

# SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 5

Father John E Boll

No 31

## *Father Colin Lawrence Macdonald*

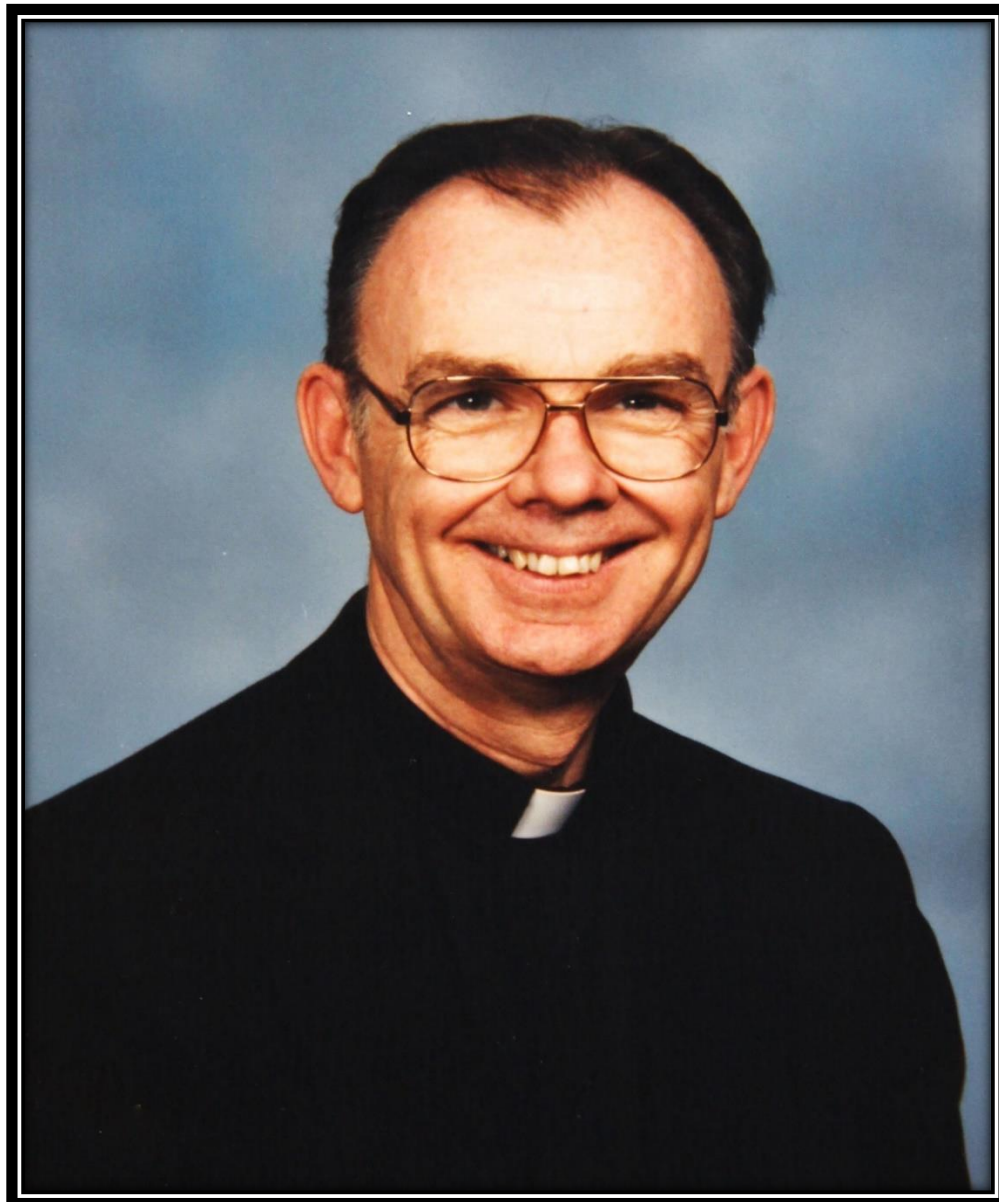
Native Son of Oakland, California

Brother of the San Francisco District of Christian Brothers

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor Emeritus of Saint Clare Parish, Roseville

February 13, 1938 – February 22, 2013



**Wilfred Lawrence Macdonald was born on February 13, 1938 in Oakland, California,** the last of four children born to Wilfred Macdonald and Harriett Lanren. He was baptized on March 13, 1938 at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Oakland, California.

### **THE MACDONALD FAMILY MOVES TO REEDLEY**

The Macdonald famioy moved to Reedley, California where Wilfred began his education at Washington Elementary School for the first to sixth grades from 1944 to 1950. He then attended General Grant Junior High School in Reedley for two years, 1950 – 1952.

Wilfred began Reedley High School for grades 9 – 11 and then in his high school senior year he attended San Joaquin Memorial High School in Fresno from 1955 -1956 which at that time was staffed by the Christian Brothers. He said, “There was nothing like close-up impressions of my teachers. They were all brothers: Edwin, Wilfred and two Georges. I liked what I saw in the manliness and spiritual depth of the brothers.”

### **ENTERS THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS COMMUNITY**

After his high school graduation, Wilfred decided to join the Christian Brothers and began his novitiate at the De La Salle Novitiate in the hills west of Napa. When he made his first vows, he chose the name *Colin* as his religious name as a Christian Brother, a name he kept for the rest of his life. He attended Saint Mary’s College in Moraga and graduated. His father Wilfred died in 1958.



Photo by John E Boll

**Christian Brothers Novitiate, Napa, California**

Brother Colin graduated from Saint Mary's College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1961 and began his teaching career in the fall of that year as an instructor at Christian Brothers High School in Sacramento until 1969. During this time, he made his final vows as a Christian Brother in 1963.



Photo by John E Boll

### **Christian Brothers High School, Sacramento**

#### **BROTHER COLIN TAKES SUMMER CLASSES**

As Brother Colin continued his teaching career, he took summer courses to better prepare himself for his work of teaching in Christian Brothers schools. In 1964, he attended summer classes at the University of Southern California; in the summers of 1965 and 1974 he attended classes at the University of San Francisco; and in 1969, he received his Masters of Arts degree from the University of San Francisco.

In 1970, Brother Colin was appointed assistant principal of De La Salle High School in Milwaukie, Oregon until 1973 and then was appointed assistant principal of De La Salle High School in Concord, California for a year. In 1975, he returned to Christian Brothers in Sacramento where he served as an instructor for a year.

#### **DISCERNMENT OF A VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD**

For twenty-two years, Brother Colin worked as a Christian Brother teaching in Christian Brothers schools and serving as an assistant principal. In the late 1970s, he began discerning whether God was calling him to leave the Christian Brothers to become a priest. It was a desire to celebrate

the Eucharist and administer the sacraments with the People of God that drew him to consider a vocation to the priesthood.

During his years of teaching at Christian Brothers in Sacramento, he came to know some of the local clergy in the area with whom he discussed his desire to become a priest. Fathers Russell Terra, James Church and Colm O’Kelly encouraged Colin and recommended him to the diocese as a candidate for the seminary.

### **COLIN ENTERS THE SEMINARY**

Colin Macdonald was accepted by the Diocese of Sacramento to begin studies for the priesthood. He entered Saint Patrick Seminary, Menlo Park in the fall of 1977 and spent the next four years taking courses in Scripture, patristics, dogmatic and moral theology, church history, pastoral care and homiletics.



Photo by John E Boll

### **Saint Patrick Seminary, Menlo Park, California**

### **PASTORAL YEAR**

For his pastoral year, Colin was assigned to Saint Patrick Parish in Placerville with Monsignor Patrick Nolan as his pastor and mentor. Colin enjoyed his that year very much because it was a good learning experience for him about the daily life of a priest in pastoral ministry. Monsignor Nolan was a good mentor as Colin neared the day of his ordination to the priesthood.

### **ORDAINED A TRANSITIONAL DEACON**

During his last year in the seminary, Colin was ordained a transitional deacon by Archbishop John R Quinn with his four San Francisco classmates at Saint Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco on December 6, 1980.



Photo by John E Boll

**Saint Mary Cathedral, San Francisco**

### **ORDAINED A PRIEST FOR SACRAMENTO**

In 1981, Colin Macdonald was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Sacramento by Bishop Francis A Quinn in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Sacramento.

### **FIRST ASSIGNMENT, SAINT ROSE PARISH, SACRAMENTO**

His first assignment was as parochial vicar of Saint Rose Parish in Sacramento under the leadership of Monsignor Edward Kavanagh. As Father Colin began his sacramental ministry of celebrating Mass, administering the sacraments and preaching, he knew he had chosen the right path of service in the church. In an interview with the Catholic Herald, he said that “Monsignor Kavanagh is truly an institution himself. He has enormous energy and is certainly inspiring.”



Photo by John E Boll

### **Saint Rose Church, Sacramento**

#### **SECOND ASSIGNMENT**

Father Colin's next assignment was to Saint Rose of Lima Parish, Roseville where he served as parochial vicar from 1987 to 1990 under the leadership of Father Michael Cormack, pastor. He enjoyed his time in Roseville and had a caring and supportive pastor in Father Cormack.



Photo by John E Boll

### **Saint Rose Church, Roseville**

## FIRST PASTORATE, ALL HALLOWS PARISH, SACRAMENTO



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Photo by John E Boll

### All Hallows Church, Sacramento

In 1990, Bishop Francis Quinn appointed Father Colin pastor of All Hallows Parish in Sacramento where he served until 1994. This was his first experience as pastor which also had a school. He worked closely with Deacon Jim Healy, co-principal of the school, and the school staff. Having been a teacher himself for 22 years, ministering to the students and staff fit his ministerial experience perfectly.

### APPOINTED PASTOR OF SAINT CLARE PARISH, ROSEVILLE

Newly arrived Bishop William K Weigand who succeeded Bishop Quinn appointed Father Colin parish administrator of Saint Clare Parish in 1995 and a year later as pastor. As he began his ministry at Saint Clare Parish, the diocese, realizing that the West Roseville area was growing rapidly with construction of new homes wisely made the decision to relocate the parish established in 1992 from Antelope to a new site in West Roseville. Since no buildings had been constructed yet on the Antelope site, it was relatively easy to make the change of location for the parish.

When he arrived at Saint Clare Parish, Father Colin soon discovered that the parish community was small, young and enthusiastic. There were about 200 people attending the one Sunday Mass held at Bear River School in Antelope. He said that “watching the community grow was an incredible experience.”

## **BUILDING A CHURCH**

The task at hand was to build a church for the new parish. Projections of growth in the West Roseville area were high. One of the advantages in the parish was the presence of a large number of retired people who lived at the Del Webb housing area in the parish. This group proved to be a great asset in achieving the goal of building the first stage of development, a new church and parish office space.

## **DIOCESAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROCESS**

Diocesan officials were well aware of the overcrowding at Saint Rose Parish in Roseville and the need to establish a second parish in the area. West Roseville was one of the areas of great housing growth and development. The diocese entered into contract with developers Sares-Regis in August 1997 and worked with them and the City of Roseville for more than two years. The developers finally received approval from the City of Roseville and recorded a development map which enabled them to sell a fifteen-acre parcel of the land to the Diocese of Sacramento for a new parish in West Roseville on December 9, 1999 for \$258,000.

## **SAINT CLARE PARISHIONERS RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGE**

The response of the parishioners of Saint Clare Parish was amazing. Tom McNamara prepared a 20-year financial projection for the parish project and presented it to the Diocesan Finance Council. Tom says his projection was overly optimistic but because the diocese needed another parish in Roseville, the Finance Council accepted the projection. Bishop Weigand made the decision that the new church must have seating capacity for at least 1000 people which made the project more expensive but this decision on the bishop's part was a wise one.

## **CHARITABLE MANAGEMENT HIRED FOR THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN**

The parish hired Chris Stocker from Charitable Management Fundraising in 1999 to lead the first capital campaign to build the new church. The goal was one million dollars and the amount pledged was \$1,280,000, exceeding the projected goal.

## **ARCHITECT AND BUILDERS HIRED**

The parish hired Ron Carissimi as the architect and John F Otto Company as the building contractor. Christian Brother William Woeger from Omaha, Nebraska was hired as consultant for the interior design of the new church. Brother William and parishioner Ruth Kaiser worked well together and the interior design of the church is due mainly to these two people.

## **SAINT CLARE PARISHIONERS CONSISTENTLY EXCEED EXPECTATIONS**

Tom McNamara was amazed by the response of the parishioners of Saint Clare Parish. Whatever projections the diocese made, the parish did better than those expectations. The diocese made the largest loan it ever made up to that time of \$3.9 million dollars. Bishop Weigand decided to ask the Diocesan Consultants for approval before making this large loan. The Consultants confirmed the diocesan decision to grant this loan.



### **BISHOP'S DIRECTION PROVES TO BE WISE**

Normally, a new parish builds a hall to serve as the first church but Bishop Weigand felt that since many of the parishioners were living at in Del Webb housing, these Catholics would probably not support the new parish unless they had a permanent church in which to celebrate the liturgy. The decision was thus made to build the permanent church first.

Throughout the planning process, Father Colin was a good team player with his parishioners and the diocesan staff. The building project went forward and the new church and office complex was built and dedicated by Bishop Weigand in June 2002 with a project cost of six million dollars.

### **IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME**

The average Sunday attendance prior to the dedication of the new church was 700 people. The Sunday after the dedication, the attendance jumped to 3000 people. It was a fulfillment of the adage: "If you build it, they will come," and indeed they did come and continue to come.

In 2003-04, the parish did its second fund drive to raise money to build a parish hall. The CCS fundraising company that led the diocesan capital campaign also did the Saint Clare campaign. The parish campaign was very successful by raising \$3.8 million dollars for the parish center which cost \$4 million dollars to build.



Photo by John E Boll

**Phase II, Morris Center Community Building**



Photos by John E Boll

**Saint Clare Parish, Roseville**



In any fund drive, the hope is to raise 3 to 4 times the annual offertory. Saint Clare Parish was able to raise 5.4 times the annual offertory in its fund drives which was incredible.

For the past 17 years, the parish net operating income has averaged \$300,000 a year. Because the pastors of the parish operated with a tight budget and reduced costs because of the many volunteers in the parish, Saint Clare parish continues to grow and pay down its parish debt.

#### **COMMENTS FROM SAINT CLARE PARISHIONERS**

Parishioner Alejandro Real who was part of the parish since it began in 1992 credited Father Colin with “bringing everyone together to complete the building project. He convinced us that it was possible to be a much larger parish and we could get the job done. He was our cheerleader and did everything he could to get us there.”

Ruth Kaiser, who served as Father Macdonald’s assistant for more than seven years, described him as “the most compassionate, caring person” she had ever met. She recalled the day a man stopped by the parish office and found it locked. It happened that Father Macdonald was passing by. Upon learning that the man was on his way to get the results of a cancer scan, Father Macdonald stopped in his tracks, unlocked the office, brought the holy oils and anointed the man who later discovered his results were negative.

Ann Silver, a founding member of the parish and former choir director, recalls the years prior to the dedication of the new church in 2002 when Masses were held at various times in a community church, a public school and in parishioners’ homes. She described Father Macdonald as “a very giving person,” who is “very welcoming and possessed a good sense of humor.”

#### **FATHER COLIN RETIRES**

After serving as pastor of Saint Clare Parish for twelve years, Father Colin retired from active ministry at Saint Clare Parish in Roseville on July 1, 2007 and was named Pastor Emeritus. He moved to the Priests’ Retirement Village in Citrus Heights where he lived for the next six years.

Father Colin’s health began to gradually decline. One day in February 2013, after the morning Mass at the Priests’ Village, the priests noticed that Father Colin had not picked up his copy of the Sacramento Bee for two days so they went to his apartment to check if he was all right. There was no answer at the door so one of the priests went for the master key and opened the door. Father Colin was lying on the floor for a day but conscious. The fire department was called and he was taken by ambulance to Mercy San Juan Hospital a few miles away. He was admitted to the intensive care unit and after a week in the hospital Father Colin died on February 22, 2013 at the age of 75.

#### **FUNERAL MASS FOR FATHER COLIN**

A Vigil was celebrated for Father Colin in Saint Clare Church on Sunday, March 3, at 7 PM. The next morning on Monday, March 4, at 11 AM, Bishop Jaime Soto was the main celebrant of the Funeral Mass for Father Macdonald as the priests of the diocese, parishioners of Saint Clare

Parish and friends of Father Colin gathered to pray for him and bid farewell to their friend and pastor who had served the parish community for twelve years. His body was laid to rest in the Priests' Section of Saint Mary Cemetery in Sacramento.



Photo by John E Boll

### **IN MEMORIAM**

Father Colin was a man dedicated to serving the People of God for most of his life, first as a Christian Brother for a quarter century and then as a priest of the Diocese of Sacramento for thirty-two years. While a Christian Brother, he began to feel God calling him to become a priest so he could celebrate the sacramental life of Christ with the larger community of God's people. With the help of three priests of the Diocese of Sacramento, Colin decided to make a leap of faith by leaving the Christian Brothers who had been his community for twenty-five years and begin a new journey that led to the priesthood and a life of service to the Church of Sacramento.

His ministry as pastor of Saint Clare Parish was the highlight of his life. He marveled at the great growth of the new parish, the commitment of the parishioners and the large number of volunteers who were always ready to help in any way that was needed. Saint Clare Church is a living testament to Father Colin who helped bring this parish together, build a permanent church and live to see Saint Clare parish become the largest parish in the Diocese of Sacramento with 7,000 registered families today. We are grateful to Father Colin for his life as a priest and the work he did to build up of the Church of Sacramento.

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*Lord, you called  
Colin Macdonald to a life  
of service to your people  
and he responded generously.*

*Now, you have called him  
home to your glorious Kingdom.*

*Grant him the fullness of  
life in your presence  
now and forever.*

*Amen*