotiated an agreement with the county that by taking over the indigent burial site, Sacramento County agreed to donate the 12 acres of land next to the Saint Mary Cemetery. Saint Mary Cemetery then took on the responsibility of caring for indigent burials at this site.

In 2008, in order to consolidate space, the diocese asked Frank to develop a plan to move the 10,000 bodies buried in Potters' Field to a new site in the cemetery. Frank did not want to take on this huge and difficult project. As he said, "I bury people, not dig them up." But Frank had a change of mind when he realized that if the remains of the indigents were moved, he could give them their names back because there were no name markers of the deceased In Potters' Field.

The process of exhuming the remains of so many indigent people took three years to complete. Frank made sure the project began with prayer and he told his employees that as they made the removals, they were to be respectful of these dead at all times. The bones of the deceased were placed in individual boxes and the names of all ten thousand deceased have been inscribed on granite blocks at the relocation site.

When the relocation to the Good Samaritan Lawn was completed, Frank had the new burial site blessed. One of the prayers used was the epitaph of Hugh Cargill, an Irish immigrant who came to America very poor but became wealthy. He never forgot his roots and established a trust to care for the poor. This prayer was used at the blessing: *"How strange O God that reigns on high that I have come so far to die, and leave my friends where I was born to lay my bones with strangers dead. But I have high hopes when I arise, to dwell with them in yonder skies."*

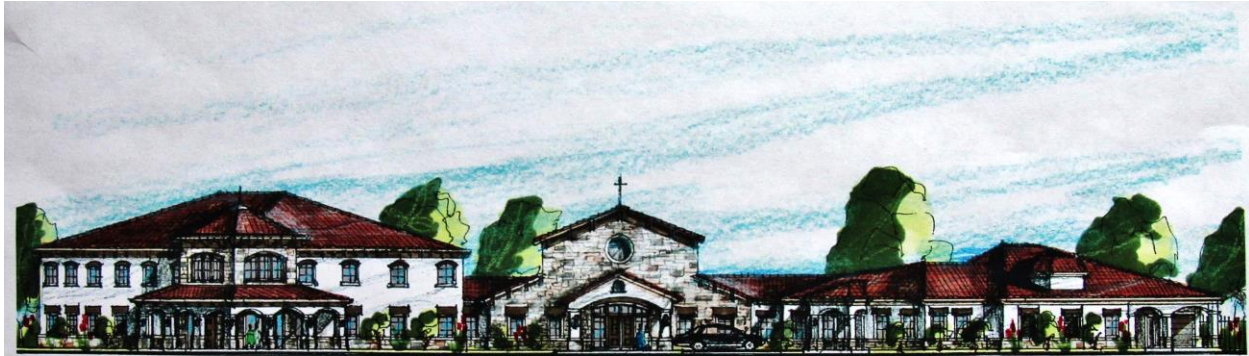**Saint Mary Potters' Field Today with Names Displayed on Granite Blocks**

SAINT MARY MAUSOLEUM HAS BEEN PAINTED
The mausoleum at Saint Mary Cemetery was painted in 2014 and the pink color has been changed to light tan. This mausoleum is completely filled with 1650 people buried there.

NEW PLANS FOR SAINT MARY AND CALVARY CEMETERIES
In 2010 Bishop Jaime Soto decided that our Catholic cemeteries needed assistance to develop new ways to better serve the Catholic community. The Cemetery Services of the Diocese of Oakland made a presentation to Bishop Soto on how Sacramento could develop its cemeteries. Bishop Soto entered into an agreement with the Diocese of Oakland to engage their Cemetery

Services Department to help us make our cemeteries more cost effective and to provide better options for Catholic families who wish to bury their loved ones in our Catholic cemeteries.

J. STUART TODD INC.
ARCHITECTURE
INTERIORS
PLANNING
LANDSCAPE

NEW ADMINISTRATION CENTER & CHAPEL COLUMBARIUM
SAINT MARY'S CEMETERY, SACRAMENTO, CA

PRELIMINARY ELEVATION STUDY

SEPTEMBER 18, 2012
12102

Catholic Cemetery Archives

Proposed Design of the Administration Complex, St Mary & Calvary Cemeteries

The Sacramento diocese purchased the George L Klumpp Funeral Home on Riverside Boulevard, Sacramento in June 2013. Since the purchase, the number of funerals has doubled at Klumpp Funeral Home. The diocese plans to build a new Cemetery Administration Center including a chapel to seat 250 people, slumber rooms and columbaria at both Saint Mary Cemetery, Sacramento and Mount Calvary Cemetery near Citrus Heights. Saint Mary Cemetery will build a retort for cremations. At both cemetery facilities, vigils and Funeral Masses may be celebrated and each site will have a hospitality center for receptions after funerals and/or burials.

OVERSIGHT OF PARISH CEMETERIES
The Catholic Funeral and Cemetery Services of the Sacramento diocese manage ten parish cemeteries throughout the diocese. These parishes have requested the Catholic Cemetery Department to take over the management of their parish cemeteries. At the same time, fifteen parish cemeteries are managed by local parishes, seven of which are historical Catholic cemeteries.

The New Vineyard at Calvary Cemetery was planted in the fall of 2014. Bishop Myron Cotta blessed the vineyard in November 2014 and when the vines begin to produce grapes in about three years, the wine made will be donated free of charge to the parishes of the diocese for sacramental use at parish Masses.

Photo by John E Boll 2015

Arial View of Saint Joseph Cemetery, Sacramento in the 1990s

DIOCESAN CATHOLIC CEMETERY STATISTICS

Main Diocesan Cemeteries	Established	Acres	Burials	Location
St Mary Cemetery	1928	60	47,000	Sacramento
Calvary Cemetery	1953	47	12,058	Sacramento County
All Souls Cemetery	1965	30	6,856	Vallejo, Solano County
St Joseph Cemetery	1865	12	13,266	Sacramento

Non-Catholic Cemeteries Owned by the Diocese

Sacramento County Vet Cem	1962	3	4,024	Sacramento
Sacramento County Cem	1928	9	8,032	Sacramento

Parish Cemeteries Managed by the Diocesan Department of Cemeteries

St Vincent DePaul Cemetery	1850	2	180	Rancho Murieta, Sacto Co
St Vincent Cemetery	1889	15	2,324	Vallejo, Solano County
St Alphonsus Cemetery	1850	5	2,423	Fairfield, Solano County
St Joseph Cemetery	1883	12	3,000	Woodland, Yolo County
Holy Cross Cemetery	1879	12		Colusa, Colusa County
St Patrick Cemetery	1903	20		Grass Valley, Nevada County

St Patrick Historical Cem	1853	5		Grass Valley, Nevada County
St Michael Cemetery	1881	1	30	Rescue, El Dorado County
St Charles Borromeo Cem	1890	1		Collinsville, Solano County
St Joseph Cemetery		5		Rio Vista, Solano County

Parish Cemeteries Managed by the Parish

St Stephen Cemetery	1855	2	180	Dry Town, Amador County
Immaculate Conception Cem	1863	1	185	Sutter Creek, Amador County
Sutter Creek Catholic Cem				Sutter Creek, Amador County
Jackson Catholic Cemetery	1850	5		Jackson, Amador County
Volcano Catholic Cemetery	1853	2		Volcano, Amador County
St Peter-St Paul Cemetery	1850	1		Clinton, Amador County
St Patrick Cemetery	1858			Placerville, El Dorado County
St Patrick Cemetery	1855	1	400	Weaverville, Trinity County
Sacred Heart Cemetery	1897	2	75	Dobbins, Yuba County
St Joseph Cemetery				Marysville, Yuba County
St Canice Catholic Cemetery	1887	5		Nevada City, Nevada County
St Joseph Catholic Cemetery	1942	32	1,250	Redding, Shasta County
St Joseph Cemetery (old)	1881	2	500	Redding, Shasta County
Forest Hill Catholic Cemetery	1861	4		Forest Hill, Nevada County

Parish Cemeteries Managed by the Cemetery District

Callahan Catholic Cemetery, Fort Jones, Siskiyou County; Sawyer's Bar Catholic Cemetery, Fort Jones, Siskiyou County; St John the Baptist Cemetery, Folsom, Sacramento County; St Dominic Catholic Cemetery, Colfax, Placer County; Shasta Catholic Cemetery, Shasta County; French Gulch Catholic Cemetery, French Gulch; Horsetown Catholic Cemetery, Horsetown.

Parish Cemeteries Managed by the Local Cemetery District

Ione Catholic Cemetery, Ione, Amador County; Pioneer Catholic Cemetery, Plymouth, Amador County; Incarnation Catholic Cemetery, Williams, Colusa County; Holy Cross Cemetery, Arbuckle, Colusa County; Sacred Heart Cemetery, Maxwell, Colusa County; Stonyford Cemetery, Stonyford, Glen County.

Parish Cemeteries Deeded to Local Cemetery Districts

St Dominic Catholic Cemetery, Oroville, Butte County; St Thomas the Apostle Cemetery, Oroville, Butte County; St Monica Catholic Cemetery, Willows, Glen County; St John North San Juan Cemetery, San Juan, Nevada County; Fort Jones Catholic Cemetery, Fort Jones, Siskiyou; Catholic Section, Lincoln Cemetery, Lincoln, Placer; St Joseph Catholic Cemetery, Yreka, Shasta County; Johnsonville Catholic Section Cemetery, Johnsonville, Plumas County; St Mary Catholic Cemetery, Red Bluff Tehema County; Smartsville Catholic Cemetery, Smartsville, Yuba County; Vinton Catholic Cemetery, Vinton, Plumas County.

FINAL THOUGHTS OF FRANK ESPINOSA AS HE PREPARES TO RETIRE

Frank says that working at the Catholic cemeteries has been a labor of love for him and a life commitment for these past 40 years. He has enjoyed his ministry to people during difficult times when families have suffered the death of a loved one. Frank plans to retire on June 30, 2015.

THANKS TO FRANK AND HIS STAFF

Frank and his staff have served the Catholic community well by taking care of our Catholic cemeteries for four decades by helping grieving families bury their loved ones in the consecrated ground of our Catholic cemeteries.

We, the Church of Sacramento, thank you, Frank, for your faithful service to the Catholic community of Sacramento and beyond. We wish you good health and a happy retirement.

AD MULTOS ANNOS!

Photo by John E Boll

SACRAMENTO SUNSET