

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 5

Father John E Boll

No 36

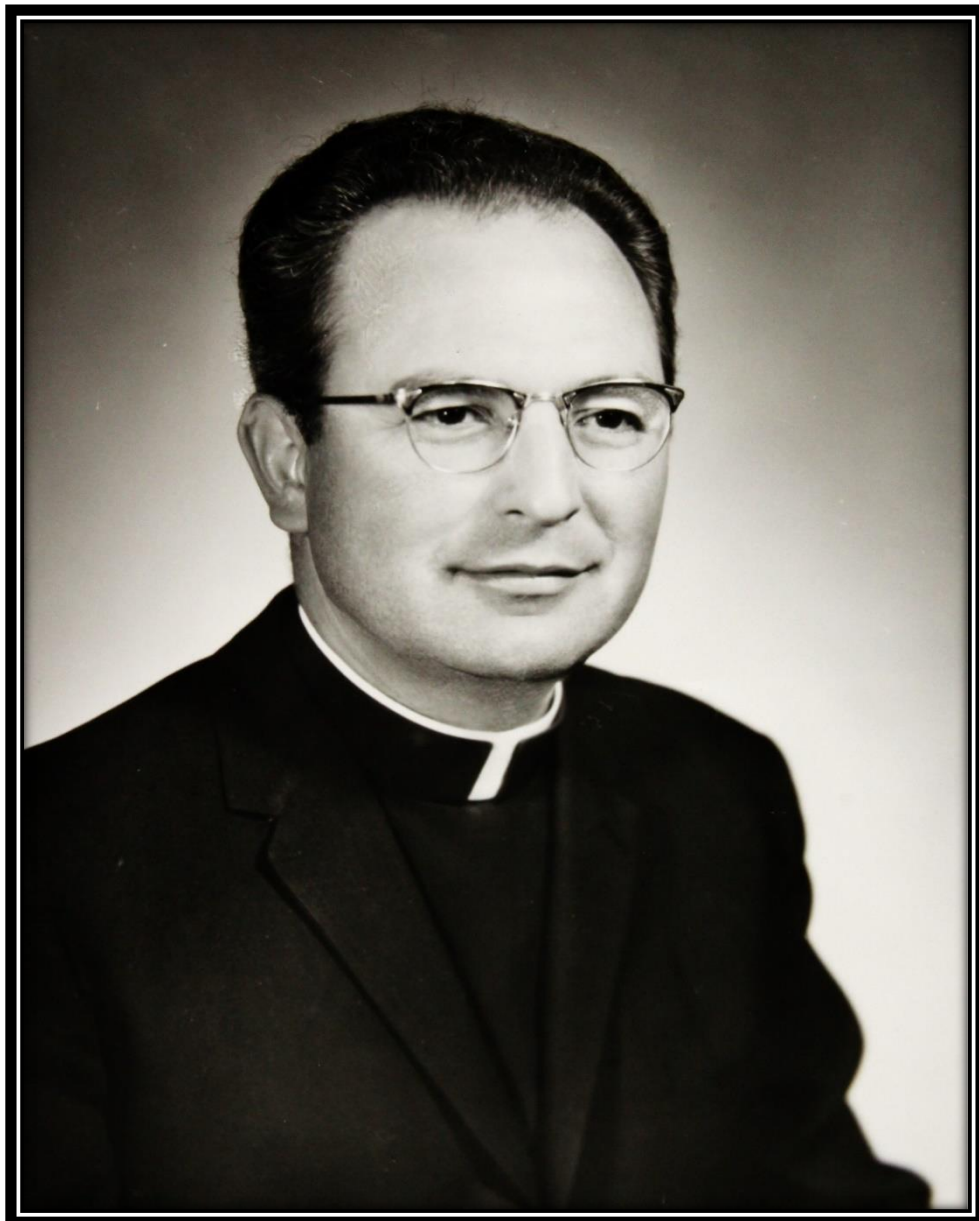
Father Anthony Vincent Maio

Native Son Benevento, Italy

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor Emeritus of Saint Basil the Great Parish, Vallejo

March 28, 1921 – December 24, 2006



Anthony Vincent Maio was born on March 28, 1921 in Benevento, Italy, son of Domenic Maio and Vicenza Dellicari. Although he was conceived in the United States, his mother wanted to give birth to her son in Italy so she returned to Benevento near Naples where Tony was born. He was baptized three days later on March 31 at Chiesa di Santo Donato, Benevento. At the time of Tony's birth, his father was a citizen of the United States.

TONY BEGINS HIS EDUCATION

The Maio family resided in Philadelphia where Tony began his education at Our Lady of Consolation School from 1927 to 1935. He then entered high school at Northeast Catholic High in Philadelphia from 1935 to 1939.

ATTENDS CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

After his graduation from high school, Tony was accepted by the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC where he spent his four years of college from 1940 to 1944, graduating with a BA degree on May 17, 1944. He continued on at Catholic University for another year to do graduate work in Spanish and Italian in 1944-45.

SAINT MARY SEMINARY, ROLAND PARK, BALTIMORE

Tony then entered Saint Mary Seminary in Roland Park, Baltimore, Maryland where he did four years of theological studies in preparation for his ordination to the priesthood. He was ordained a priest on May 26, 1949 in the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia by Bishop Hugh Lamb, auxiliary bishop of Philadelphia, for the Diocese of Sacramento.

BEGINS MINISTRY IN SACRAMENTO



Photo by John E Boll

All Hallows Church, Sacramento

Father Maio arrived in Sacramento in June 1949 to begin his priestly ministry. His first assignment was to All Hallows Parish in Sacramento as an assistant priest. His time at All Hallows Parish was a short stay of six months, from June to November 1949.

ASSISTANT AT THE CATHEDRAL OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Father Tony was then transferred to the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament where he began his ministry as assistant. When Father Carl Willmann stepped down from his ministry to the Hispanic community at the small mission church on 3rd and O Streets in 1950, Father Maio succeeded him and began his ministry to the Hispanic community at Our Lady of Guadalupe chapel.

In 1955, Father Tony was appointed the first administrator of Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission. As the Hispanic community grew, he consulted with Bishop Joseph McGucken who agreed that a new church needed to be built for the Sacramento Hispanic community, dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patronness of Mexico.

FUND RAISING BEGINS

A campaign was established to raise \$100,000 of the \$250,000 needed to build the church. Father Maio also placed collection boxes in cantinas in downtown Sacramento and went by regularly to collect donations for the new church. With hard work on the part of Father Maio and the Hispanic



Photo from the Diocesan Archives

Father Maio works with the Building Committee at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, circa 1956

community, the project came to a happy conclusion when the new church, located at 711 T Street, was dedicated by Cardinal Miguel Dario Miranda, Archbishop of Mexico City, on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12, 1957.

THE NEW CHURCH, PRIDE OF SACRAMENTO HISPANICS

Father Maio served as administrator of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church with Father Eugene Lucas as his assistant. The church was the pride of the Spanish-speaking community of Sacramento and beyond but it remained a mission church under the jurisdiction of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament because Bishop Bell was not ready to raise it to a parish and name Father Maio pastor.

GUADALUPE CHURCH BECOMES A NATIONAL PARISH

In August 1963, Father Keith B Kenny succeeded Father Maio as administrator of Guadalupe Church. He was no stranger to the Mexican community having also been an assistant to Father Maio at the original church. In 1969, Bishop Bell made the decision to create Our Lady of Guadalupe Church as a national parish for the Spanish-speaking community of Sacramento with Father Kenny as its first pastor.



Photo from the Diocesan Archives

The newly constructed Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Sacramento

A PARISHIONER'S COMMENT

Mary Erpelding of Sacramento first met Father Maio at the Cathedral in 1952 and later served as his secretary and director of the choir at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church during his years there. She was a close friend for more than 50 years and named her youngest son Anthony in honor of Father Maio.

She said, "Father Maio's 'magic word' was 'El Camino' – 'The Way.' He certainly showed many of us the way as a guide and educator, as one who helped us over the rough spots and made us appreciate life and know the goodness of God at every turn. We will always remember his kindness and love of people"

FATHER MAIO NAMED TO HIS FIRST PASTORATE

On September 17, 1963, Father Maio was appointed to his first pastorate at Corpus Christi Parish in Tahoe City, succeeding Father John Connelly who was founding pastor in 1961. Father Tony had to get used to dealing with the snow that piled up in the parish parking lot every winter. He served as pastor of Tahoe City from 1963 to 1967.



Photo by John E Boll

Corpus Christi Church, Tahoe City

APPOINTED PASTOR OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES PARISH, COLUSA

After dealing with the snow of Lake Tahoe for four years, in 1967 Bishop Alden Bell appointed Father Maio pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Colusa, an old parish established in 1870. He succeeded Monsignor John J McGarry who served as Colusa's pastor for 20 years, 1947 to 1967.

Before Monsignor McGarry retired, Father Murrough Wallace was assigned as assistant to the Colusa parish. When Father Maio arrived in Colusa, Monsignor McGarry decided to continue living in the small rectory and Father Maio was forced to live in the last spare bedroom in the house until a new residence could be secured.

FATHER MAIO HOPED TO BUILD A NEW CHURCH

Father Maio set into motion an effort to build a new church in Colusa. In the meantime, the religious sisters who staffed the school suddenly withdrew from the parish, forcing the school to close.

Since the convent was now vacant, Fathers Maio, Wallace and Monsignor McGarry moved into the former convent which became the new rectory for the parish. In the midst of all these changes, Father Maio was suddenly assigned to Holy Rosary Parish in Woodland as pastor.



Photo by John E Boll

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Colusa

HOLY ROSARY PARISH, WOODLAND

One June 2, 1970, Father Maio was appointed pastor of Holy Rosary Parish, Woodland, the County Seat of Yolo County. He succeeded Monsignor Thomas Markham and served a pastor of Woodland for the next twelve years until September 2, 1982.

In October 1952, the Holy Rosary Academy operated by the Holy Cross Sisters was destroyed by fire. A new school had to be constructed on land owned by the parish on California Street and this construction imposed a financial hardship on the parish.

The decreasing number of vocations in the two religious communities of sisters who worked in the parish resulted in the withdrawal of both communities of nuns. The Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement left the parish in 1966 after 21 years of dedicated service and the Sisters of the Holy Cross departed in the early summer of 1977, resulting in the hiring of an all lay faculty for Holy Rosary School for the first time.



Photo from the Diocesan Archives

Holy Cross Sisters attend Sunday Mass at the old Holy Rosary Church, Woodland in the 1940s

A HIGHLIGHT FOR FATHER MAIO

One of the highlights of Father Maio's pastorate was the 1974 reconstruction of the old parish hall, the interior of which had deteriorated through misuse and neglect. In February 1974, with the help of 125 men and women parishioners, a fund drive was held to raise \$125,000 to remodel the hall. Working without any outside direction, the parishioners of Holy Rosary parish with the encouragement of Father Maio raised approximately \$100,000 and donated many hundreds of hours of volunteer labor to transform the old parish hall into an attractive church hall close to the parish church on Walnut Street.



Photo by John E Boll

Holy Rosary Church, Woodland

While serving as pastor of Holy Rosary Parish, Father Maio also served as director of the diocesan Department of Mexican American Affairs. In addition, he was diocesan director of the Italian Catholic Federation.

FINAL PASTORATE, SAINT BASIL CHURCH, VALLEJO

Father Maio began his final pastorate at Saint Basil the Great Parish in Vallejo on September 2, 1982 and served there for four years until June 30, 1986. He succeeded Father John Terwilliger who continued to live at Saint Basil rectory after his retirement, helping with parish Masses. Father Maio and Monsignor Terwilliger were good friends so the relationship between them worked well until Monsignor Terwilliger's health forced him to move to Mercy McMahan Center in Sacramento where he could receive additional care as he needed it.

After four years as pastor of Saint Basil Church, Father Maio stepped down into retirement on June 30, 1986 and was named pastor emeritus of Saint Basil Church. He was succeeded by Father William Storan as the new pastor.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Basil the Great Church, Vallejo

CHAPLAIN TO THE IRISH CHRISTIAN BROTHERS

After his retirement, Father Maio became chaplain to the Irish Christian Brothers who served at Saint Vincent – Saint Patrick High School in Vallejo. He then moved to Vacaville and remained active in ministry assisting parishes in Solano County with Sunday Mass help.

FATHER MAIO ASSISTS AT SAINT JOSEPH PARISH, VACAVILLE

Father Vincent O'Reilly who served as pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Vacaville had known Father Maio for 40 years. Father Maio concelebrate Mass with him at Saint Joseph Church almost daily for 14 years. "I always found it fascinating how Father Maio searched to find a diocese where he could devote his entire ministry to the Spanish-speaking," Father O'Reilly said. "He had a singular devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe and traveled frequently to Mexico and other South American countries. He will be remembered for his love for the Mexican people, for their faith and their culture."

FATHER MAIO CELEBRATES HIS FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION

When Father Maio celebrated his 50th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood in 1999, he was interviewed by the *Catholic Herald* and said, "What gave me the most joy was serving God's people. Saint Vincent de Paul told his Sisters of Charity that the poor were doing them a favor by permitting the sisters to serve the poor. And one of the Holy Father's titles is "servant of the servants of the poor. Over the past 50 years I have come to understand this: there is no other way of loving than to give – to give of yourself. What I have done for those I served as a priest over the past 50 years is far, far less than what I have received. We are all servants."

FATHER MAIO'S LAST YEARS

Father Maio was living in a condo complex in Vacaville where Father Vincent O'Reilly was also living. After a priest's residence was constructed on the Saint Joseph Parish site, Father Vincent invited Father Tony to live in the rectory if he wished. Father Maio was thinking of moving to Mercy McMahon Center in Sacramento so Father O'Reilly accompanied him to check out the facility. Father Maio decided not to move to Sacramento but accepted Father O'Reilly's offer to live at Saint Joseph rectory in Vacaville. Father Maio moved to the rectory in 2005 and lived there until December 24, 2006.

FATHER MAIO'S SUDDEN DEATH

It was Christmas Eve morning 2006. Father Vincent rose early to make the coffee at 4:30 AM and stopped to check Father Maio's room to make sure all was well; Father Tony was sound asleep. Father Vincent went to the kitchen to make the coffee when he heard a noise coming from Father Tony's bedroom. He went to check and Father Maio was sitting up in bed, gasping for air. Father Vincent called 911 immediately and then quickly anointing Father Tony with the oil of the sick. When the fire department team arrived, Father Maio was already dead. He was 85 years of age.

FUNERAL FOR FATHER MAIO

On Friday, December 29, 2006, Bishop William Weigand, bishop of Sacramento, presided at the Funeral Mass for Father Maio at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Sacramento where Father Maio had served as the first administrator of the church. Father Vincent O'Reilly was the homilist at the Mass.

After the Mass, Father Maio's body was laid to rest in the Priests' Section of Saint Mary Cemetery in Sacramento. He was survived by his brother Libro, sister-in-law Mary, his sister Lucy Capaldi, and many nieces and nephews.

A Memorial Mass was also celebrated for Father Maio on January 20, 2007 at Our Lady of Consolation Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

DISBURSEMENT OF FATHER MAIO'S ESTATE

After Father Maio's death, his instructions were to disburse his estate in three equal shares to the Priests' Retirement Fund, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Sacramento, and Saint Joseph Parish, Vacaville. These three institutions received about \$140,000 each.



Photo by John E Boll

Headstone of Father Anthony Maio, Saint Mary Cemetery, Sacramento

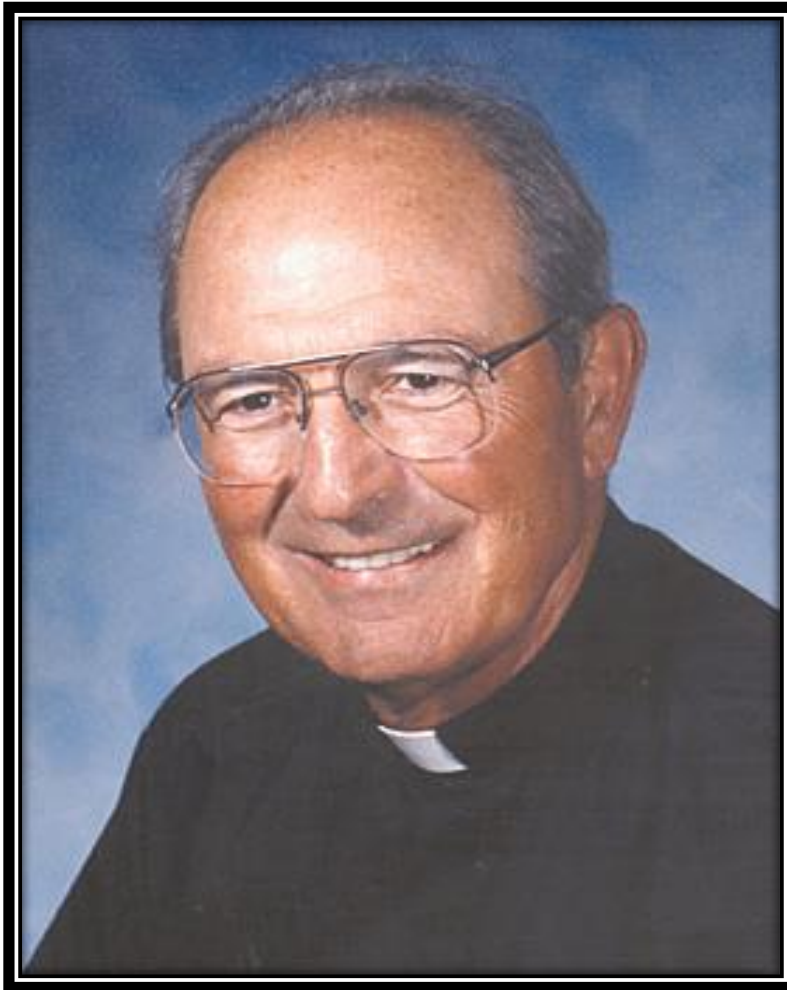
IN MEMORIAM

Father Maio caught the spirit of the Gospel that the Lord wants his priests to walk with their people as companions. He realized that the joy of the Gospel comes when one willingly serves the poor; when we give of ourselves and serve others, the return in love and joy will be far greater than anything we have given to others.

Father Tony had the desire to serve Hispanic people whom he dearly loved. He chose the Diocese of Sacramento as the place where he would spend his life because there were many Hispanics here where he could spend his life serving them.

He was a man gifted with the ability to speak many languages -- English, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. He used those languages to reach out to all who came seeking help from him.

Father Vincent O'Reilly was very kind and gracious to Father Maio by inviting him to live his last year of life at Saint Joseph rectory in Vacaville. Father Tony's final hour came quickly on Christmas Eve 2006. Early that morning, the Lord called him home for Christmas. May Father Tony be at peace in the loving embrace of God who is always kind and merciful.



*Lord,
We thank you for the gift of Father Tony Maio
Whom you called to serve your people as a priest.
He had a great love for Hispanic people
Of the Diocese of Sacramento.
You called him home on Christmas Eve;
May he now enjoy the beauty of heaven forever.
Amen*