

# SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 5

Father John E Boll

No 37

## *Monsignor Patrick Michael Nolan*

Native Son of Anbally, Cummer, County Galway, Ireland

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor Emeritus of Saint Philomene Parish, Sacramento

September 10, 1924 – December 7, 2006





**Patrick Michael Nolan**, son of Daniel Nolan and Kate Clancy, was born on September 10, 1924 in Anbally, Cumber, County Galway, Ireland. Three days later, on September 13, he was baptized in Saint Colman's Church, Cumber.

### **PATRICK BEGINS HIS SCHOOLING**

Patrick was raised by his grandparents on their farm after his mother died when he was two years of age. He began his elementary schooling in Scoil Mhuire, Furbo, County Galway in 1931 to 1939. He then transferred to Apostolic School, Mungret College, Limerick from 1939 to 1946. He then began his theological studies at All Hallows College, Dublin where he prepared for ordination to the priesthood and service in the Diocese of Sacramento.

### **ORDAINED A PRIEST FOR THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO**

Patrick Nolan was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Sacramento on June 18, 1950 in All Hallows College Chapel by Bishop Michael O'Reilly of the Diocese of Saint George, Newfoundland.



Photo from the book *Missionary College of All Hallows*, by Kevin Condon, CM

**All Hallows College, Dublin, Ireland**



### **BEGINS PRIESTLY MINISTRY**

The newly arrived Father Nolan received his first assignment in the Diocese of Sacramento on November 7, 1950 when he was appointed assistant priest of Saint Bernard Parish in Eureka. At this time, Humboldt and Del Norte Counties were part of the Diocese of Sacramento. Father Pat served in Eureka for three years until March 4, 1953.



Photo by John E Boll

**Saint Bernard Church, Eureka, California**

### **SAINT PATRICK PARISH, SONORA**

From the far recesses of the northern part of the diocese, Father Pat was next assigned to the southernmost region, to Saint Patrick Parish in Sonora. Sonora is the county seat of Tuolumne County and is nestled in the Sierra foothills east of Stockton. He arrived in Sonora on March 4, 1953 and served four years as assistant priest until November 7, 1957.

The churches in Tuolumne County were part of the Diocese of Sacramento until 1962 when Pope John XXIII created three new dioceses of Stockton, Oakland and Santa Rosa. When this happened, Tuolumne County was taken from the pastoral care of the Diocese of Sacramento and given to the new Diocese of Stockton. Father Nolan had been reassigned to Sacramento before these changes took place.



Photo from the St Patrick Parish Website

### **Sanctuary of Saint Patrick Church, Sonora, California**

#### **SAINT JOSEPH PARISH, REDDING**

After four years of ministry in Sonora, Father Pat was appointed to Saint Joseph Parish in Redding as assistant priest from March 4, 1954 to November 7, 1957. The pastor of Redding was Father John O'Connor who served the Redding as pastor from 1952 to 1980.



**St. Joseph Church, May Altar, 1950**

Photo from Diocesan Archives

### **Saint Joseph Church, Redding in 1950**





Photo from the Diocesan Archives

**Fathers William Walsh, Patrick Nolan and John O'Connor**  
Redding, California, May 30, 1954

**CHAPLAIN OF MERCY HOSPITAL, SACRAMENTO**



Photo by John E Boll

**Mercy Hospital, Sacramento, California**

Father Nolan was next appointed Catholic chaplain of Mercy Hospital in Sacramento where he served from November 7, 1957 to June 3, 1963. During that time, he also served as assistant chaplain to the Sacramento Newman Center with ministry to the students of Sacramento State University and American River College. At the same time, he served as director of the Pre-Cana and Cana Marriage Preparation programs.

### **SECRETARY TO THE BISHOP AND DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC CEMETERIES**

On June 3, 1963, Father Nolan's life radically changed when newly installed Bishop Alden J Bell appointed him secretary to the Bishop, director of Catholic Cemeteries and auditor-notary of the Diocesan Tribunal. As secretary to the Bishop, Father Pat assisted the bishop as master of ceremonies at confirmations throughout the diocese and at all other liturgical celebrations involving the bishop. He held this position from 1963 to 1968.

Father Pat served as director of Catholic Cemeteries two separate times, from 1963 to 1975 and again from 1994 to 1998. He brought a personal touch to this ministry to the grieving and bereaved and carefully guided the expansion of Catholic cemeteries throughout the diocese.



Photo by John E Boll

**Saint Mary Cemetery, Sacramento**



While director of Catholic Cemeteries, he wrote historical pamphlets and cable TV programs about Catholic cemeteries. In an interview with the Sacramento Bee in July 1998 about Catholic cemeteries, Father Pat said, “We are in a ministry, not an industry. Some people never get over the death of a loved one. Bereavement goes on for a long time. Cemeteries provide contact in a spiritual sense with the person who went before.”

For his dedication to restoring cemeteries and preserving historic sites, Monsignor Nolan received a special award from the Sacramento County Historical Society in 1998. That same year he was recognized by the State Assembly for his selfless community work and his spiritual and civic leadership.

### **NAMED PAPAL CHAMBERLAIN**

While Father Nolan was serving as secretary to the Bishop and director of Cemeteries, he was named Papal Chamberlain on July 21, 1965 by Pope Paul VI at the beginning of his papal ministry and at the end of his reign, he appointed Monsignor Nolan Prelate of Honor on January 21, 1977.

### **FIRST PASTORATE, PRESENTATION PARISH**

When Monsignor Cornelius Higgins stepped down as pastor of Presentation Parish in Sacramento on September 4, 1968, Bishop Bell appointed Monsignor Nolan as his successor and second pastor of this parish.



Photo by John E Boll

**Presentation Parish Hall that served as the First Church**

The parish was established in 1961 and after the parish hall was built, Sunday Masses were held in the hall. Monsignor Nolan realized it was time to build a permanent church for the parish. A capital fund drive was undertaken and architect Ron Carissimi was hired to design the new church. In the midst of all these activities, Monsignor Nolan began to experience health issues that necessitated that he step down as pastor in order to take some time away.

#### **FATHER MICHAEL McKEON APPOINTED ADMINISTRATOR**

As Monsignor Nolan left Presentation Parish to take a sabbatical, the parish was preparing to build its permanent church. Bishop Bell appointed Father Michael McKeon administrator pro-tem of the parish during the final planning and construction of the church. He oversaw the building project to its completion. In 1975, Bishop Bell appointed Monsignor Eymard Gallagher as the new pastor of Presentation Parish.

#### **SABBATICAL LEAVE**

Monsignor Nolan began his sabbatical on August 5, 1974. While he worked on his master's degree in counseling at San Diego State University, he also worked for Catholic Community Services in San Diego. He returned to Sacramento on December 23, 1975 to resume ministry.



Photo by John E Boll

**The Permanent Church of Our Lady of the Presentation, Sacramento**



### **DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES**

During his time in San Diego, Monsignor Nolan became involved in Marriage Encounter, “a movement that would have profound effects on my life,” he said on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination. “My priesthood was affirmed and I gained a new vision of what it meant to be church. Now I saw church as a loving people and I was in relationship with them, not as a superior but as a leader providing services for them. The Eucharist became central for me in a way that I had not previously experienced. I felt so privileged, tinged with a sense of unworthiness, to be a priest of God.”

Bishop Bell appointed Monsignor Nolan director of Catholic Social Services on December 26, 1975 with residence in an apartment. In March 1977, he changed his residence to Saint Paul Parish in Sacramento where he lived until July 1979.

### **APPOINTED PASTOR OF PLACERVILLE**

On July 18, 1979, Bishop Bell appointed Monsignor Nolan pastor of Saint Patrick Parish in Placerville where he served for the next four years until March 4, 1983. Father Michael Downey was parochial vicar and these two priests worked together as a team. Monsignor brought the Marriage Encounter movement to the Placerville parish and many parishioners were pleased with the direction the priests were leading the parish.



Photo by John E Boll

**Saint Patrick Church, Placerville**

## **FINAL PARISH ASSIGNMENT**

Bishop Francis Quinn succeeded Bishop Bell as bishop of the Diocese of Sacramento in 1980. It was he who appointed Monsignor Nolan to his last assignment on March 4, 1983 as pastor of Saint Philomene Church in Sacramento. He enjoyed his eleven years as pastor of Saint Philomene Parish and at age 70 he decided it was time to step down from his role as pastor.



Photo by John E Boll

## **Saint Philomene Church, Sacramento**

### **RETIREMENT**

Monsignor Nolan retired from active ministry on July 4, 1994 and was named pastor emeritus of Saint Philomene Parish. He continued to be active in retirement, celebrating pro-life Masses and healing Masses at Saint Philomene Parish, and serving as chaplain to the Knights of Columbus and the Serra Club. He served as parochial administrator temporarily at the Cathedral from 1999 to 2000.

### **THE MANY MINISTRIES OF MONSIGNOR NOLAN**

Over the 56 years of his priesthood, Monsignor Nolan served in many roles in the Diocese of Sacramento including assistant chaplain at the Sacramento Newman Center; auditor/notary, pro-synodal judge, advocate, and defender of the bond for the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal; secretary to the Bishop and liturgical master of ceremonies; director of Catholic Cemeteries; director of Cana and Pre-Cana Programs; member of the Priests' Council; director of Catholic Social Services, Sacramento; executive priest for the Marriage Encounter Movement; diocesan director of



Catholic Hospitals, treasurer of the Diocesan Aid Society; bishop's representative to the Diocesan Aid Society; member of the Diaconate Board and Diocesan Ecumenical Commission.

### **OTHER SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES**

In 2000, Monsignor Nolan said two other significant experiences in his priesthood were his involvement in the Charismatic Movement and healing Masses, and a pilgrimage he made to the Shrine of Mary in the Bosnian town of Medjugorje, "which made me more aware of my calling and God's great mercy and forgiveness."

### **DEATH OF MONSIGNOR NOLAN**

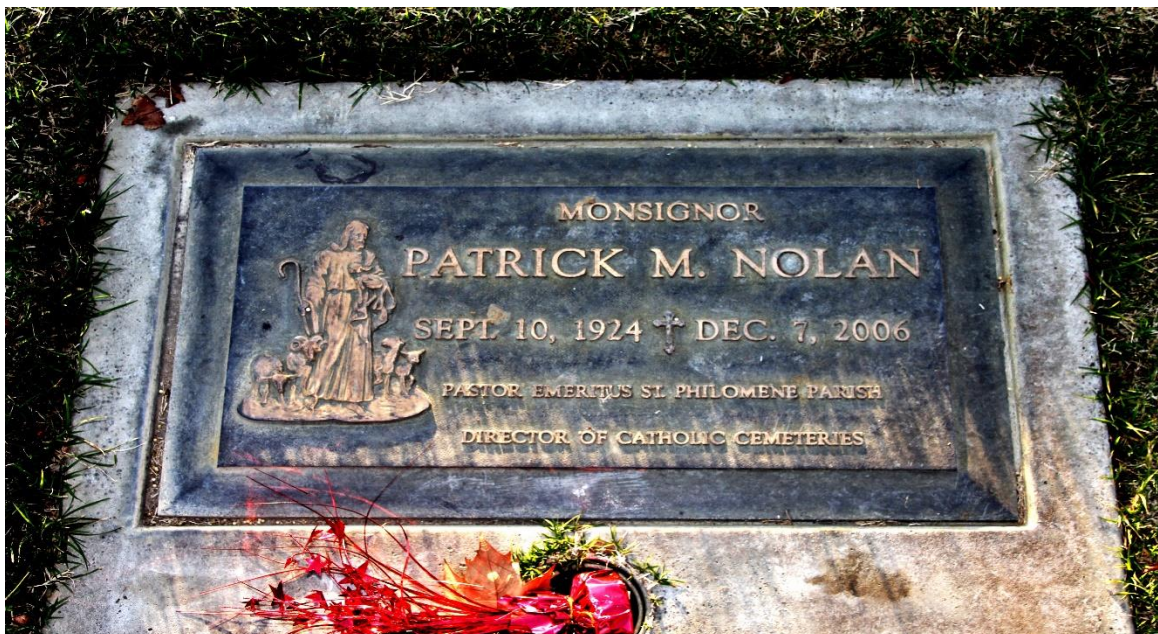
Monsignor Nolan was stricken with liver cancer in 2006 and he spent his last months in hospice care until his death on December 7, 2006 at the age of 82. Bishop William Weigand was the main celebrant at the Funeral Mass for Monsignor Nolan at Saint Philomene Parish in Sacramento. Monsignor Brendan O'Sullivan, a close friend of Monsignor Nolan for fifty years, was the homilist at the Mass and said "hope was the hallmark of Monsignor Nolan's life, even until the day of his death. The constant flow of friends to his home was a sure proof of a life poured out for the people he loved. Thankfully, they did not wait until he had gone to tell him how much they loved and appreciated him. His indomitable courage was a caption of a life well-lived and beautifully executed up to the last breath.

"While priests are credited with unique records in the course of their lives, Monsignor Nolan served with verve and distinction for all of his priestly career and surely must have the record for serving in the most diverse ministries in the diocese."

### **COMMENT BY ANN PEAK**

Ann Peak, an archeologist who knew Monsignor Nolan since 1995 when they worked together to restore Saint Michael Cemetery in El Dorado County, said he "had an influence on me that will last the rest of my life. He made a deep impression on me as mentor, guide, confidant and confessor," she said. "He was a godly man who served Christ all his life and practiced what he preached."

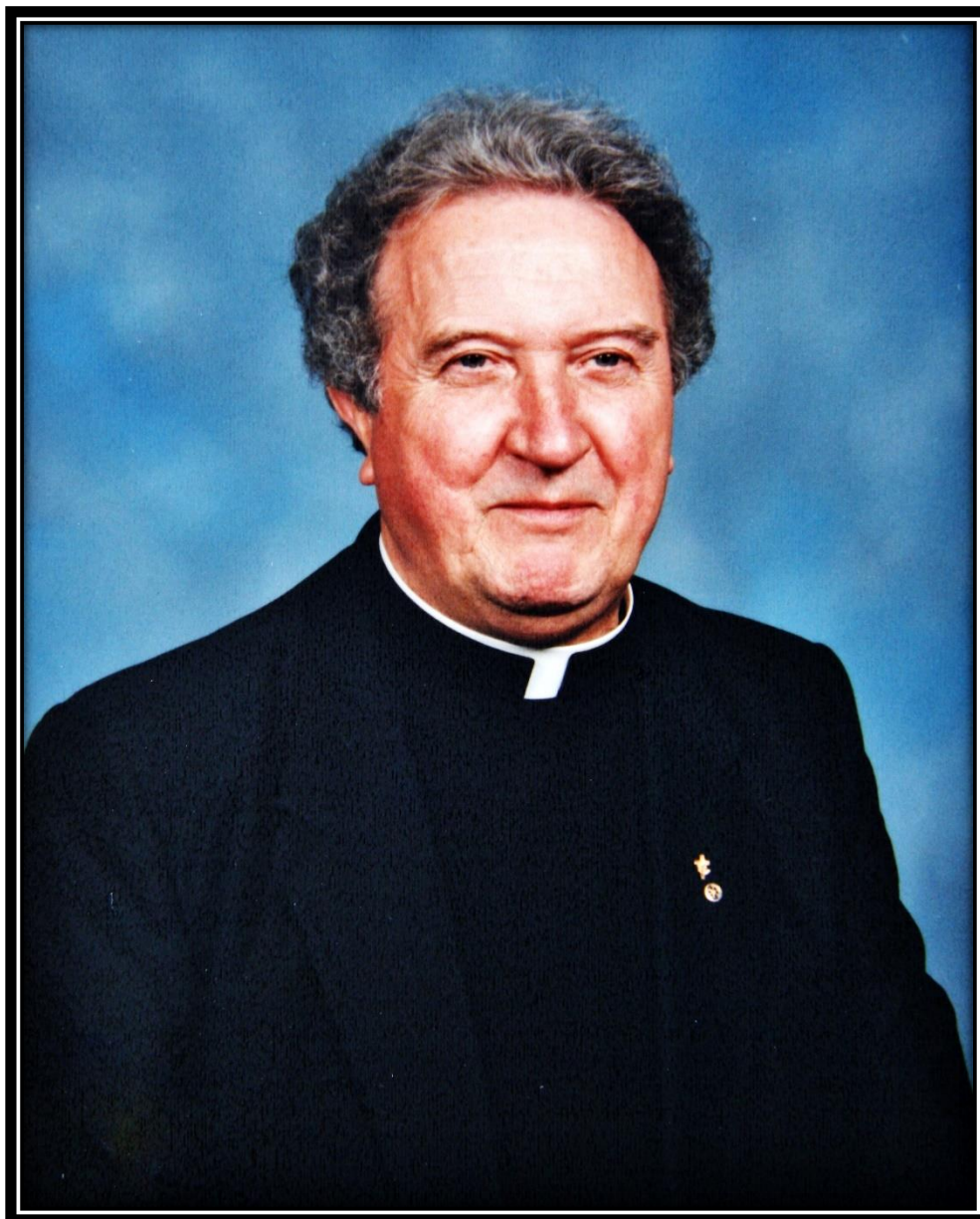
### **BURIAL AT CALVARY CEMETERY, SACRAMENTO**



At the conclusion of the Funeral Mass, Bishop Weigand said "Monsignor Nolan touched thousands of people's lives and we are indeed grateful. His was a life exemplary in every way." Monsignor Nolan's body was laid to rest in the Priests' Section at Calvary Cemetery in Sacramento to await the day of the Lord's return.

**IN MEMORIAM**

Monsignor Patrick Nolan was an amazing priest who accomplished so many things in his 82 years of life and 56 years of priestly ministry in the Diocese of Sacramento. He was a man of incredible energy, clarity of vision and tenderness of heart. We miss his presence among us.



*Monsignor Patrick Michael Nolan*